

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY  
FOR THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

---

POOR LAWS AND PAUPERS  
ILLUSTRATED.

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III. THE TOWN.

A TALE.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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# THE TOWN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ENTERPRISE.

“WHERE is Guthrie?” asked a customer who entered the shop of a respectable cooper in Turnstile Lane.

“What did you want with him, Mr. Lucas?” asked Patty Guthrie, who was amusing herself with piling up a dozen buckets which had been disarranged.

Lucas answered by taking a survey of the shop with an air which bespoke his intention of going away again.

“If you want a bucket to hold your ratsbane,” continued Patty, “you cannot do better than ask me to show you one. And there’s a second-hand cask that will do to kennel your dogs in.”

So saying, she touched the cask with her foot, and set it rolling till the rat-catcher’s dog, with humbled tail, ran whining between his master’s legs.

“So this is the way you keep shop while your father is out, young mistress! You have not told me yet where he is.”

“ Because everybody knows where he is, I suppose. He is out asking good-will, to be sure. You will meet him sooner or later to-day, depend upon it.”

“ I met Dixon, very busy canvassing.”

“ He canvassed you, I dare say, Mr. Lucas: but you know better than to go and speak against my father. My father is sure to win, I can tell you.”

“ Because he has you to canvass his customers while he is away, my maiden? But Dixon has got before him in many quarters, if you will believe me.”

“ O yes; and that may serve him when my father's year is out. My father lets every body get before him; but he won't be overseer the less for that.”

“ And what sort of an overseer will he make if he goes on to let every body get before him? Those out-paupers are full as ready about their business as Dixon about his. They will get Mr. Gillingham's good will on their side, as Dixon has done.”

“ If Dixon has got Mr. Gillingham on his side, my father has got Mr. Thorn, and the vicar too, and fifty more that don't care for a word Dixon has to say. And you are one of these last, Mr. Lucas, I suppose I may tell my father.”

“ I can't imagine what makes your father so eager to be overseer. One would think that no man would wish for so much trouble and so much ill-will where there is no pay.”

“ Dixon is full as eager, I'm sure. He never

got home till it chimed twelve last night ; and he left his wife to manage the bread this morning before it was light."

" Ay, ay. He hopes to get the supplying of the workhouse, no doubt ; but there can be little custom in washing-tubs that should make it worth your father's while to be overseer. Perhaps you may have a score of poor cousins, however, that he would like to be kind to ; as they say Dixon has."

Patty resented the imputation of having poor cousins. When everybody seemed to wish to be overseer, why should not her father, without his having poor cousins ?

" Well, I shall tell him, mistress, that he cannot do better than make easy work of it, as most overseers profess to do. He may as well leave you to manage the paupers while he is hammering away in his shed. You are as good a match for Pleasance Nudd as he."

" For Pleasance Nudd ! Why, yonder child with his go-cart is a match for her. He has learned to say ' Go away ' quite plain."

" Well ; get him to help you, and let us see how you will manage Pleasance Nudd.—That bucket is the size I want : but you can't reach it. Bless me ! what a handy girl you are ! I thought you would have brought that bundle of staves about our ears."

While the bargain for the bucket was going on, and Lucas was making friendly inquiries about the apprentice's success in keeping out the rats from the shed and sawpit, Patty got between

her customer and the door. When he had paid for his purchase, she said with a smile,

“ You have not told me yet which way you are going to speak, Mr. Lucas. I am sure you will be so kind as to save my father from coming to you, seeing (as you say) that he is rather slow in making his rounds.”

“ He had better by half send you on his rounds, my brisk little maiden. You would get his appointment presently. He had better send you about, and stick to his hammer.”

“ Perhaps he will, if I tell him I have got your interest for him. There is no interest after Mr. Thorn’s and the vicar’s, that he cares about so much.”

“ That is the reason why he left me the last to be asked, I suppose ?”

“ Yes ; and because he was most sure of an old friend like you. I shall set you down on my list, Mr. Lucas.”

“ O to be sure, my dear, if you choose ; and I dare say Mrs. Dixon will do the same, when I have been to her shop for one of her new spiced cakes. I am going there now ; so, good day, Miss Patty.”

And he removed her from the door as lightly as if she had been a doll, and departed, smiling back at her, as she would have detained him with inquiries after her friend Charlotte Lucas ; and how much weaving Charlotte had to do ; and how poor Mrs. Lucas’s head was in this damp weather ; and many other matters.

Before he was out of sight, a new subject

appeared in the shape of an old customer, who had, like Lucas, not yet been canvassed. Patty knew old Mr. Sharp's difficulty of being pleased, and prepared herself accordingly,—not to fret and wipe her brows, and stand doubtful, with her hands in her sides, like her father, when waiting upon Mr. Sharp; but to haul the tubs about, and measure, and measure again, and pronounce decidedly, and look quite unwearyed till he had given his final orders. She showed herself so strong, and seemed to care so little for objections, that Mr. Sharp went away determined to do his best to make her father overseer.

Next came Mrs. Goose, who must be propitiated for her husband's sake; and propitiated she was with a hoop for her dear little boy, who was shown into the shed to choose for himself a stick to drive the hoop with; and the apprentice was called from his work to see that the dear little boy did not fall into the sawpit. Mrs. Goose thought she might almost promise Mr. Goose's interest, and blessed her boy for being able to carry home a hoop as high as himself. When Patty had made him promise to come again, and show her how he could drive his hoop, she was left at home to command the apprentice back to his work, re-arrange the shop, and sing "Sweet Home."

Her father seemed quite disposed to agree with her that "there's no place like home," when he found that there was money in the till, and a list of new partizans on his desk, while his

saucy little daughter was ready to cheer his spirits with sundry anecdotes of rebuffs sustained by Dixon, and pretty speeches echoed from the mouths of the vicar and Mr. Thorn about Guthrie's various fitnesses for the office he sought. Though it was growing dark, however, and sleeting fast, the wearied man was not allowed to shut himself in till he had been to Lucas. He must go there, Patty said, before Mr. Lucas had forgotten what she said; and, above all, before Guthrie could be supposed to have heard that Lucas had seen Patty. It was necessary for Guthrie to perceive once more this evening, that he was a man of great importance; a perception which did not often visit him at home, and which was no otherwise acceptable to him than as it saved him the necessity of asserting his own consequence on the present occasion.

It took him quite by surprise to be accosted by gentlemen in the streets.

"Your name is Guthrie, I think, sir."

"I—I—I believe it is."

"I am sure of it, sir; and I want to know whether it is true, as I am told, that you are opposed to Orger's re-appointment."

"I! Bless me! who can say so? I believe he is very secure; very——"

"We shall see to-morrow what his chance is. What I want now to know is whether you wish him to be assistant overseer again or not."

"Certainly, sir: I believe so. There can be no objection to him; for I'm sure I hope, if I

am to be overseer, he will be assistant overseer."

"Then my interest is yours: but to secure Orger is the first point; so you will excuse my stopping you. Good afternoon!"

It could only be supposed that Lucas liked to be canvassed, so difficult was it to obtain any answer from him as to what he designed to do on the morrow. He well knew how precious Guthrie's time must be, this evening; yet he sat caressing one dog, and feeding another, and teasing a third, while he harassed his neighbour with questions. As often as Guthrie seemed to be screwing up his courage to the point of putting the necessary interrogatory, Lucas had an order or a scolding to give to some one of his many children, or a series of remarks to make on the cause which kept his daughter Charlotte away this night. As long as the manufacturers appointed a certain quantity of ribbon to be woven per week, the young folks would take after their elders, making holiday on the Monday and Tuesday, so as to have to work night and day at the end of the week. It had hurt Charlotte's health,—that he could tell Mr. Gillingham; and——

"I suppose there is no doubt Mr. Gillingham is for Dixon," observed Guthrie; "but I wish people would say which way they mean to speak."

"It all depends on what Dixon does about Orger. Gillingham can't abide Orger, ever since the poor began to call out against a paid overseer. If Dixon is against Orger, Dixon is safe."

“Do you really think Gillingham has power to carry the day for his man?” cried Guthrie.

“Why not, when he is such a favourite? Which way stands your good will in the matter of Orger, man?”

Guthrie could not deny that he had given his opinion in favour of Orger, as often as he had been asked.

“Then I wish Orger may get his appointment, for both your sakes. It will be very pleasant to act together, knowing that you have had one another’s good will beforehand.”

“So you seem to think I shall be overseer,” observed Guthrie.

“O, ay; why should not you? Well! to-morrow will show.”

When Guthrie left Lucas’s house, he felt as if his appointment depended on what the rat-catcher thought of his chance; and this opinion could by no possibility be inferred from anything that had been said. Guthrie had never been in such a state of anxious expectation; and, if asked to account for his excessive eagerness, he would have found it very difficult to do so. He knew that his brother, the ironmonger in the next county, would willingly have given £50 to escape being overseer, and that it was considered by many better to pay the fine for not serving than to fill an office which brought all kinds of trouble and ill-will; but in this town it was, for some reason or another, an object of desire; and those who had once filled it were anxious to be re-appointed. He supposed that it must be a

good thing to be overseer, and his wife wished that he should not be behind his neighbours, and he himself had a prodigious desire to thwart and conquer Dixon, the baker, who had never been a good neighbour to him. He had a lurking suspicion that if he lost the appointment, he should not be very sorry after the first week; but, in the meantime, he was desperately bent on success.

It terrified him to think of the parties with whom he had in the first place to deal. He had not yet had any attention to spare for the prospect of his skirmishes with paupers, so great was his awe of the tumult of the open vestry, in the first place, and of the division of parties in the select vestry, in the next. What the open vestry of the next morning would be like, no one could tell, unless it was Orger, who held the list of arrears of the rate; but it was pretty certain that so many of the poorer rate-payers were in debt to the parish, and would therefore be excluded from influence, that no opinion of the probable result of the meeting could be formed till the last moment. What the select vestry was to whose orders he was by law required to defer, he knew, and thought the prospect of being under their orders far from tempting. There was the vicar, to be sure; and Mr. Thorn; and Sir Edward Mitchelson and Dr. Hudson; but these gentlemen would none of them give him the pleasure of acting under their orders. It was considered a common rule that no clergyman, physician, or magistrate, could attend

the select vestry ; the clergyman, because it was thought beneath the dignity of his clerical character to be mixed up with the squabbles of the parish, and to be liable to an accusation before the magistrate of inhumanity and oppression ; —the physician, because his professional interests must be injured by the dissensions in which a select vestryman must take a part ; —the magistrate, because he may not be a party in a decision against which he may afterwards have to admit an appeal. As for Sir Edward Mitchelson, he was seldom in town, and never dreamed of attending the vestry. His name was put on merely for the sound of it, —that the acts of the vestry might appear more respectable under such a sanction than they could have done without. Guthrie knew that these names availed the overseers but little. Their real masters were the tradesmen who happened to know the greatest number of the poor, and to have the loudest voices, and who chose to attend the vestry meetings the oftenest. Peter Lane, the tinman, and John Lane, the porter seller ; Benson and Clutterbuck and Wall, the publicans ; Wright, the brewer's clerk ; the two Davids, the butcher and chandler, and Morris, the tailor, were in fact the masters of the overseers ; and these men had such various opinions, and interests, and tempers, that it would be hard for any officer to satisfy them, even if there were no paupers to bully him, and no magistrates to hear appeals against him. If to these should be added his rival Dixon, Guthrie might

scarcely be able to say that his soul was his own by the end of the first quarter. He almost wondered that he had not held back from being overseer till the last moment.

The next day was as bright as a March day can be, and left no excuse for idle rate-payers staying at home. As soon as poor Waters, the lame shoemaker, left his awl, took up his beadle's staff, and opened the church-yard gate, a crowd of children pushed in to jump from the tomb stones, and play among the damp grass. Waters let them play; for the vestry was on the windy side of the church, and the children chose to keep to the sunny,—except a blue-cheeked little boy, with his shivering baby-sister in his hand, who stood in the wind to see the gentry of the parish go by. The sun shone brightly in at the tall church windows, while the shifting shadows of light clouds passed from urn to tablet on the walls. The place seemed scarcely like a church, resounding as it did with various and harsh voices, instead of the measured tones of the clergyman, and the music of the organ. Many a loud laugh came from the aisles, and noisy feet passed from pew to pew, as joking or consultation might be going forward. The vicar was there, too;—not so busy as some of his acquaintance, but ready to take his part, and to speak with any one who had any thing to say to him. His first words to Guthrie produced as strong an effect as any portion of any sermon that the cooper ever remembered to have heard from him.

“ So, you and Mr. Dixon may shake hands upon your appointment, after all. Mr. Barber is anxious to decline the office.”

The news seemed almost too good to be true; but it was true. Dixon presently came up to shake hands with Guthrie; and Mr. Barber was seen looking somewhat melancholy, and urging weak health and full occupation as pleas for not accepting the office his friends would have thrust upon him. When Guthrie heard and saw this, he was disposed to wish that he had been wise enough to withdraw, like Barber; for he had not strong nerves, and few men were more fully occupied; but it was too late; no other candidate came forward, and Guthrie and Dixon were appointed overseers by the magistrates.

Orger's re-appointment was not carried quite so easily. He was too active and determined an enemy to abuses to be any favourite with those who profited by abuses; and great efforts had been made to fill the church with his enemies to the exclusion of his friends. This was nearly accomplished by Mr. Gillingham, the great ribbon manufacturer of the parish, bringing down a crowd of his workmen, many of whom could hold up their hands and make a clamour, if they could not vote. Orger left but little scope for the popularity hunters of the parish. Under his administration, they could do little but thwart and abuse him; and they longed for a return of the good old days when the only overseers were tradesmen whose interests obliged them to be accommodating in their dispensation of the

parish funds. Orger had nothing to sell which might be neglected; he employed no workmen who might be tampered with; he had nothing to do but his parish duty, which he therefore discharged fearlessly and well, and thus became a very troublesome lion in the path of popularity hunters.

It was proposed this day that it was a very iniquitous thing to pay 70*l.* a year of parish money to Orger, when the office of overseer was actually in such request as to be canvassed for; but this would not do, and the applauses of Gillingham's men were silenced when Mr. Thorn, the magistrate, clearly proved that the parish expenditure had been lessened 1000*l.* for every 70*l.* that had been paid to Orger. As for the willingness of certain of their friends to be overseer, Mr. Thorn readily acknowledged it; but he considered it impossible that, in the case of tradesmen, they should be able to attend duly to their public and private duties;—to be present in their warehouses and shops, and collect the rates, make themselves acquainted with the characters and circumstances of paupers, so as to supply the vestry with full information, and superintend the labour of paupers employed by the parish. The vicar also thought that overseers must eat, drink, and sleep like other men; and that in proportion as the parish was obliged to them for their exertions, it should be careful not to wear them out in its service.—Lucas thought that if 70*l.* a year were a sum of the consequence represented, it might easily be

saved out of the dinners given on open vestry days. There was time now, he believed, to countermand the dinner ordered for this day at the Bull; and two more such abstinences during the year would furnish Orger's salary. He proposed that the beadle should be immediately despatched to the Bull to countermand the dinner. There was a general outcry against this motion, amidst which the voices of the porter-seller, the brewer's clerk, the butchers, and all the publicans, were loudest. The objections were transferred from Orger's salary to himself. Three times seven deadly sins against the respectability of the parish were charged upon him; but they contradicted one another so efficiently that no one else was put to the trouble of gainsaying them. Three or four parishioners were named to fill the office; but it so happened that the applause died away before they could be voted in, or that they pushed forward to stop the applause by declining the office; so that Orger came in at last, when all but his quiet friends were so thirsty that it would have been a cruel thing if no refreshment had been awaiting them at the Bull.

The news of his re-appointment reached Orger very soon after the matter was settled, and before the vestry broke up. He had not been present during any part of the proceedings, and had had enough to do at his home in the workhouse in preserving some order among the paupers who were beginning to rejoice, rather prematurely, in his reign being over; as they had been

assured, by some of Gillingham's men, that it would be before night. There was a witness and reporter-general in this parish from whom the news spread, before any body had left the church. The vicar had seen Pleasance Nudd sitting on a tomb-stone, and rocking herself as usual, as he entered the church-yard. As this poor creature seemed to be fond of frequenting places where children resorted, the vicar always supposed that she amused herself, as other idle people are fond of doing, with soothing quarrels, kissing bruised temples to make them well, picking up the fallen, and lending a hand to the weak or inexperienced jumper. The vicar always spoke kindly to Pleasance Nudd when he passed her. It seemed this day as if she did not manage the little creatures well, for so sharp a cry, so angry a hubbub, arose now and then among the little ones in the church-yard, that Waters, the beadle, was obliged to hurry out among them several times, and shake his staff in a very awful way, and at last put them all to flight,—some over the wall, and others through the gate. He would not leave so much as one crouching behind a stone, or hidden between two buttresses of the church wall. He hobbled round and round till nobody was left but Pleasance Nudd, rocking herself as before, while the thistles and rank grass waved in the wind about her feet.

She did not sit there long;—no wonder; for the cold March wind could not have been agreeable to one so thinly clothed as Pleasance Nudd

always was. When the tallest and strongest of the little ones was lifted by his companions to peep over the wall and find out if the beadle was in sight, Pleasance Nudd was no more to be seen than Waters. The vicar at that moment, however, recognised her pale smiling face, under her large shabby black bonnet with its faded pink lining,—that half-smiling face which every body in the parish knew,—peeping through the lowest lattice of the church window which was opposite to him. Mr. Thorn presently after saw it in another direction; and every one who happened to be in full view of a window, was aware of the same bonnet before the business was done. Nobody thought much about this, or cared at all, for Pleasance was known to be every where; and the only concern felt was that so much parish money should be spent on Pleasance Nudd's shoe-leather. If there was a funeral in the parish, Pleasance had always a peep into the hearse before the coffin was put in; and if a marriage, she was sure to be behind the clock to see it. She was at the tail of every procession; she overheard the gipsy telling the servant girls' fortunes in the grey morning; and too often startled the damsels by her silly laugh when the milkman paid broad compliments in the twilight. According to her custom of being everywhere, Pleasance was standing in the midst of the crossing opposite the workhouse, when Orger came forth from the gate,—restless, perhaps, to know how matters were going on in the church. There was nothing to sweep on

this crossing,—nothing but a sprinkling of March dust; but the moment Orger appeared, two or three paupers who were employed as scavengers began to sweep to right and left with absurd vehemence, having already worn down their new brooms almost to the poles. One, more impudent than the rest, actually tried what he could do with the other end of his broomstick, making a display of his mock diligence before the eyes of the assistant overseer. When asked what good he expected thus to effect, he replied that he must make a clean path for his worship away from the work-house, where his reign was now over.

“Then turn your broom,” said Pleasance, “and make a cleaner way for his worship to step back to his new reign.”

His new reign! what did she mean?

Only just that Mr. Orger was chosen again. But seeing him look as if he liked the intelligence, she added that nobody could tell how it happened, for it was plain that nobody wished it. There was plenty said, but nobody had a word to speak for Mr. Orger. There was Mr. Gillingham, who said Orger was an insolent puppy; and Mr. Benson complaining that 70*l.* a year was spent on the enemy of the people; and there was not a soul to contradict him. Then came Mr. Clutterbuck; he said . . . .

Orger presently tried to stop this method of reporting, but Pleasance's drawl proceeded, notwithstanding all he could say, the sweepers urging her on, till nothing remained but to walk

away, and leave the catalogue of his imputed crimes to be repeated to those to whom the subject was more welcome.

The lamentation on his re-appointment, which, thus begun, soon extended to the work-house, was pathetic. For another whole year, at least, the paupers must submit to be under the eye of one who knew all their circumstances, and kept a close watch over all their proceedings. All the devices which had been planned to be put in practice against a new officer must be laid aside for an entire year. Nothing better than work, food, clothing, and lodging was to be expected from the parish for twelve whole months. It was a severe disappointment.

Patty had been leaning for more than an hour over the half-door of her father's shop, when she hastily retreated, and began to make a prodigious clatter among the articles for sale on the counter.

"What is the matter?" inquired the weak voice of Mrs. Guthrie, who peered anxiously through the single-pane window by which the parlour communicated with the shop.

"Only Dixon has got the appointment; that's all. There he comes up the street, rubbing his hands,—I am sure for me to see;—for he glanced this way,—and all his friends about him, laughing and being noisy, to make every body look."

"O, dear! I hope there is some mistake. I wonder your father is not home. I have been expecting him this hour, I am sure. I wonder he is not home."

“ I don’t. I should not be surprised if he does not venture home till night.”

“ Well, but, Patty,—I wish you would step over to Dixon’s, and ask him whether my husband has lost the appointment. If he is not coming home till night, there is no use in keeping the table-cloth laid, you know ; and we may have our tea at half-past five, as usual. Just step over, Patty, will you ?”

Patty pettishly answered that her mother might as well go herself and ask such a question, as set her to do it. She would make no inquiry of Dixon this day, or to-morrow either.

“ Then I will go myself, as you say, Patty. I will just step and ask Dixon whether he has got the office.”

“ You shall do no such thing,” said Patty, running to guard the shop door from being opened on any such errand. “ O, here comes my father ! But he does not look so tired as I should have thought he would : and Wright and Morris are with him. How very odd, that any body should be with him if he has lost !”

“ Well, my dear, so you have lost the appointment ! Will you have your tea with us, or must you have some dinner ?” said Mrs. Guthrie.

“ I should say neither, if I had lost the appointment,” replied the husband. “ I am overseer, and I am very hungry.”

“ Well, that is just like Dixon,” cried Patty ; —“ to put a bold face upon it, and make us believe he had won, when he knew the truth

must come out in half an hour. I almost wish I had gone to ask him."

The facts being explained, the person to be next found fault with was Lucas. He had certainly been aware, the night before, that Barber would not stand, and might as well have given Guthrie the satisfaction of knowing it also.

How briskly did Patty now stir the fire, and emulate the kettle as it sang! While her mother was asking questions about the meeting, and mourning over a hole in the table-cloth in the same breath, Patty cooked the Welsh rabbit, and drew the ale, and made the tea, and suggested to Mrs. Guthrie that her father was probably so cold that it would be as well not to stand directly between him and the fire. The apprentice, meanwhile, was ordered, with an air of consequence, to attend to the shop, and have his wits about him, as the family must not be disturbed without particular occasion.

Guthrie's knife and fork wrought and rested by turns; by turns his wife wondered and yawned, and Patty sneered and smiled as her father prosed, till the apprentice put his head in with,

"Please, master, you're a wanting."

"Why, Jack, there is nothing in the shop that you cannot sell, if you do as I bade you," said Patty.

Jack accepted the compliment, but declared that it was no customer who wanted his master; and, to confirm his words, Pleasance Nudd sidled into the room. Before any one could ask her

business, she began to cry, and complain of the state of want she was in from no parish matters having been attended to this day. At the first mention of the parish, Mrs. Guthrie, who thought that deference was due on this day to whatever thereto appertained, vacated the cushioned arm-chair by the fire, and respectfully proposed to Pleasance to be seated. Patty instantly slipped into the chair, and frowned at her mother, while the new overseer turned half round, and leaned his cheek on his fore-finger in an attitude of patient attention, withdrawing altogether his motion that the matter should stand over for discussion in the morning.

“And I ha’ nobody to take care o’ me: and they say I’m not fit to take care o’ myself, and——”

“How will you take care of money, then?” asked Patty, interrupting the conclusion of the whimpering tale.

“Only try, Miss, whether the new overseer’s money won’t prosper as well with me as the old. I must go and lie at Dixon’s door if you don’t give me what will pay my lodging: and ——”

“Why don’t you go to Mr. Dixon, Pleasance?” asked Guthrie. “I dare say he knows you better than I do.”

“Ay, doesn’t he?” said Pleasance, relaxing into her half smile. “I warrant I know Dixon; and that is why I came to you. I’ll spend the night on his door step, but I’ll never ask anything of him.”

“ Well, I suppose—till to-morrow——” muttered Guthrie, putting his hand into his breeches pocket, and looking doubtfully at his daughter.

“ Yes, just a shilling till you can see Mr. Orger,” decided Patty. “ Good night, neighbour.”

Pleasance seemed much disposed to stay, but was compelled to give place to another applicant.

“ Michael Dean ?” repeated Guthrie, casting a glance at the Welsh rabbit whose consistency was spoiling under these interruptions. “ Michael Dean ? and who are you ?”

The wan gin-drinker pleaded that he was sent by Orger, to ask for relief for which he could not wait till morning.

“ Sent by Orger ; O ! that is enough,” replied Guthrie, applying once more to his pocket.

“ Stop,” said Patty to her father. Then turning to the pauper,—“ Why did not Mr. Orger relieve you himself ?”

“ That is what you had better ask him, Miss.”

“ But what did he say to you ? Did he bid you come to my father ?”

“ O, yes,” Dean replied : that is,—it came out on cross-examination,—he gave no relief himself, which was the same thing as bidding the applicant ask somebody else for it.

“ Then, as he did not name me,” observed Guthrie, “ perhaps you had better go to Mr. Dixon, the other overseer.”

“ I thought I would pay you the compliment

of coming to you, Sir, hearing Mr. Dixon say, when he was giving relief just now, that he would answer for it he should be twice as much applied to as you."

"What sort of relief was he giving? Whom was he giving it to?" were the next questions.

"O, money, as usual; and it was the poor creature, Pleasance Nudd, that was holding out her hand for it at the moment; but there were three more waiting outside: so I thought I would come on here, especially after what Dixon said in my hearing."

In the midst of the speculation about the pauper spinster, she showed herself from behind Dean, and humbly asked, as she wagged her head from side to side, whether Dixon's people were supposed to give good money in change. She had just taken from Dixon's own hands a sixpence in change, after buying her little loaf, and she did not know good money from bad, and so came to ask the overseer.

"That was the money he was paying her," observed Guthrie.

"And to make himself important, pretended that it was in relief! That is so like Dixon," cried Patty.

Dean immediately recollected that it was a sixpence that he had seen given to Pleasance; and that she had a loaf in her hand at the time; so that indeed he wondered to see relief given to her at all. Dean had his shilling, and he went away with Pleasance, deter-

mined, he said, to look sharp lest he should get doubtful money in change.

Guthrie, thoroughly wearied, was nodding over the fire, with a hand on each knee, when yet another personage was introduced,—a stout, rosy, elderly woman,—Agatha Stott,—who could no more wait till the morrow than her two predecessors. She pleaded that Abigail did not make the hungry David wait till the next day for his loaves of bread and lumps of figs; and, moreover, that Abraham made ready directly for the strangers that came to him under the tree at eventide.

Guthrie roused himself up to trace some resemblance between the person who spoke and King David; but she insisted upon even a superior claim to immediate assistance. She had not been wandering about, seeking worldly things, but labouring in her vocation, inviting her neighbours to hear the word; and the Scripture said of such as herself, that the labourer is worthy of his hire.

“Will not those who preach the word do something for you, Mrs. Agatha? Do not they think you worthy of your hire?”

“Just twopence a time for shaking the mats at the door; and what is that to find clothes and firing, and a little matter of meat, and a drop of beer?”

“How do you suppose other people do without meat and beer?”

“O, you know the Scripture says ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”

"I *have* heard the vicar say that," timidly interposed Mrs. Guthrie.

"And what do you suppose is meant by that?" asked Patty of Mrs. Agatha.

"About not having bread alone? That man must have something to take with it," pronounced the pauper.

"Ay, but nothing is said about woman," observed Patty. "Bread is enough for woman. If my father lets you have a loaf, that is as much as you can expect till Mr. Orger tells us what he knows about you."

Agatha could find at the moment no Scripture plea for half-a-crown in preference to a shilling, and was obliged to be content with the latter. As the door closed behind her, Guthrie rose to go to bed, as the safest precaution against giving away any more shillings this evening.

Poor John Waters meantime limped home, arriving, weary and exhausted, just when his evening scholars were assembling. His wife had but little to do in the way of preparing food for him; for the food consumed by this family was such as to require no cooking, after the noon meal of potatoes was eaten. Bread, unequally divided, the largest share being offered to the five or six children who grew the fastest, and the smallest being kept for the sickly parents, was their evening diet. The children had eaten theirs, and their mother was making room, in the dim apartment up stairs, for the forms, slates, and books which were to

be employed as soon as her husband came home. It had been a great misfortune to Waters that he could not continue to pay the rent of his former abode. Not only was the present one more confined, and the steep flight of stairs a great grievance to a person so lame as himself, but many of his best scholars had fallen off, and no new ones came to supply their place. The more his little school appeared to go down, the more difficult did it become to recover the payments due for his instructions; and it would now have been a matter of serious consideration whether the plan should be persevered in, if Mrs. Waters's approaching confinement had not decided that the school must at all events be then dismissed for a few weeks. Whether it could be re-assembled would be seen at the end of that time.

"Well, John, you are too tired to-night," said the wife, as John mounted each stair more slowly than the last. "We've been looking for you; but I have set the smallest boys their line of strokes, and the two Dukes are getting their letters off. Billy Duke forgets all he learnt last night, I am sorry to say. But it will give you time to eat a bit before you begin."

"Haven't you another bit of candle, Prissy?" asked John. "It seems to me the boys can scarcely see to make their strokes."

Not another inch of candle had Mrs. Waters besides the two ends that cast a glimmer over the two sides of the room. She sprinkled a little coal-dust on the low fire, to help out with

a blaze. The darting up of the flame, and the appearance of a goodly slice of bread, with a morsel of hard cheese, sent a kindly glow through the poor man's heart. Departing from the reserve which he usually maintained before his scholars, he declared that there was good news in the parish. Several little faces looked up suddenly, the kicking of heels ceased, the strenuous clutter and gabble of alphabet-learners were silenced, and all ears heard the whispered intelligence that Orger was still to be the servant of the vestry.

"There be some that think that no good news for us," replied the wife. "Under the old overseers, who let shoes be supplied to the work-house from your master's shop, you might have had good work again. Some take it very ill that Mr. Orger will have the shoes from another parish."

"It is my master's own fault," replied John. "He would have the preference, if he would sell shoes to the work-house as cheap as other people do. I should not wonder if he does, now that he is disappointed by Orger's coming in again. It is my opinion that he held off, in hopes of getting rid of either the office or the man.—I begin to think," he added, so as not to be overheard,—“I begin to think that better times may be coming to us, Prissy.”

Prissy sighed, and turned away. She had heard such hopes expressed too often ; and her husband's spirits were invariably depressed in the greater proportion when the disappointment

of such hopes arrived.—John had more to tell, however, and he would not understand what his wife meant by thus turning away. Before the bread and cheese were finished, she had become informed that the great gentleman, Mr. Gillingham, was their friend; and that he had promised that the parish should help to apprentice their eldest boy, Tom, who was growing up to such an age that it was time something was done with him.

“But I thought you did not like being helped in that way. I thought you would not put Tom upon taking such help,” remonstrated the wife.

“Why, Prissy, we must make a distinction,” replied John. “Neither you nor I would go to the pay-table, or send our children into the workhouse; but, our boy being growing up, and now idle for want of what we cannot do for him, it would be a sin not to take seasonable help in apprenticing him.”

“Well, perhaps: but he won’t need to go into the workhouse at all, I suppose.”

“I suppose not; and if at all, only just to come out again.”

“But I am not sure that I like that weaving-shop for a lad so young. The lads and lasses are apt to make one another unsteady, both in their work and their play.”

“But I believe Mr. Gillingham does not mean to take the boy himself. He does not seem to think of the business of weaving for Tom.”

This was good news, and the father turned with fresh spirit to his teaching. Tom was

schooled with peculiar strictness this night ; and all went on so briskly that the last line of pot-hooks was criticised, and on the point of being dismissed, when the second of the two candles gave its last flicker, and made it necessary for the scholars to grope their way down stairs, and leave the close, littered, dirtied room to be put in order, and swept, and aired, as soon as Mrs. Waters was enough rested to be able to prepare for bed.

“ Don’t you think we had better tell the children to-morrow not to come any more till the 1st of May ?” asked Waters.

“ Not to-morrow, I think. Let us get over Saturday night, if we can, that you may stand a chance of somebody paying at the end of the week. If we did but know how to get candles——”

“ I will try to manage that, if you really think you shall be able to keep the room for the school till next week. Cannot you get somebody to sweep it out for you ? Somebody that may help you if we should be hurried at the last ?”

Mrs. Waters did not know of any body who would not expect to be paid for such a service.

“ There is poor Pleasance Nudd. She has nothing to do ; and many is the shoe I have cobbled for her for nothing. Can’t you get her in to help you ?”

“ By no means, John. The children do not like Pleasance. I don’t know why ; but none of them take to her ; and they would give me more trouble with hanging about me than she

could do me good. And Pleasance has got wit enough to do nothing without pay.—No; Tom will lift these forms away, and I will do my best to keep about till after Saturday. If the girls were but old enough to stand at the wash-tub!”

The last red embers expired in darkness before the room was made what Mrs. Waters called tidy. She was obliged to send Tom to his rest in cold and darkness. She was afraid to ask whether also in hunger. Yet she lay down in a mood of thankfulness; for something of a prospect was opening before Tom. When the clouds begin to part, no one can tell how much sunshine may soon be shed; and the long-harassed mother could not help feeling to-night that one happy chance might be followed by another. She was too weary to sleep, but she had something pleasant to think about; and this was, therefore, the best night she had passed for a long while. It was comforting too to know, by the heavy breathing from all corners of the chamber, that every body else was asleep.

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## CHAPTER II.

## REPENTANCE.

It did not require many days to convince Guthrie that he was a great fool to be so eager to be made overseer. It would not always do to send applicants to Orger, as some came with complaints of Orger; and he was sometimes in a great dilemma on account of the contradictory orders of different magistrates, and their inconsistency with those of the vestry. His difficulties sharpened his wits, and gave him a spirit of enterprise that nearly matched his daughter's.

"Patty," said he, one day, "just have an eye to Joseph, and see what he makes of standing behind the counter."

"Well, to be sure, and what is Joseph to do there? I don't believe he can live half a day without the noise of the saw."

"And I'm sure I can't live another whole day in the hubbub of my own shop, if matters go on as they have done."

"How is Joseph to mend them?"

"He must do what he can with the people, and you must help him. Nobody will come and look for me in the sawpit; and you won't be so unkind as to send them, Patty."

Patty laughed at the idea of her father being driven into hiding, and recommended that her mother should not be told where he might be found. Joseph was called in, instructed to lay

aside his brown cap and look like a Christian shopkeeper, and apply to Miss Patty if he should be at a loss about the prices of things. His master then disappeared, and Patty sat down to her work, so that her profile might be seen through the single-pane window.—There she saw that Joseph knew how to handle a pail so as to show off its bright points to the greatest advantage; and, by quietly setting the window ajar, she overheard how eloquent he could be on the merits of a cooler, and that he managed a dry joke with a pauper very well. His attempts to place a slate pencil properly in his stiff fingers, so as to set down his account of sales, were very amusing.

“Patty, where is your father?” inquired Mrs. Guthrie, putting her head in at the door.

“Has nobody seen him go out?” was Patty’s answer.

“No; and this poor woman is much in want of him. Do but see how . . . . . but I must find your father. I will go myself, and look for him.”

“Let me go,” cried Patty, starting up and running into the yard. “I will soon bring you word whether he is out, if you will only look to see that nobody steals any thing.”

Patty wound her way among little stacks of barrel staves, and large heaps of chips, dropping a word or two to the hammerers as she passed, till she came within sight of the sawpit. Her apparition on the edge startled her father, who, however, had by this time had his arms suffi-

ciently exercised to doubt whether it was most grievous to earn bread by the sweat of his brow, or to give bread with equal toil and trouble of mind. Patty swung herself down upon a soft heap of sawdust beside him, and took the saw to see how she could manage it, telling her father, with a provoking laugh, that he was wanted at home;—her mother was bent on making him hear a new pauper story. Guthrie writhed under it, declared it was too bad, and wondered what was to be done.

“O, if you don’t choose to go, we must send Peter after Joseph to take care of things at home, and you and I must saw. Peter, you had better go, and keep my mother from looking for us.”

“You must put on a coat, then,” said Guthrie; “for you must be the one to go aloft, child.—What is the matter now, Peter? Somebody coming? I wish you had stayed within, Patty. You have brought somebody after me, you see.”

Mr. Gillingham appeared overhead,—all astonishment, of course, at finding the father and daughter contending for the saw in a sawpit.—He must beg them to come out, as he had business with the overseer. He had been so anxious to see Mr. Guthrie himself, that he had begged Mrs. Guthrie to allow him to walk over the premises, and find his man if he could.

When Guthrie had clambered out of the pit, and sent Patty about her business, with an air of severity to which she was little accustomed, he was obliged to sit down beside Mr. Gilling-

ham, on a piece of timber, and hear what the gentleman had to say.

"Guthrie, you have not paid for the flax the vestry ordered?"

"The flax? No, I believe not: that is . . ."

"The large quantity of flax, to employ the people in the workhouse. I hope you have not paid for it."

"Not at all. By no means. That is, I have had no money given me yet; and—"

"And you have advanced a good deal, I dare say. You will not repent that. Depend upon it, Guthrie, you will not repent being less mean and grudging than that vestry, that has no more feeling for the poor than if it was made up of so many heathens. Trust to me for your being repaid what your kind heart leads you to advance."

But what Guthrie meant to say, was, that it was not intended that he should have money in his hands. He was to give relief in the form of cheques on the assistant overseer.

"Ay, that is the way they curb and check,—and, I must say, insult overseers in these days, treating them as if they were not worthy to be trusted with money. But be so good as not to pay for the flax with one of your cheques, that is all."

"But what will the vestry say? I am under their orders, I believe."

"Yes. You must take their orders, as the act stands; but I do not see why you must obey them. There is no penalty, as far as I can make out. If they are a vestry, I am a magistrate;

and I desire you not to pay for that flax. I will never agree to overwork the unfortunate poor in any such way. As if it were not hardship enough to be a pauper !”

“ Then I am to say you would not let me pay the bills, sir, am I ? ”

“ Say any thing you please, but let no more flax be ordered and paid for while Orger is in power.—I hope you listen to nothing that fellow has to say.”

Guthrie was startled ; for the fact was, that Orger seemed as an oracle to him. Orger was his only hope. If he must not listen to him, he did not know what would become of him,—how else to steer his course among many differing parties.

“ Is not Orger thought to know a good deal about paupers ? ” he ventured to ask. “ He could always tell me about every person I mentioned to him. The vestry said he would help me.”

“ Why should you want ‘help more than Dixon ? Dixon prides himself upon having nothing to do with the inferior overseer.—O yes ; Orger knows a good deal about paupers ; but he is a hard-hearted fellow ; too precise to do business with, with any pleasure. He has served me very ill about a little matter in which I exerted myself in favour of my workmen. There is small encouragement to try to do good when one is thwarted at every turn. It was about the fall of wages among my weavers : did you hear of it ? ”

“I heard that you paid lower wages than any other ribbon master, just now.”

“Not exactly so—not exactly so. Perkins’s house followed directly; and Steel’s and Miller’s are doing the same. I merely gave my men the certificates they asked of me, that their wages are six shillings a week: and Orger tries to seduce them from me.”

“I did not know that Orger had any work to give. I thought—”

“O, it is to do parish work that he tempts them. A pretty way of taking care of parish funds, is not it, to seduce men from their regular employment, and throw them on the parish?”

“But perhaps it costs the parish less to employ these men for their maintenance, than to give them half a maintenance in return for their working for you. I believe it has been found so among the farmers. The allowance system—”

“My dear fellow, who ever heard of the allowance system in the ribbon manufacture?”

Guthrie could not see but that the case in question was a real true instance of the adoption of the allowance system. It made no difference as to the principle, that the labourers wove ribbons instead of ploughing fields, while their deficient wages were paid out of the rates.—Did any body take Orger at his word? he inquired.

“There will always be fools who will be taken in by such a man as Orger,” replied Gillingham. “There will always be people fond of change. Yes; two or three of my men have

gone over to Orger, and I should not wonder if more follow."

"And then you will have to raise your wages again, and matters will stand as they did before."

"No such thing. I mean to get my men back again, and make Orger pay his share of their maintenance too. He shall not escape me, or make the parish shirk its duties. He shall see that I am up to him. The poor shall be satisfied that I am their friend.—That puts me in mind," continued he, without explaining his further intentions against Orger and the parish; "that puts me in mind of the chief thing that I came to say. You must take another apprentice,—a fine lad that must be apprenticed by the parish. You will be well off to get such an one, and you must take him directly."

"Must I? But I do not want another apprentice."

"Very likely; no more do many of us; and yet we must take them as our share of the parish burdens. The farmers, you know, have every day to take on labourers that they do not want; and it is a rare thing to fall in with such a good lad as this Tom Waters. I had rather you should have him than Dixon; for the boy does not come out of the Workhouse; his parents are not paupers; and Tom will be a good bargain for a quiet peaceable man like you. How soon can you make room for him?"

"Why should not Dixon take him, or somebody else who wants such a lad? He would

suit very well at Dixon's. Dixon's is a fine business, they say."

"Very; and likely to be more so; and Dixon must take his share. But another lad will do as well for him. You will be worse off if you do not take Tom Waters."

Guthrie was still full of objections; objections with which Mr. Gillingham had so little concern, that it would have been better to say at once that he did not choose to take another apprentice. This would have brought him more quickly to the point which was reached at last.

"Well, Guthrie, if you prefer paying the fine to taking the lad, you may do as you please; but you are liable to have another put upon you next week; and if you refuse him, another the week after. It would cost you rather more to pay thus £10 a week than to take apprentices as your neighbours have to do."

Guthrie could only fold his arms, and ask for a little time to make up his mind. He must think it very hard that his office of overseer did not exempt him from such a burden. He was sure parish matters imposed upon him trouble and uneasiness enough, beyond what was suffered by other people.

"That will hardly go down. You had better say little about that," observed Gillingham, significantly.

"I am sure, sir, I do not know what you mean," replied Guthrie. "Have not I been teased every hour in the day? Have I ever been sure

of a meal in peace, since I came into office? Does not every body beset me, from the highest to the lowest, till I can hardly say I have a thought of my own?"

"True, no doubt; but you put yourself in the way of all this. You were eager to be overseer, and it is clear enough to everybody that there must be some compensation for all you complain of; and the more reason there is for complaint, the greater must be the compensation. Any half wit—Pleasance Nudd herself—might see this."

While Guthrie turned over in his sluggish mind the reasons which could have induced him to stand for his office, and what compensation could possibly arise, Joseph appeared at a distance, beckoning as he ran. His master was particularly wanted in the shop. Lady Mitchelson in her carriage was at the door, with a message from Sir Edward about bottling some wine. The lady must see Mr. Guthrie himself. Mr. Gillingham bade good morning and went away by the yard-gate, while Guthrie hastened to attend Lady Mitchelson.

Lady Mitchelson had alighted on seeing some tiny casks and pails,—the handy-work of the apprentice,—put up for sale as children's toys. Her little boy was with her, and he was to take his choice of what he would carry home for his sister's baby-house. Patty was playing the agreeable with all her skill; and her father smoothed his troubled brow when he saw with what success she was propitiating his customers.

He forgot half his cares while the lady presented to him the vision of a few hours' quiet employment in wine-drawing in Sir Edward's dark cellars, where no paupers might enter. His peace was soon disturbed by Lady Mitchelson's exclamation,

“ Good heavens! what does that woman want? Do not let her come in here. O, Mr. Guthrie, keep her out!”

It was a stout virago, who had come several times when Mr. Guthrie was declared to be absent, and now revenged herself for not being properly attended to, by obtruding her presence when she knew the overseer to be occupied with a customer of the first class. Patty slipped round and fastened the half door, and Lady Mitchelson's footman attempted to turn the woman away; but she struggled and shouted till Guthrie was nearly as much shaken as his customer.

“ Your hard heart shall be wrung, depend upon it,” cried the railer. “ I'll have you up to tremble before your betters! The whole parish shall know how you keep the poor out of their right, you hard-hearted ——.”

The little boy began to cry; and his mamma, with a heated face, began to protest that it would be impossible to come to Mr. Guthrie's shop if such scenes as these were to be encountered.

“ Certainly, Madam,” replied Patty: “ but such a thing is only once and away,—only just on my father's entering on his office. I assure

you it is as new to us as to your ladyship. The carriage shall go round to our back gate, behind the corner, if you will have the goodness just to step through the passage. I have sent for the constable; but your ladyship and the little gentleman can get in quite quietly at the back gate. Shall I put up the little washing-tub, as well as the pail, for the young gentleman?"

"O, no, neither of them to-day. Pray order them to make haste with the carriage. Edward, my dear, keep close to me. Is the carriage gone round?"

When the carriage-door was safely closed, the lady sent to recall Mr. Guthrie, who again stood uncovered to receive her commands.

"Mr. Guthrie, I am very sorry to hear anything about your being hard-hearted to the poor. I do not like to hear of any body being hard-hearted; and no more does Sir Edward, I assure you. I hope I shall never hear such a thing of you again, Mr. Guthrie. Good morning."

Mr. Guthrie was so utterly confounded that the carriage moved on before he could begin to justify himself. He began to run after it, but the horses quickened their pace when the corner was turned, and nothing was to be done but to go back again.

Patty was gloomily re-arranging the toys she had just exhibited. She did not believe Lady Mitchelson would ever come to the shop again. When she heard of the parting lecture, she wished Lady Mitchelson would be overseer her-

self for a twelvemonth. She had nothing else to do; and she might then find what it was to be called hard-hearted, when the great fault was the being too easily wrought upon.

The threat of the constable had availed to make the pauper shift the scene of action from the overseer's door to some distance down the street. She was creeping along by the wall, in crab-like fashion, shaking her fist in the direction of Guthrie's house, and appealing to the four little boys and three little girls who looked on in awe, whether she was not kept out of her right by the cruel cooper whose delight it was to grind the poor. When she came to a glass-door, with gold letters on the panes, shown off against a scarlet curtain which hung within, the door opened behind her, she disappeared, and the children were left to peep in vain for a corner through which they might see whether she was likely to come out again, and then to turn to their old sport of powdering one another with dust.

"Father," said Patty, on seeing her father slowly cross his knife and fork at the end of dinner,—“I have been thinking, what became of poor widow Beale's baby when she died?”

“Ask Orger, child. Orger knows all about those things.”

“Ask Orger! I am sure if every body asks Orger as many questions as we do, he need have nothing to do but to answer them. We can do nothing now-a-days, and know nothing without asking Orger. I am sure you could”

recollect if you chose. Was not the child put out to nurse somewhere?"

"Yes; I believe it was."

"Where?—Now, don't shake your head; for, if an overseer does not know where a parish child is put out to nurse, who should? It was in the country, I suppose?"

"Yes; somewhere near Owlshurst, I fancy."

"And is not Owlshurst near the parish farm?"

"Not above three miles from it, they say."

"Well, do not you mean to go and look after the parish affairs there? I think you ought."

"Dixon will take that part of the duty. He has business about his flour with the miller at Owlshurst, who has connexion with the parish farm; so that concern naturally belongs to Dixon."

"O, yes, to be sure. Every part of the duty that has any thing pleasant in it, falls to Dixon. But, do you know, I would not trust that poor baby to Dixon. I think you ought to see after the child yourself; and it would be a pleasant excursion for you, father. You do not look well—Does he, mother?"

Mrs. Guthrie, on being awakened to make the scrutiny, declared that her husband did not look well.

"That may be; but I know nothing about farming, and nothing about babies," said he.

"You will soon learn as much about farming as Dixon knows, father; and I will go with

you to see the child. Poor little thing ! I have been thinking about it all day."

"Why, Patty, you would not think of going all that way for such a reason as that!"

"Indeed, I should not mind it at all; and besides, my aunt and cousins want me to go and spend one of the Easter days with them; and their place is close by."

"Ten miles from Owlshurst."

"Ah! that will just do. If we take a gig to-morrow morning, we can see the child first; and then you can go on to the farm, and take me up as you come back. If the horse has a good feed, we can get on to my aunt's by a little after dark, and sleep there; and get home late the next night, or early the morning after. It will do you a world of good!"

Guthrie muttered that he could hear of no frolics,—he had no money to spare for journeys while his best customers were leaving him.

"Certainly. Who ever thought of your doing parish business at your own expense? You must have a gig to go and see that the child is properly taken care of; and there is no harm in my having a seat in it, I suppose?"

Several considerations occurred in support of Patty's scheme; the principal of which was that time would be gained for deliberation about taking another apprentice. The matter ended in Joseph being sent to the Bull to bespeak a gig for eight o'clock the next morning. By that time, Patty's best dress was packed up,—

the dress in which her cousin William had thought at Christmas that she looked downright pretty. The morning was bright, and Guthrie smiled, and Patty nodded up at her mother's window, as Joseph touched his cap, the whip cracked, and the vehicle rolled away.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### EVENING ENGAGEMENTS.

PATTY might not have been so eager about the fate of the child at nurse, if she had known what she must lose by accompanying her father. An invitation arrived, two hours after she was gone, to a hop at the Dixons, the next evening. There were apologies for the shortness of the invitation, which arose from Mr. Dixon having but just become aware that the young people from Mr. Gillingham's were more at liberty at the beginning of the week than at the end; and if the party should be deferred to the beginning of the next week, Mr. Dixon's cousin, who played the fiddle very well, would be gone; and the dancers must be content with Miss Dixon's spinet. Mrs. Guthrie duly expressed her sorrow that Patty would probably not be at home in time; but she then began to doubt whether it would not have been too great

a condescension for the cooper's only daughter to have joined with the young people from the weaving shops. She would not have Patty matched, even in the dance, with some lads she would probably meet, while there was a cousin William who seemed inclined to admire her.

Patty would, however, have had one good partner. Orger was there ; and Orger considered it a point of etiquette to dance with the daughters of the two overseers. While leading out Miss Dixon, he inquired whether Miss Guthrie might not be expected. Miss Dixon was excessively sorry that Miss Guthrie was out of town ; she was such a dear, lively creature ! Did not Mr. Orger think so ? Of course, the gentleman assented ; and Miss Dixon began inwardly to rejoice that it was raining so fast that there was every probability of her rival's being detained in the country till the next day.

No wonder Mr. Orger praised the arrangements, and admired the scene ! This hop was a most animated affair. The bread-room was the place of dancing,—chosen, not only because it was the largest in the house, but because it was never carpeted, and the trouble of taking up carpets was spared. The tiers of shelves were emptied of loaves, which were for the occasion piled up in the shop ; and eleven lamps, inserted in globes of coloured paper, hung at wide intervals along the highest shelf. On the lower, were china pots of artificial flowers. At each end were nailed up tin sockets for three candles each, and branches of ever-

green were crossed above and below. To save room, the fiddler's chair was mounted on the round table in the corner which was necessary to receive the tea-cups and lemonade-mugs which Molly neglected to carry away directly. Nobody had remembered to close the aperture by which the loaves were handed into this room from the baking-house ; but this was rather an advantage than not. The couples who stood at the bottom of the country-dance could amuse themselves with the picturesque spectacle of the journeymen kneading at their boards, and occasionally shining in the light of their ovens as they fed the fires.

The first circumstance that disturbed the tranquillity of the proceedings was the desire of two of the belles to introduce something less common than country-dances. Could not a quadrille be got up? The Dixons all shook their heads ; but Charlotte Lucas wished above every thing to see a quadrille danced, and she volunteered her services to find out who danced quadrilles. The fiddler, however, could not play quadrilles, and there was an end of the matter.

“ Well ! and no damage,” cried Alice Flint to her next neighbour. “ It serves them right for wanting to show off without thinking of other people's pleasure.”

“ Well ; so it does,” admitted Miss Barbara Watson. “ But I should have liked to see what French dancing is. Here comes Solomon Stott. I dare say he is going to ask you to dance.”

"No; it is more likely you, Miss Barbara. Your dancing is so superior to mine!"

"I never thought that, I'm sure; for I've heard others say that you danced very well. But there is Margaret Owen going to dance with Mr. Orger; and she is the best dancer of all. She is the only one here, they say, that can cut a double caper."

Miss Alice was more vexed at not being thought the best dancer than pleased at being esteemed a very good one. She was about to turn away from Barbara, when she thought she might as well wait to see whether Solomon Stott meant to ask either of them. Solomon, a prodigiously tall and extremely thin youth, with a little childish face rising out of his stiff yellow cravat, approached with,

"Do you like dancing, Miss Alice?"

"Middling, sir."

A pause; and then,

"Sir."

"What is that tune they are setting up now?"

"The White Cockade, sir." And Alice touched Barbara's elbow and frowned reproof. Barbara's ringlets were dancing in admirable time.

"You are fond of dancing, Miss Barbara," Solomon was very safe in observing.

"Very indeed, sir."

"Then may I——"—Solomon's hand was being extended, but Barbara saw a friend

approaching whom she somehow knew to be about to ask her.—Starting up, she said,

“No, I am engaged, but Alice is not. You had better dance with her.”

There was no retreat for Solomon. He handed the scowling belle to the dance which had already begun. To dance in this way was better than sitting out; but to think that young Stott had preferred Barbara!

Miss Alice was not to be pleased with her station. She peeped between two dear friends who seemed glued together by her approach. She pushed her way in somewhere else, and was pushed out again. Her partner pompously pointed to the bottom, as the proper place for those who came late to the set: but this was the most provoking of all. Something must be done, however; for her partner evidently began to quiz her efforts, and to enjoy the “be quiet, will you, Miss Alice?” with which she was greeted from one and another.

“Will you be quiet and take your place below, Miss Alice?” inquired Charlotte Lucas among the rest.

“You will please to stand lower, Miss Lucas,” replied Alice. “You are but a rat-catcher’s daughter.”

“If I am,”—Charlotte began angrily to say; but a sly look from Solomon restored her good humour. She let Alice stand above her, showing no other sign of displeasure than walking the figure when she had to change sides with Alice. This forbearance did not improve the

discontented lady's mood. When she met Barbara in the dance, she said,

"I wish, Miss Barbara, you would learn a little better manners."

"Well, what now?"

"To think of your taking up young Stott so short about dancing!"

"O, I thought you would like to have a partner; and you would not have been dancing now, if I had not done as I did."

"I am not speaking about my dancing. He asked me properly,—just as he meant all along. But he no more meant to ask you—"

"O, Mr. Stott," said Barbara, "I'm so sorry if I thought you were going to ask me to dance when you were not!"

Mr. Stott not only was about to ask her before, but must now entreat her hand for the two next dances. But Barbara was engaged so deep that Solomon had no chance. He could only watch his opportunity to supply her with negus, and sigh when he saw her afterwards led out by Mr. Orger.

"I hope you find the air of the hill continue to agree with you?" said Orger to her. "That is a fine situation for an infirmary. I could almost be glad to be just ill enough to go in, for the sake of—"

"O, don't say that, Mr. Orger! The view is very beautiful from our window, as we sit at tea; and the air, they say, very fine. But what signify those things to the poor creatures that lie groaning or tossing in their beds;—or, at

best, asleep? The best thing about the fine air is, that it helps them sooner out again."

"But there are other tempting things, besides the air and the prospect. I never saw any other place so clean and so quiet. It really seems, when one walks through the wards, as if the patients must get well, under such good nursing, and under your mother's superintendence. I hope you let them have the pleasure of seeing your bright face sometimes? Whenever I go—"

"I wonder then," interrupted Barbara, "what you could be about to make Bexley take his child away. My mother was very angry with you, I can tell you."

Orger was all astonishment. Who was Bexley, and what was the case of his child? He knew nothing about them.—Bexley's little girl had a lame knee which had been long under treatment at the infirmary. She was beginning to improve; but her father had this day removed her, pleading orders from the assistant overseer. It was very grievous; for the house surgeon considered it certain that the child would relapse at home; and every body at the infirmary could not help thinking the assistant overseer very cruel. Orger could only suppose that Bexley meant to apply for relief for this child the next morning; and he promised to inquire into the matter, and unite his efforts with Barbara's to get the child back into its quiet birth in the infirmary.

How was the institution supplied with nurses? he wanted to know. It did not often happen

that pauper women were fit for such an office ; but there were occasionally quiet and respectable persons on his list who might be thus provided with employment.

“ Have you any now ? ” asked Barbara. “ We are very busy to-day at the infirmary, on account of the accident in the factory. I wanted not to come to-night ; but my mother would not hear of my staying away. I am pretty sure either she or I shall have to sit up all night.— Yes ; I should think my mother will be pleased to have another nurse or two for a while. Have you any now ? ”

“ I shall be better able to tell after to-morrow’s vestry. The only one I can think of now is Pleasance Nudd. She might do for some light cases. She is not over-wise ; but she can do what she is bid ; and nobody can complain that she is not quiet.”

“ But she is ill herself. You have no idea how strong the nurses ought to be. Pleasance Nudd always looks weakly ; and now she is ill.”

“ I was not aware of that. I saw her this morning, talking at Lucas’s door. She looked just the same as usual.”

“ I saw her at the infirmary at ten this morning. She came to ask for a blister, she was so ill.”

“ Did they give her one ? ”

“ O yes, certainly ; and they told her to be sure to keep within doors, because she complained so much of her breathing : but she is a restless creature, and I dare say she cannot help

moving about. I will ask Charlotte Lucas what she was doing there, shall I?"

Pleasance had been to inquire after Mrs. Lucas, who had been ill for nearly a week. This was all that Charlotte would tell. She neither declared nor denied that Pleasance was ill, but suddenly perceived that supper must be ready, as every body was leaving the dance before it was finished, and there was a rumour buzzed about of a transparency. Nothing could be thought of now but pushing a way to the solidities of the supper table, and to the transparency which surmounted them. Orger was loudly called upon by Mr. Dixon to take the lead in conducting his partner to the region of knives and forks.

A group of gazers had rushed from the bake-house, the kitchen,—and, it appeared, a few from the street, to see the company pass to supper. The cook and the shop-girl found space to admire Mr. Orger; and the journeymen looked after Miss Barbara. About midway, Orger felt himself pulled by the sleeve, and looking round, was surprised to see poor pale John Waters in a scene like this. John had supposed he would be here, and had come in to tell him of something that was going on in which he thought the assistant overseer would be interested. Orger promised to join him as soon as he should have deposited Miss Barbara under proper care.

"Perhaps you will like to know, sir, what is doing among some old friends of yours, down

yonder," said Waters, when Orger joined him on the outside.

"No harm, I hope? What sort of old friends? The vestry or the paupers?"

"The one to-night, sir, and the other to-morrow. The one making ready for the other, I fancy," said Waters, with the scanty smile which was the utmost extent of his mirth.

He then explained, that his school being necessarily dismissed till after his wife's confinement, neither his boy Tom nor he had employment in the evenings. When he had put all the little ones to bed, he had looked round for Tom, in order to give him a quiet lesson in figures, being anxious to prepare the lad for whatever might be expected of him at Mr. Guthrie's, if he should be received there as an apprentice. Tom was not to be found on the stairs, or looking into the street from the entrance, as he was somewhat too fond of doing. A neighbour gave information of the lad having been spoken to by a silly-looking, middle-aged woman, and of his having sauntered with her down the street, as far as an alley which was pointed out. Waters presently found that Michael Dean, the gin-drinker, lived in this alley; and having little doubt that Tom was there, he had made bold to lift the latch, and look in. Dean was lying in one corner, apparently drunk. Tom was fast asleep, with his head on the table; Pleasance was up and awake, doing something with a mug at the cupboard, but she came forward, smiling, into the middle of the room, as soon as Waters put

his head in. Waters roused the boy, led him away, and gave him a long sum to do by his mother's bedside; but he suspected from Tom's drowsiness that something had been given him to drink; and he returned to the alley to see what was going forward. One after another of the well-known parish dependants dropped in; and Waters came now to know if Mr. Orger would like to see what they were about.—The beadle and assistant overseer were soon on their way.

Pleasance had told the agreeable news to the party at Dean's, that the one overseer was twenty miles off, and the other giving a feast at which the assistant overseer was dancing; so that the foes of the company were all safely disposed of for the night. It was no infrequent practice for the paupers of the parish to meet in by-places to consult about ways and means: but they could seldom do it in such security as now. The usual precaution of locking the door had been taken; but nobody was placed outside to watch the approach of strangers. Waters was at his wits' end because there was no getting in; but his companion presently devised a way of ascertaining what was going on. No one was less disposed to play the spy than Orger. He was so scrupulous as to turn away his head when he passed the windows of humble houses,—windows too humble to have shutters or blinds. He felt uneasy when, by any chance, he saw a family collected in the firelight, or was an involuntary witness of any whipping or scolding of little boys who would not go to bed, or of the

mother's caresses of her infant while preparing it for its rest. But he considered as fair subjects for observation, the comfortably housed who might close their shutters, and yet took their dessert in that which is called the dark hour, when there is gloom enough without to hide the observer, and light enough within to display the observed: and, yet more, the indigent, who, having put themselves under his care, with the profession of making him the guardian of their affairs, could properly have nothing of their daily proceedings to conceal from him. He made no scruple, therefore, of attacking an opaque portion of the window of Dean's house. He gently pulled out the rags with which the broken pane had been stuffed, lifted up with one finger the curtain which hung within, and saw what every body was doing in the apartment.

The scent of gin issued powerfully. Several glasses were on the table, and most of the persons present took a sip from time to time. Pleasance Nudd was the busiest. She had not the credit of being a scribe. Not even the school-master knew that she could handle a pen; yet she was now in the very act. Slowly, carefully, she made a stroke or two on a piece of paper whose peculiar appearance was well known to Orger. She examined her work, held it up and re-examined it, and then handed it to Dean for approbation; but Dean was not sober enough to fix his eyes steadily upon it. Several others did, however, and expressed their applause in various ways. The most emphatic approbation

was that of Bexley, the tattered, ferocious-looking father of the little lame girl of whom Barbara had spoken. Bexley put before Pleasance just such another piece of paper, to undergo the same process,—another of the overseer's cheques upon Orger,—to have an alteration made in the specified amount. Pleasance smiled at him, as usual; but there was something in the disposition of the figures which probably rendered an alteration too hazardous; for she declined operating upon this cheque.—Bexley treated her with an oath and an assurance that she was very cross; at which she smiled again, and spirted ink over his face, so as to make everybody laugh but himself. This laugh disclosed to Orger, to his horror, that a child was present. He was certain that he heard a childish voice amidst the hoarse laughter; and he presently saw that Bexley's little girl was laid on a dirty bed in a far corner of the room.

“Ah! your pa looks funny, my pretty dear, does not he?” said Nudd approaching the child. “He looks as if he could cut off your leg as well as the doctors, I think. Would you like to go back and have your leg cut off, my dear?”

“I should not like to have my leg cut off; but I should like to go back and see Mrs. Watson,” declared the little girl, beginning to cry.

“Now, don't you cry; look here!” producing and unrolling a blister. “This is to put on children's mouths when they cry.”

“Is it?” said the poor girl, shifting herself

back as far as possible from Pleasance. There was something in this woman's smile that was peculiarly disagreeable to children. She obtruded it more upon the little girl, whispering and approaching nearer and nearer the while, till she seemed to have inspired absolute horror. With something very like a scream, the child called out——

“ O, father, father, come to me ! ”

“ Halloo, mistress, what are you after ? ” cried Bexley, looking fiercely at Pleasance. “ I won't have the child meddled with.”

“ Dear me ! how timoursome those doctors have made her ! ” meekly observed Pleasance. “ One cannot speak to the poor little thing.”

“ What do you hold my coat for, child ! Nobody is going to eat you,” said Bexley. “ Well, if you shake in that manner——”

And he lifted her up, and carried her to the table, on which he placed her, standing beside her, while Pleasance tried to administer a drop of gin to the patient, who evidently dared not refuse it.

Mrs. Stott, and two men whose forlorn appearance formed a strange contrast with her own, were meanwhile engaged in complaint of the adverse times which had overtaken them. Poor men's friends were very rare in these days. Gillingham was the only one in this parish who could be depended upon for lasting help, since the few who were in the vestry had but little power.

“ But where's the vestry that can hurt us,

when we have such a man as Gillingham?" asked one. "He said with his own lips to me that he would give us twenty summonses a-day to break Orger's spirit; and it is my belief he would."

"I wish we could muster twenty to try," observed another, "I would be one."

There seemed to be some difficulty in making up the requisite number, though every person present could mention one or two who might be depended upon to join in breaking Orger's spirit. It was agreed that it would be necessary to use some exertion to recruit their numbers, which had fallen off sadly since Orger's reign began. One would have thought that the fewer they were, the better cheer they would have had; but this grudging vestry kept them out of the full amount of relief as well as the full complement of numbers.

"They keep back our hire," exclaimed Mrs. Stott, who had just been, as she said, keeping the door of the tabernacle. "They keep back the half of the land that is ours by right. By God, we'll have it!"

"Somebody said Orger would always be in the way," simply observed Pleasance.

"No longer than he is backed," declared Bexley. "Take away his backers, and where is he?"

"Dear me! and how will you take them away?"

"Frighten them," said one.

"Tire them out," advised another. "You

will never manage to frighten the parson, or such a man as Thorn. As for Guthrie, he wants no frightening; and Dixon is, in a manner, of our side. But any man may be tired out."

"Not Thorn. Not a man that supposes the vestry knows best, and accordingly hears nothing we have to say. There is no plan like getting more and more to join us, till we have our right, as Gillingham says."

"Is that what made Gillingham take up little Tom Waters?" asked one.

"'Tis a thousand pities that boy could not stay for another glass or two," Pleasance observed. "He is such a likely lad!"

"You are the woman for getting hold of likely lads and lasses," observed one. "You will have the credit of bringing the parish into a lawsuit about that settlement. Who but you put it into the girl's head to make a claim? I should as soon have thought of Dixon's daughter finding out where she was born, and becoming one of us."

"Who is this? What girl are they talking of?" the beadle was asked by his companion. Waters did not know.

"Her mother *was* very ill," observed Pleasance. "How could she mind her weaving and all, when her mother was so ill?"

"She can go to a dance though," whispered Orger. "It is Charlotte Lucas they are talking about. She has a claim somewhere far off; and I dare say these people have been putting her

in mind of it. Girls cannot nurse their mothers in these days without being paid for it."

"I suppose they will have the girl up before the vestry," observed Mrs. Stott; "and what will her father say then?"

"They dare not," Pleasance declared, with a look which was meant to be sly. The first that calls her up, whatever overseer he be, will find what she can do against him."

"O, you have been teaching Charlotte how to use the oath, have you, Mrs. Nudd? 'Tis a fine power that; and it needs no better a wit than yours to use it.—Orger pretends to be very brave about that sort of thing; and Dixon would win any woman away from hurting him. Guthrie's her man. If she drops the least hint to him, he'll get her all she asks for; and then she may get something for us too. Can't you put her up to it, mistress?"

"What would you have?"

"Have Orger sent off to the parish farm, in the first place. The others will manage our business very well. The folks in the work-house are tired enough of having a hawk's eye always over them. For all they can do, Orger will go on living within the walls; and one time he is complaining of Dixon's sending in the bread hot and new, and will not let it be touched till it is a day old: at another time what does he do but go about and see the crusts picked up that the women throw about when they have had enough?"

"And I heard Dixon laughing about the

meanness of grudging candles. Orger took down three that were blowing and flaring in the windows; and the Dixons say it is all because their sister furnishes the candles, that there is any stint in the use of them. One would like to see him marched off to the farm."

"Ay; and before all the rummaging they talk of on account of the cholera. It will be a confounded plague to have him peeping and prying about every house in the parish."

"One must have no gin under our noses then, in this wise," observed Mrs. Stott; "and so I think we should have a little more while we can get it. Who will step for another drop?"

"What will you give me for going?" asked Pleasance.

"Give you! Why, a sup for your own 'share is enough, to be sure. I dare say you have more gin money about you than any of us. How many overseers and overseers' wives have you seen to-day, Mrs. Pleasance?"

"There is Dixon's cheque to begin with,—that's one," said Bexley. "Where did you last see Orger, my woman?"

"Before Gillingham's table, when he had to count down half-a-crown to her this morning," added Mrs. Stott. "It is a pity Guthrie is out of town."

"His wife is not," said Pleasance.

"O, ho! You got another half-crown from her, did you? That was well done, for Guthrie won't like to tell that to the vestry, and it will

go down in the book as flax or brooms, you may depend upon it. But we never hear Thorn's name from you, Mrs. Nudd."

"Thorn is a bad man," Pleasance drawled out. "He makes a fool of one."

"He gives you no credit, like other people, for being half a fool, and so you feel like a whole one. We are all fools alike, as long as we can't get a single summons out of him. If we knew how to join hand-in-hand as other parishes do, we should not be so easily shamed by a plain man like him. We might do it now before the cholera times come."

"If he links with the parson, it is only idle in us not to link with one another," Mrs. Stott declared. "The vicar preaches a false, cold word; and so I am the one to take up my speech against him. If we all quarrel with the vestry to-morrow, Thorn must give us summonses; and if he does not, we can inform against the vicar before Gillingham. I should like to see him preach, next Sunday, after being informed against for cruelty."

"He is a good gentleman to me," said the little girl on the table, with much effort, and rising tears.

"What do you know about it, child?" asked her father. "How should you understand what your betters are talking about?"

"The gentleman brought me a doll, I'm sure," said the child, speaking rapidly; "and he brought a little lady to come and read a story to me; and he never said a hard thing to me

in all the times he came past my bed. Father, don't let them hurt him."

"Hold your tongue, child. Who should hurt him?"

"If any body tells him any thing about hurting him,"—whispered Pleasance, approaching the child as before. The child clung as before to her father's coat.

"Go your ways, Mrs. Nudd, and get some more gin, will you? and don't be frightening the child," said Bexley, who would have laid his little daughter on the bed but for two impediments. Dean was lying half on, half off it, and the girl would not disengage her arm from her father's neck while Pleasance was in the room.

Orger desired the beadle to follow close at his heels, and effect an entrance when Pleasance came out, mug in hand, on her way to the gin-shop. Mrs. Stott shivered, and observed it was a cold night; and she answered for it, by the draught from the window, that Dean had broken it in a drunken fit, and it would be a twelve-month before he would take the trouble to stuff it up. It was settled, however, that the cholera inquisitors must get it mended; and in the meanwhile, Dean was the person to pay for the gin which must keep out the cold. Tobacco was next voted essential, and Dean was turned over on one side without being roused, and the needful abstracted from his pocket, together with sixpence for Mrs. Nudd, for going the errands.

“ Now for it,” whispered Orger, as the sound of unlocking the door was heard. He slipped in behind her while Waters remained outside, so that she stood between them.

“ Well, dear me! Mr. Orger, if you be not here instead of dancing at Mr. Dixon’s, where I was now going to look for you.”

“ Mr. Dixon gave you a cheque. Let me see it. You should not have to go abroad at night for your money, while your chest is so bad.” Pleasance began to cough very actively, while Orger persisted in walking into the room she had left, instead of another which she pointed out.

“ Don’t let me disturb you,” said Orger to the company, “ I can pay this poor woman her money without troubling you long.”

Still coughing and breathing hard, Pleasance presented the cheque. Orger shook his head over it, tried the pen and ink which stood on the table, and, finally declaring that these were not Dixon’s figures, called in the beadle.

The company immediately began to compassionate Pleasance for her weakness of intellect. It was all very well that she should be taken care of by the overseers, but it was folly to trust such an one with cheques. She was always scribbling and scrawling with every pen she could lay hold of; and it was not likely that she would leave cheques alone. The assistant overseer allowed this; and as Pleasance seemed to be growing more foolish every moment, he ordered the beadle to see whether she had any

money about her which might serve her until her case could be laid before the vestry the next day. A comfortable fund was produced from her pocket, besides the gin and tobacco-money which lay in her sleeve. "Poor thing! how could it be expected of her to reckon money like other people?" the company asked.

"Very true," replied Orger. "She is quite a subject for relief in kind. I shall advise the vestry to provide Mrs. Nudd with food and clothing as she wants them, instead of mocking her with money which she shows herself unable to use. Take her home, Waters, and see that she has all she wants. I will deliver over this money to the vestry to-morrow, and see what can be done for her."

Mrs. Stott thought she saw a vast difference in Pleasance at different times. Some days she was much like other people, while to-night she was scarce better than an idiot. The rest of the company were full of admiration of Mr. Orger's kindness in coming so late to see after poor Mrs. Nudd. This was not the only reason of his entering, Mr. Orger said. He came to take back that poor little girl to the infirmary. There had been some mistake about what he had said, he found; and he could not rest without setting the matter right. He was far from having meant to recommend that the child should be yet removed from under the surgeon's care; and he had liberty, late as the hour was, to get her into her place again this night. He would go directly with Bexley.—But Bexley could not go to-night.

“ Then I will carry her myself.”

“ But she does not like the infirmary, sir. The very name of it strikes her all aback. She will never get well there.”

“ I am told she will. She looks now as if she would like to go. My dear, will you go to Mrs. Watson again, or stay here ? ”

“ O, go to Mrs. Watson and Miss Barbara. But they will not cut off my leg, will they ? ”

Orger could only say that he had never heard anything about such an intention. Somebody had been frightening her, perhaps.

“ Yes: that Mrs. Nudd——she will not come to me at the infirmary, will she ? ”

Bexley was so busy wondering how in the world this Mr. Orger always knew everything, that he had no clear account to give of any accommodation prepared for his sick child. There was no excuse left for detaining her; and, on being assured that he could be allowed no relief on her account while it was known that he refused the very best, he let her go.—Whatever discomfiture he left behind him, Orger proceeded with a brisk step and a light heart under his burden, and was rewarded for his enterprise by delivering the patient into the arms of Miss Barbara, whose face looked brighter at the moment than in the merriest crisis of the dance. She was so glad that she had come away early; for, though her mother did not particularly want her, it would have been a great pity not to be in time to lay this poor little patient in bed with her own hands.

## CHAPTER IV.

## BEGGAR MY NEIGHBOUR.

“COME, you had better let me find it out,” said Dr. Kinnear, the vicar, to one of his children who had puzzled him very much indeed with a riddle, after dinner. “You had better help me to find it out directly, Mary; for I must be going.”

“O, papa, you can be in your study when we are all in bed. You must find out just this one riddle.”

“If you will not tell me, I must think about it as I walk. I am not going into my study, but into the church vestry.”

“My dear,” urged Mrs. Kinnear; “you do not know what an evening it is. I think your people always choose the rainiest nights for their vestry meetings.”

“Not quite always, my dear. I was treated with a very visible eclipse of the moon, last time. But I assure you I am doing my best to have our meetings held at any time rather than the evenings. As for the weather, we must take our chance, like other mortals. Come, Harry, get my great-coat while Mary helps me with her riddle.—O, Mary! what is it that——Ah! I see. Is it a——”—and he whispered in his little girl’s ear.

“Now, papa, somebody told you.”

“No, I guessed it. So now bring my um-

brella, and make your mamma find out your riddle, as you made me. Do not help her at all."

"Mamma knows it. She helped me to make it," said the child disconsolately. "What do you think Betsy said when she was putting me to bed last night?" continued Mary, when she returned from the hall with the umbrella.

"That papa is very cruel to go out after dinner when his little girls want him to play?"

"No; not quite that: but she thinks it is very odd you should preach so much about people minding their own business, and yet——"

"And yet mind other people's so much?"

"No. She says you make them all as busy as bees; and nobody would believe the time you waste in reading and such things."

Dr. Kinnear was obliged to leave his lady to explain how it was more his proper business than Betsy's to spend a good deal of time "in reading and such things." Mamma knew that very often when papa would like to have a stirring game of blind-man's-buff with Henry and Mary and Isabella, he felt it right to go and shut himself up with his books. This evening he was gone to do something less pleasant than guessing Mary's riddles;—something more disagreeable than walking in the rain;—he was gone where people were sadly apt to quarrel with each other, and very ready to find fault with him.—No wonder that Mary thought, considering all this, that it was very foolish to go

at all. She did not yet know even the little that Henry knew of papa's reasons for under going so much that he did not like: but they must be very strong reasons indeed, if it was true that he should certainly not be at home in time for tea, and did not expect any tea where he was going.

A carriage drew up to the vicar's gate just as he was passing through it. Dr. Hudson had come to see the baby, who was not quite well; and he proposed staying for a game of chess afterwards.

"My wife will be happy to receive check-mate from you," replied the vicar, "especially if you put her in the way of setting the baby to sleep first. But I am wanted down at the vestry. I wish you would go too. I wish you would follow me."

"I will take you with the greatest pleasure.—John, let down the steps. We will go down together; but I do assure you, my appearing in vestry is quite out of the question."

"You have time to play chess," observed the vicar; "and if it was only once a quarter that you appeared in vestry, your presence might do more in supporting the right than you have an idea of."

"It is not the time required," replied the physician, "but the difficult situation in which any interference with parish business would place me. What am I to say the next time Mrs. Dixon has her rheumatism, if she declares 'O, doctor, I shall never get any better while

I have such a cruel thing on my mind ! That you should say that my husband's sister makes a profit by the candles she sells to the work-house !' Then there is Clutterbuck, always as fierce in his twinges as publicans in the gout very naturally are. He will throw his crutch at me if I venture a word against the parish money being spent at his bar. And the two Davids, who are always quarrelling, will agree for once in discarding me if I happen to say a word in favour of an assistant overseer. No, no. The man who depends on individual opinions for his support and prosperity must keep away from vestry meetings."

" You would exclude every tradesman, every manufacturer, every professional man, except the clergyman. You would leave only myself," observed the vicar.

" I am afraid I should not leave even you," replied Dr. Hudson. " I believe you are really not aware of what you are doing in mixing yourself up with parish affairs as you do."

" O, yes, I am. There are a few, I dare say, who think it very shocking that a clergyman should go into the way of hearing foul language, and witnessing fraud and dissension. And others think it beneath me to go and find out mistakes in bills for bread, and butter, and soap, and brooms : and yet more wonder how a Christian divine can busy himself in detecting imposture, and refusing relief to the ragged and wan : but if these objectors view only half the

question, it is my duty to set it straight before them."

"Do not you do that from the pulpit?"

"As far as the pulpit allows me scope; but I believe I shall find it of advantage to finish my sermon in the vestry. I happen to know that some honest tradesmen of this parish are well nigh crushed by the weight of burdens which are unjustly imposed. Shall the roughness and railing of a few tongues prevent my getting justice for those good men? I happen to know that certain of my flock are sinking deeper every day into want and despondency, because their maintenance is wrenched out of their hands by ill-judging administrators of the subsistence fund. Shall I let these my charges sink utterly because it is thought beneath my dignity to attend to concerns which are not considered spiritual enough for my vocation? Indeed, Dr. Hudson, we have only too few opportunities of washing our disciples' feet. Alas for us, if we neglect such as we have!"

"But the brawls are shocking, I hear. Can you preach with ease to yourself and profit to the brawlers, when they remember all the time that you have seen their quarrels?"

"How should one be a peacemaker, if one runs away at the first rumour of a dispute? It is my belief that many quarrels may be checked and soothed away at the beginning, if the clergyman be firm and good-humoured; and if no gentleness of his can avail to prevent the

outbreak, he may yet be able to work the cure."

"Not by preaching a sermon for Benson and against Clutterbuck, I suppose."

"Certainly not. That old priestly practice of preaching sermons with a particular application is the most detestable I know of in its way, next to auricular confession. What I mean is, that a clergyman is enabled by this experience to minister,—not the less to an abstraction, to the collective spirit of his parish,—but to a real abstraction instead of a mere phantom. As to the plainest and commonest view of a clergyman's duties,—who but he should concern himself most deeply in the management of the poor of his flock?"

"More is done to affect their interests in the vestry than in their cottages, everybody must own."

"Immeasurably more. Where is the use of my carrying a pittance of aid to their homes, while I make no effort to prevent their subsistence being flung away by a wrong administration in vestry? What good will my advice and reading and prayers do them, if I countenance by my silence whatever is done to tempt them to theft, and goad them to violence, and sink them into faithless despondency? The priest and the Levite of old might be praying or praising as they passed by; but how was either the Samaritan or themselves the better for that?"

"Well; we shall see how you get on."

“ We shall ; unless we should all adopt your notion, that none who have interests depending on private opinion in the parish can help to administer its affairs. If I am to stand alone —— ”

“ But do you think my principle a bad one ? Can you deny that there is but a small chance of the parish having justice done it while it is managed by parties who have all, more or less, something to gain or lose by every measure that is proposed, and every step that is taken ? ”

“ I think that there is not the remotest chance of it. I think that it is pure jargon to say that every parish is best left to manage its own affairs. If it is a democracy, it is controlled by the small minority of the loudest voiced and most interested. The representative form is a great improvement : but there is the grand evil of its being impossible to obtain purely disinterested administrators, and the grand deficiency of a disinterested head to which they must be responsible,—the *respublica* of a parish being too small to serve the purpose. An important step is gained by the institution of a disinterested executive power,—of a paid overseer ; but still the parochial constitution is infirm, and liable to lapse into deformity. All this is clear enough.”

“ Clear enough : and it follows that the supreme direction must rest where there can be no bias of interest. There must be a general and uniform administration which shall go far to preclude abuse. It would be like a sunny

calm after a storm if we had officers whose regular business it was to manage our parish affairs, with some place of appeal far enough off to save us from the evils which this need and power of appeal cost us at present."

"The incessant restlessness which tells of old storms and forebodes new. Do you know, it really seems to me next to impossible to establish peace and good-will in a parish while this power of setting parties in opposition remains in the hands of those who are the least capable of employing it well. The permission to make vestry decisions final, and the consequent liberty of receiving magistrates into the vestry, would do more to promote the Christian temper of my parish than all my public and private services from New Year's Day till Christmas."

"It is rather hard to require of you this Christian temper in your flock, when, by the law, any vagrant from a distance, or the worst, or the most ignorant person within our bounds may set the lawyer against the tradesman, and the manufacturer against the lawyer; and even bring the clergyman into judgment before the magistrate for inhumanity and oppression. It would at least be a great improvement to obviate all notion of reversing the decisions of the vestry. But then the vestry must be most scrupulously made a fair tribunal."

"And to make it so, it must be responsible to some party other than its own conscience;—to some party better qualified to judge it than

the nearest magistrate, 'or two, or three, or twenty magistrates."

" Indeed the multiplication of judges has never been found to mend the matter, as far as I have been able to learn. Two or three at a safe distance would probably be sufficient ; but it is intolerable that the decisions of fifteen or twenty administrators should be made subject to reversal by a brace of neighbours who, as experience proves, stand an equal chance of being ignorant respecting the matter in dispute, and more or less interested in the result. My wonder is that any man will accept and use such a power."

" There may be cases where it would be criminal not to use it ;—cases where a packed and corrupt vestry betrays its trust, and the parish has no security but in the watchfulness of the magistrate. But this security is so precarious, and the instances of unconscious or wilful abuse of power by the magistrates are so much more frequent, that it is impossible not to wish for a parochial constitution which shall provide a firmer dependence, and obviate the danger of such abuses."

" I fancy that the most enlightened magistrates are the least willing that the peace and prosperity of parishes should be founded on an assumption of the wisdom and virtue of their magistrates. There is Mr. Thorn for one. In proportion as he is a wiser and more honourable man than Gillingham, is he more reluctant in

the use of his authority in parish affairs, and more anxious to have it placed elsewhere. If your clerical brethren every where were as secure from magisterial insult as you are from interference by Mr. Thorn, they would neglect their duties in vestry less than they do."

"Undoubtedly: and I believe that the instances where the clergy attend in vestry are, for the most part, found in towns where the magistrates interfere much less than in the country. As for Thorn, he positively refuses to interfere in cases where our vestry is likely to know better than himself; and in any case where both sides of the question are not brought before him. You may suppose that this reduces considerably the number of cases brought before him."

"In what kind of instance is he less able to judge than the vestry? I should have thought that he had been wiser than most men among you."

"But not wiser than all together, on certain matters of fact. For instance, as to what a poor family may live for, at different times and seasons. Thorn finds that one magistrate reckons shillings as if they were of the same value to the pauper as to himself, ordering an additional half-crown a-week as if it was not to the applicant the same thing as a gift of a hundred a-year would be to himself. Others accept the dictum of their clerks as to what a poor man ought to have; and far too many take the word of the pauper himself. Mr. Thorn knows

that the baker and the butcher and the chandler can make out among them how much certain averages of persons spend on the necessaries they sell; that there are overseers who hear the largest variety of experiences on this head; and an assistant overseer who observes with his own eyes the households of all the poor in the place; and a clergyman, and opulent and liberal rate-payers, who see that the poor applicant is not oppressed or neglected; and he thinks it very strange if all these men together do not know more of the matter of fact of such a case than himself and his clerk. On all disputes in which law and justice are concerned, Thorn's services are at the command of the pauper; but he will not accumulate the expense and trouble of summonses and orders, on the ground of a dispute whose merits he does not understand."

"How does he manage to learn both sides of the question on a case which he consents to hear,—on a case of total refusal of relief, for instance? If the overseer is to be called before him every time——"

"The overseer is not called before him at all. He knows that the overseer has something else to do; and that the pauper, as the unemployed party, is the one to trot up and down, if any one must. His plan is so obviously good, that there was little difficulty in getting the vestry to consent to it, at first; and now that it is found to add weight to their decisions, they are quite willing to persevere in the method. Our vestry clerk sets down in a book every application at

the time it is made, and adds the reasons why it is refused or granted. If the pauper chooses to appeal, he must show Mr. Thorn a copy of this entry, (with which the clerk is bound to provide him.) If Mr. Thorn decides in favour of the appellant, he writes his recommendation to the overseer on the back of this paper. No plan can be simpler ; and it obviates wrangling, and the expense both of the summons and of the overseer's time. I do not know that under our present system of appeal, some of its worst evils could be better evaded ; but such expedients plead strongly for a better system."

"The more strongly, that they show how little individual wisdom can do against the influences of a bad system. In our parish, those who are dissatisfied with the mere justice which they may depend upon from Thorn, run to Gillingham, who harasses the vestry more than Thorn relieves it. Thorn takes no men into his employ who, in their own persons, or in those of their relations, have benefited by parish pay ; while Gillingham seems never to be satisfied till all his work-people are brought under a sort of allowance system. The consequence is that Thorn is well off for servants, as he deserves to be ; but pauperism spreads in the parish very nearly as rapidly as if he was such a 'poor man's friend' as Gillingham dubs himself.—I think, as Thorn admits so few appeals, he really might attend the vestry, as if he were no magistrate."

"No. All appeals would then be thrown

into Gillingham's hands, and the degree of restraint on them which at present exists would be lost. We cannot afford this. There would be terrible havock made with our funds. The paupers would run riot during the summer season, while the gentry of the parish are making their tours. As it is, half the vestry has enough upon its hands, on its return from the seaside, to undo what the jobbing half has done during its absence. If Gillingham and the small tradesmen had every thing in their own power for three months, there is no saying how high the rates might rise before winter. The check, however feeble it may be, of a magistrate who hears but will refuse appeals, is one which we cannot dispense with."

"This summer vestry talks as proudly of its grandees as vestries of any other season."

"O, yes. The baker, butcher, and grocer continue to achieve an unusual pauper consumption of their own stock, and then ask whether anything can be done wrong by Sir Edward Mitchelson, and Dr. Kinnear, and the Messrs. Williamson, who were all some hundreds of miles off at the time."

"You must make the best of your opportunity of acting in concert," observed the physician, looking out of the window of the carriage as it approached the church. "I see some true men among that knot by the door."

"Let me be set down here, Doctor, unless you have changed your mind, and determined to be one of us," said the vicar. "Do not let them

see you draw up to the door, and drive away again.—If you find my little Mary awake,” he continued, after he had alighted, “do remember to tell her that I had no occasion for the umbrella; and let me find you at chess when I come home.”

Nobody was yet seated in the vestry. The business had not begun—partly because one or two expected members were yet absent, and partly because Dixon and the senior David had something to do first. Certain cases were to be brought forward for relief, in whose favour the baker wished to interest as many as possible of his friends. He had much to say of poor Joe Merriman,—a very worthy fellow,—an excellent workman in his day,—the last man that one would have expected to apply for relief,—brought up his family well,—felt it most for his partner,—feeble old woman,—never more fitting objects of parish care;—he must entreat that the friend he was speaking to would support the application: might he depend on this?

“Certainly; by all means,” the friend replied.

“That is more than I dare promise till I know all the particulars,” the vicar replied to a petitioning look from Dixon, directed towards him on his approach. “Hear the story?—O, I have not the slightest objection to hear the story; but we shall all hear it from the poor man’s own lips presently. It seems to me a pity to canvass for the case, Mr. Dixon,—to say nothing of its being an unusual proceeding:—

it seems a pity to canvass for a case which, if perfectly true, needs no advocating."

Dixon bowed, and moved away to canvass somebody else. Dr. Kinnear hoped he was not suspicious and perverse; but it had grown into something of a rule with him to doubt every case which was urged so very strongly as this. It seemed to show that its own merits were not ground enough for it to stand upon. It was not with the vestry as with charitable societies about to elect a candidate for relief from among many. Here, to show cause was enough to obtain relief, however numerous the applications might be: and, as far as the vicar's influence extended, those applicants were far from faring the worst who told a plain story for themselves, and sought no private patronage in the vestry.

Guthrie stood looking on, as if he would fain have had the vestry canvassed in favour of his accounts. He had been all day dreading the necessary production of these accounts; and now he could do nothing till they were passed but stand at the table, dog's-earing the leaves of his book with trembling fingers. His nerves were saved from too long a tension by his business being the first that was brought on, though he had to suffer much of what he had dreaded from the diversity of tempers and notions with which he had to deal.

"What is all this?" cried Mr. Wright. "Another rate at the end of three weeks! I

heard something of such a levy, but I could not believe it, Mr. Guthrie."

"You must be mistaken, Wright," said Morris, the tailor. "With the wonderful blessing of an assistant overseer, we can never want a second levy in three weeks."

Wright handed the book to Morris, who shrugged his shoulders, while everybody looked to Guthrie for an explanation.

He believed—he could assure them, that there was no money left before the last rate was levied. He did not know what to do—what could he do, when there was no money? He had advanced as much as he could spare; and he believed he had asked Mr. Orger what he should do; and he believed Mr. Orger had said that when an old rate was exhausted, they must have a new. He believed——

"I am afraid, Mr. Guthrie, you misunderstood what I said," interposed Orger. "I remember saying something quite different; but——"

"O, I beg your pardon, Mr. Orger; I believe I made some little confusion. It was my daughter Patty, I dare say, that said so. I knew it was one or other of you."

"What was it that you did say, Mr. Orger?" asked the vicar.

"I advised that the arrears of the old rate should be recovered before the new was imposed."

"And why was this not done?"

"Please to ask Mr. Guthrie, sir. I did the same thing that was recommended last year. I

made out a list of defaulters, when I had called twice on them at a time convenient to them. This list I gave to Mr. Guthrie to present to the vestry: but he preferred beginning with a new rate to doing so."

"Have you that list about you, Mr. Guthrie? We will save you further trouble about these defaulters by summoning them all together before the magistrates to-morrow."

Guthrie fumbled for some time, though he declared that he had not the list. He did not think it necessary to expose the names, as the defaulters were all good men, and would pay.

"Then let them make haste and pay: but we must find out who they are. Orger, did you keep a list?"

Orger produced the list, which was passed from hand to hand, and particularized in such a way as to terrify Mr. Guthrie.

"Pay! yes, indeed. They ought to pay. I wonder at you, Guthrie, that you could come a second time to me, and leave Hitchcock in arrears. What manner of excuse can Hitchcock have for delaying payment?"

Hitchcock was a touchy person, and had spoken very roughly whenever the subject was approached. Some equally good reason was attached to each name as it was called over. One had threatened to deal no more at the cooper's shop, if he were unhandsomely treated. Another was a favourite partner of Miss Patty's at dances, and one whom she would not allow to be troubled about trifles. A third had

obligingly recovered a bad debt for Guthrie, who could not think of pressing him hard. And so on.

“Your friends,—for all these seem to be friends of yours,—will feel little obliged to you for letting them off, only that they may be summoned before a magistrate,” observed Mr. Wright. “It would have been better kindness to have been a little more peremptory with them. I warrant that any of them who are creditors of the parish are ready enough to obtain their payments.”

Guthrie protested himself too anxious for the honour of the parish to delay paying its bills. The vestry might see that there was a balance,—a little balance in his favour, from this cause. Only seventeen pounds, they would perceive: but he was anxious to pay as he went on.

“By the by, what discount did you get on that large bill for flax?” inquired Wright, turning over the leaves in search of the entry. “I see nothing about that article here. Please find it for us, sir.”

Guthrie turned over the leaves in like manner, declaring all the while that he was sorry he had been prevented discharging that little account. The flax was not yet paid for, he believed.

“Why, Mr. Guthrie, who should know but you? The vestry gave it in charge to you to settle that matter. What is the use of ‘believ-

ing' any thing about it? Why is the flax not paid for?"

"Mr. Gillingham would not allow it."

"And what has Mr. Gillingham to do with it? How dares he set up his authority against the vestry?"

Guthrie buttoned and unbuttoned his coat, wishing that this question were put to any body but himself.—He would take care and see Mr. Gillingham, and ask him, he said.

"But, my dear sir, why should you listen to any thing that Mr. Gillingham has to say? If he told you to make your casks of mahogany, would you mind him?"

Some people present believed that Guthrie would actually begin to make mahogany casks on such a bidding; but Guthrie urged that Gillingham was a magistrate.

"So is the Lord Mayor of London; and the one has as much to do with our bill for flax as the other.—But come, gentlemen, let us get the accounts passed, that we may go on to other things."

Two or three vestrymen objected to passing the accounts in such a hurry, while there was a balance in favour of the overseer.

"My dear sir," continued Mr. Wright, "only consider how late it is getting, and how many poor people are waiting outside. We shall not be done by midnight, at this rate."

"We must devise some plan for meeting earlier," the vicar observed. "There is a

marked distinction, I am told, between the efficiency of a vestry that meets before three in the afternoon, and one that assembles in the evening."

Mr. Dixon laughed, and said that the gentry who were incommoded about their dinner hour had better stay away.

"They must be very selfish gentry," observed the vicar, smiling, "who would not make their dinner hour give way to these occasions: and as for the early diners, they would find their account in leaving their occupations for an hour or two in the mornings, if such a plan speeded the transaction of parish affairs."

"I am for meeting somewhere else, where we shall not be in such a hurry to get away because we are all afraid of the rheumatism," declared Dixon. "Rather than change hours, I would change places. Mr. Clutterbuck, here, has a nice comfortable room that would hold us all,—warm and pleasant, and close at hand."

"Ay, and that would bring your brother-in-law good custom for his beer," observed Morris. "The paupers would stay behind, and spend the money we had given them in Clutterbuck's beer."

The brewer's clerk thought such remarks very unhandsome.—Morris could see into a mill-stone as far as another man, and so expected the brewer's clerk to speak just as he had done.—The vicar interposed to point out that the vestry would be a very comfortable place to meet in at noon-day for three-quarters

of the year ; and declared his intention of proposing a reform in respect of hours. It was then decided that Guthrie's accounts should stand over for examination till he should have discharged all the orders of the vestry thereunto appertaining.

Mr. Orger feared he might be considered as going out of his province in observing that the expenses with which the overseers were apt to be taunted as excessive, could never be much lessened till some other method of supplying the workhouse paupers with food and clothing was adopted. He was himself in favour of contract management.

He was stopped by outcries from the various tradesmen about him, who had all much to say of the cruelty to the paupers, who were sure of being starved under contract management ; and of the injustice to the tradesmen of the parish, of dealing out of the parish :—for all these vestrymen were somehow aware that, under contract management, they would not be parties to the contract.

Orger had evidence to prove that paupers prefer contract management, where well conducted, to such a state of things as existed in the workhouse he was speaking of. The paupers might no longer be able to barter a superfluity of food for gin : they might not feast on hot new bread two or three times a week ; nor would they any longer have an excuse for wasting two hours a day in waiting to be served, according to the present disorderly

fashion : but they would have their food served hot ; and be certain that, for his own sake, the governor would not let the small joints and the large be all cooked together, so that the one would be boiled to rags, and the other half raw. The workhouse would also be free from the wanderers from other parishes who get in on hearing of hot bread and gin, and get out again when they fall in with an overseer who puts a stop to their bargains beyond the walls.

“ I suppose we shall grow wise enough, some day, to have an uniformity of management in our workhouses,” observed the vicar. “ Then there will be no travels in search of good living at other people’s expense. There will be no comparing notes under a hedge, such as I once heard when I chanced to be walking on the other side of it. ‘ Bless your soul, don’t go there, Jack ! You will get nothing that you like. B—— is the place for good living. They give you butter enough there to butter your bread on both sides ; and if you don’t want so much, they will sell you gin for it.’—‘ Well, to be sure,’ says Jack, ‘ there is no plague of an overseer living in the house there, to see us eat our meals ; and rap the carver’s knuckles when we are kept a couple of hours waiting for our turn. I’ll go to B—— this time ; and the other place will serve when they have had enough of me at B——. But I’ll not put myself in the way of their stale bread and their meddling overseer, till the last minute.’”

“ No ! did they say so ?”

“ Indeed they did. Now, if the diet and clothes were the same in every workhouse, and if there was a fit resident officer in all; the whole being under the impartial management of a central board, through paid, and therefore disinterested, agents; all vagrancy of the kind I have mentioned, all individual speculation and trickery, would be swept away at once, and contract management would follow of course, as being the easiest and most economical under a system of regularity, and safe, while under the superintendence of a vigilant and impartial authority. ‘The contractor would be a check upon the tradesmen, by its being made his interest to deal in the best market. ‘The paupers would be a check upon the contractor by their power of appeal to the district superintendents; and the central board would be a check upon all parties, having the means afforded, by a general experience, of judging rightly in individual cases, as long as uniformity of management is maintained.”

“ Then,” observed Orger, “ there will be an end of the understood rule that every thing furnished to the workhouse is to be charged forty per cent. higher than private housekeepers will pay. ‘Then we shall not have shoes sold at fourteen shillings for pauper use, while they will fetch only twelve in the market; and we shall not manage to use precisely the same quantity every year. ‘Then ——”

He was stopped by clamour: but he had written proofs in his pocket that what he had

said was true with respect to woollen petticoats, shoes, candles, cheese, bread, and blankets. He made no apology for his plain speaking, but observed that it was particularly necessary just now to make careful inquisition into the prices of blankets and woollen petticoats, as the parish must supply them in large quantities under the present alarm about cholera.

Every man asked his neighbour his opinion about the danger, and all called the assistant-overseer to account for the precautions which had been taken. He had much to say of the cleaning which he had instituted in all the places under his jurisdiction, and of the precautions which had been taken for watching the progress of the disease, and administering speedy relief; precautions not taken too soon, since the disease had shown itself this afternoon in Key's Court. When the excitement caused by this news had subsided, the vicar was anxious to know whether some of the best of the female paupers might not be employed as nurses, to the great comfort of the sick and their families. In instances of attack by a new and alarming disease, when the patient is exposed to a thousand evils through the doubt and inexperience of those about him, it must be an inexpressible advantage to have a body of nurses at hand who know what ought to be done, and how to do it. As far as he could learn, there was nothing in the present management of the nursing department of cholera cases, which might not easily be learned and practised by the women who lounged about

the workhouse, only half employed. He proposed, as a measure of humanity, that every fit person among these should be trained to the office of cholera nurse, as soon as possible.—Dixon and some of his friends did not believe that there was a pauper woman that would undertake the office. Nobody could compel them to it, and it was pretty certain that they would one and all refuse.

“Then we must refuse them parish aid. It is a very simple case of justice and humanity:—of humanity, that the sick should have qualified nurses; of justice, that the parish should not be burdened with the pay of hired nurses, while it is maintaining a body of women in idleness.”

“Well, sir, suppose we see what some of them will say to it. There are two or three waiting outside now.”

“Let them come in;—one by one, I suppose, gentlemen.”

Of course, Pleasance was there; and, as usual, she made her appearance first. She had witnessed the cholera case, and told of this and that and the other thing that she had recommended and done. The vicar took care that she should not be interrupted in her long story, and then observed that he was happy to find her just the person the vestry were in want of. By her own account, she was already qualified to nurse, and no doubt she would be very glad to earn her support in so useful a way.

Pleasance twisted her apron-string and smiled,

while she said that she had no particular desire for work : she was not overfit for work. O, no ; she did not want work. She was assured, however, that she did want work, and that she was the servant of the vestry, as long as she was maintained by their order.

“ Of the vestry ! ” said she, very coolly. “ I did not think that : and I don’t like the vestry for masters. I like the magistrates for masters. There are no such good masters as the magistrates.”

“ You will soon have to make trial of that, mistress,” said Orger. “ If you refuse to do the work of the vestry for your pay, you must go before the magistrate as a disorderly person.”

“ Well, the magistrate,—(Mr. Gillingham knows me)—the magistrate won’t hurt me, Mr. Orger.”

“ If Mr. Gillingham will not commit you, we must find some other magistrate who will.”

“ Dear me, Mr. Orger ! How much would you give one over and above, I wonder, if one was to accommodate you ? ”

“ You would have every thing necessary to support you in a laborious office ;—better food than usual, and all needful care of your strength :—nothing more, of course.”

“ Dear me ! and I have been offered to be made nurse at very good pay, I can tell you.”

“ Then you must take the offer, and we shall strike off a shilling a week. I know where you mean ;—at the infirmary. Had you rather nurse at the infirmary, and be put partly off the

parish, or be a parish cholera nurse, or go to take your trial for . . . you know what?"

And Orger held up a bit of paper between his fingers, at the sight of which the woman began smiling and sidling, and pulling scraps of paper to pieces, as if she had been a perfect fool.

"What is that, Orger?" said Dixon. "Some piece of folly of this poor woman? She has no more sense than a babe, you know. I wonder you have the heart to be harsh with her."

"I must keep my heart tender towards the parish," said Orger; "for which purpose we may find it necessary to debar this woman from the use of pen and ink.—Hold off, Mrs. Pleasance," continued he, observing that she had sidled towards him, and might possibly be intending to snatch at the paper,—“back to your place, if you please. Waters, are you there? See that this woman keeps her place at the table."

Waters came forward to do so, and then the story was told, and the cheque with the forged marks handed round. It passed from hand to hand, while Dixon was trying to throw a doubt on whether the sum originally specified was not indeed that which was here set down. It was possible that in the hurry of business, he might have put down a wrong sum—too large an one. He would not take his oath that he had not. As, however, Orger could take his oath that he had seen Pleasance alter the figures, Dixon's excuses were of no use. He was not to be per-

mitted to touch the paper, as he was perhaps aware. While it came into the hands of some one near him, he removed, to go round and consult with the vicar upon the case,—happened to stumble over one of the benches and push his neighbour, who let the cheque fall. Pleasance was too quick for poor Waters. She pounced upon it, and it flew blazing up the chimney in a moment. Of course, Dixon was very sorry, and Waters was reprimanded, and Pleasance looked as cool as ever, while the beadle was somewhat roughly pulling her back to her place. By way of atonement, he now informed the vestry that Mrs. Nudd had something curious hidden under her apron. This curious thing was a massive silver watch, for the possession of which Pleasance was called to account. Every body saw the hardship of having to part with a watch which had been a great grandmother's; but nobody could contend that the owners of silver watches should have bread from the parish. If Pleasance chose to use it to guide her nursing operations, she might; but, if she persisted in keeping her watch and refusing to work, she must go and see what Mr. Gillingham would do for her; for the parish could have nothing to say to her. She was obliged at last to consent to heat water and blankets for the wretched patients in Key's Court.

“How much,—not only of time and pains, and ill-will and disgust,—but of guilt, might have been saved,” observed the vicar to Orger, “if this woman's case had been indisputably provided

for under an uniform system which would take her out of the hands of Gillingham and Dixon on the one side, and ours on the other ! Whether she really be weak in intellect or not, she is full as much to be pitied as those who maintain her, for the uncertainty which Gillingham's powers introduce into all our management.—Who is this ? ”

“ Mrs. Stott, a near relation of somebody here. You may soon find out whose. More coals, Mrs. Stott ? You must be wanting something else. More coals ! Why, we let you have a fine stock a fortnight ago.”

“ They are all gone, sir, I assure you. All gone, Mr. Orger. As I hope to be saved, there is not a shovel-full left.”

“ Then they ought not to be all gone. One would think you had been warming your chapel out of your own stock. How happens it that your coals are all gone ? ”

“ Because of Mrs. Gillingham's washing. It was such a large wash last time that all my coals were used up, and my soap too.”

The gentlemen were pretty safe in conjecturing that Mrs. Stott did not make a present of this washing to Mrs. Gillingham. The wash was ascertained to be so large that Mrs. Stott had made between two and three pounds by the job, and was therefore little entitled to mourn over the disappearance of her fuel. She flatly declined the offer of nurse, though several of the persons present knew that she had a taste for giving ghostly consolation, and a habit of frequenting

sick-beds for this purpose. In all such cases, however, she had, as she pleaded, a choice of the disease; and the disease had never been cholera. Dixon could testify that Mrs. Stott's time was so fully employed by her present duties,—particularly attending upon her poor old father, (the old man to whom the parish should be ashamed of allowing no more than three shillings a week,) that she could not possibly accept any employment which would take her much from home. It would be far better to give her coals, and let her pursue her washing.

“Has that poor old man no relations to take care of him?” asked the vicar.

“His daughter, you see:—a very dutiful, pious daughter, sir, who deserves encouragement from her parish,” said Dixon. “Who so near and dear as a daughter, sir?”

“A nephew is less near and dear, perhaps, Mr. Dixon; but more available for purposes of support in old age. Has he neither son nor nephew to provide for him?”

Instead of answering the question, Dixon proceeded to prove that nephews were by no law of morals obliged to provide for uncles. The conclusion was obvious. Mrs. Stott and her father were cousin and uncle to Dixon; and one or two whisperers were overheard to pronounce it a shame that a dance should be given within doors, while poor relations were petitioning the parish without. Dixon drew

Mrs. Stott aside, and said something which sent her away with a knowing nod.

She was not the last poor cousin who appeared this day. When once the attention of the vestry was turned upon the subject of consanguinities, it was astonishing how many were discovered. Dixon's canvassing now proved vain, for the object was a brother of Mrs. Dixon's. It was a settled matter, in more minds than one, that every strongly recommended applicant should be held guilty of vestry relationship till he could disprove the same. Before all were disposed of, Mrs. Stott reappeared with a recommendatory letter from Mr. Gillingham,—such a letter as Dixon supposed no vestry would dare to resist. Mr. Gillingham was not only astonished that the vestry refused coals to a poor creature whose occupation depended upon a supply of them, but thrice amazed that they had disallowed the claims,—actually struck out the names, of three of his workpeople who had happened to be prevented from appearing for a pay-day or two. He desired that they should be reinstated, or cause shown for their not being so. The overseers prepared to show cause when they found how the case stood. It appeared that, when Gillingham's men were deprived of all pretence for having relief by being fully employed, a device had suggested itself to their master. He could not venture again to lower their wages in order to their being compensated from the rate; so he em-

ployed double the number of men, at half time, on full wages, finding a profit to himself in the rent of his looms, of which twice as many were employed as need have been. It was Guthrie who had the courage to come forward and expose this manœuvre. He who was not brave enough to expose an abuse because it was an abuse, was capable of being goaded into a temporary daring by personal resentment. The insults with which he was continually followed—insults which, if not directly encouraged by Gillingham, might easily have been checked by him,—were now too much even for Guthrie's patience. He gave short answers to everybody supposed to be in any way connected with a ribbon-manufactory, and now told the story of the loom-rent with fewer grimaces and hesitations than might have been expected.

"Here is a case," observed the vicar, "which would never have arisen under a system of uniform management, and of giving relief in one way only. Under a wise workhouse system, such a device as this could not subsist for a week, and would fall without any help from the parish to pull it down. Now we must interfere; and the consequence will be a charge against the parish of meddling in private concerns. We must offer full work and subsistence to as many of these applicants as choose to accept it; and we can only hope that Mr. Gillingham will employ the rest at full time. It is really too much to expect us to pay the rent of his extra looms."

Very few of the applicants would accept the parish offer, and Guthrie and Orger agreed in the prediction that they should be served the next day with a dozen summonses a-piece, and brought to the magistrate's house amidst street remarks which were not very musical to their ears, to be taunted and reprobated when there, and triumphed over on their exit. All this must be borne, however; for the people would not give up their half-work, and the vestry refused the half-pay. There was at present but a small promise of cholera nurses.

"Here comes one," observed Mr. Wright. "I should like to be nursed by her myself, pretty lass! I wonder why she lets that half-idiot follow her like her shadow. I have seen them looking into one another's eyes under Gillingham's gateway, and in the church-yard, and wherever they could get together for a consultation. I wonder Lucas lets his daughter keep such company, when she might have the best in her line in the parish. What she can find to talk about with poor Pleasance is more than I can make out."

"Perhaps we shall hear," said Orger. "You observe Pleasance keeps close behind her, as if to prompt."

"I am sorry to see you here, Charlotte Lucas," said the vicar. "I hope no adversity has befallen your family since yesterday."

Her parish disputed her settlement, Charlotte replied; and she came to ask the vestry to establish her claim. For all she could de-

clare, the country parish in which she was born would have nothing to say to her; and she must look to the vestry for justice. The story told was, that Charlotte's mother had once been travelling too long to get home before her confinement; that she had been hospitably received and nursed by an inhabitant of the country parish in question, and that Charlotte's birth within its bounds left no reasonable doubt of her having a settlement there. The parish, however, chose to doubt it, and was on the point of going to law about the matter.

"And what has given immediate occasion to your claim?" asked the vicar. "Unless there is some pressing reason for enforcing it, it is a pity to go to law about a privilege which you may never want to use. What is the immediate occasion of your claim?"

Charlotte made two or three attempts to speak; but it seemed as if no voice would come. Pleasance put her head out from behind, and told how ill Charlotte's mother had been,—how sadly ill, poor soul! so that Charlotte had had no rest, night nor day; and for several days was so called away from her work at Gillingham's that she had more trouble than enough in making up her quantity by the end of the week. The parish should consider her loss of time in nursing her mother.

"Young woman," said the vicar, "I hope and trust this is not your plea."

"Yes, it is," replied Charlotte, quickly. "This is one thing I have to say; but —"

"I suppose you will next ask to be paid for worshipping your Maker."

"That does not come on week days, sir."

"Nor on any day to any purpose, I fear, with those who cannot discharge the first duties of life but for hire. How can you read your Bible, young woman, and hold up your head to tell such a story as this? You must know the story of the mother of Jesus, and how she was taken care of."

Charlotte began to gabble, as in old days when she was desired at school to repeat this story. She then admitted that she had never heard or thought of such a thing as John's seeking any reward for the dutiful protection he afforded. She remembered something also of Naomi; but pleaded that she was now asking what other people asked, and encouraged her to ask; and ran off half a dozen cases of recompense from the parish for the performance of domestic duties, and the endurance of domestic troubles. It would not do, however; the instance was too gross to be defended even by the supporters of abuses. She was desired to walk off, and be duly ashamed of herself.

"Well, then," said she, half-laughing, "you just make me say what there was no need to have said. You will find it to your interest to fix me on another parish. If you don't, you will repent it by-and-bye; and Mr. Guthrie will tell you why."

Guthrie had probably received a hint of what she was intending to say, for he was quick

enough in pulling Pleasance's sleeve, and Pleasance in transmitting the jerk to Charlotte's, to stop the rest of the story, though not to remove the impression which the beginning had made.

"I only mean," Charlotte resumed, "that it may be too late by-and-bye to have the matter of my birth in that parish sworn to ; and so you may be sorry that you did not get me righted by the law, now that it is easy. Mr. Gillingham says it shall be done."

"If Mr. Gillingham likes lawsuits, let him carry on this at his own cost," said Wright. "Now, mistress, are you going to tell your poor mother what you came here for?"

"If she chooses to ask, Mr. Wright. What I dare do I dare justify."

"Then I hope your mother will never more honour you by asking you for a drop of water, or the help of your little finger. You have forfeited the privileges of being a daughter, and I hope you will never be graced with them more."

"Nay, Mr. Wright," said the vicar, "let us rather hope that she will recover them. It is never too late, Charlotte ; and if you have again to sit at night beside your mother's bed, casting about for thoughts, perhaps it may occur to you how many hours of rest and days of profit she has given up for your sake ; how anxiously she nursed you without dreaming of putting her strength and her caresses out to hire. Whenever you feel this as I trust you will feel it, forget your present errand here, and be like other

daughters from that time. We shall not remind you that you have ever been otherwise, and should be sorry that your young sisters should know it."

Charlotte moved away, Guthrie following uneasily to the door, and whispering there awhile. He seemed much disturbed when he came back; and let fall that he feared they should hear more from the magistrate, who was determined that this settlement should be certified according to law.

It was now getting so late that several applicants were relieved, for this once, almost without inquiry, though their claims were suspected of being very ill founded. The vicar was of opinion that vestry meetings were held oftener than was good for the parish. There was a temptation to apply for relief when the vestry was sitting, to try what could be got, when the same parties would not think of going to an assistant overseer who was thoroughly informed of their circumstances. The meetings must be held at an earlier hour, and less frequently, if they were meant to be as efficient for their purpose as they might be.

"And in a more comfortable place," added Dixon, with a shiver. He was determined to make another effort in favour of his brother-in-law; but nobody took the hint, as the vicar preserved silence and gravity. He was the first person to be considered in this matter. They were about to break up when Waters came forward to thank the vestry for their goodness in

apprenticing his son. The vestrymen all looked at one another, none but Orger knowing what had been done at Gillingham's command.

"I little thought, gentlemen," said Waters, "or my wife either, that we should ever have to ask favours, or return thanks; and we should not have thought of it for ourselves: but we must get the best done for our boy,—and I am so worn down, as it were, with trouble and poor health, that I cannot hold up in spirit and stout heart as I did, and as my wife does still. I doubt whether it would have come into my mind but for Mr. Gillingham. He was so kind as to think of it for my Tom."

"How came he to think of it? How came he to know about your affairs?"

"Mr. Gillingham has often come after me, or sent after me, in the matter of speaking to character, which is the part of my office, gentlemen, that I should be most glad to be let alone in. It is a very difficult thing, gentlemen, to have to speak to the characters of the people one lives amongst; and particularly when gentlemen will know beforehand what one means to say."

"Very difficult, and quite unnecessary under a system of workhouse management," observed the vicar.

"Well; it was about this that Mr. Gillingham made acquaintance with me, when some of his own people were expected to be inquired after. Mr. Gillingham was very kind indeed, as I am sure I had no right to expect. He said

he thought Mr. Guthrie's would be a good fixation place for Tom; and he could get him put there. I told him how much obliged I was to him."

"I'm sure I am not," murmured Guthrie. "I did not want an apprentice. I wonder what right he had to saddle me with one, making me believe, all the time, that it was the will of the parish. Pretty talk he made, indeed, about my being fined if I did not take the lad! I wish my Patty had been there. I wish I had held out a while longer."

"But you will not think of giving him up now, sir," said Waters, very anxiously. "You will find him a good lad, sir."

"I cannot give him up, if I would; for they took care to get him indentured in a trice. There would be no use in it, either. They would just put the next upon me, and fine me again if I was unwilling to take him. That is the way they leave one no power to manage one's own affairs."

Everybody assured Guthrie that he might be worse off: which he did not dispute. All but himself were well satisfied with the arrangement; and if they had not been so, they would have tried to appear so, rather than prolong the discussion at so late an hour. Some were already stretched on the benches, and others were nodding over their folded arms, till the striking of the clock overhead roused them to the effort of going home.

How differently they went home! The lame

beadle who remained the last to lock the doors, moved off spiritless, cold, and weary, trying not to think that Mr. Gillingham had, as it were, taken him in, and grieved that his Tom should be under an unwilling master. He hoped his wife would be asleep when he got home ; and he should creep to bed without any supper, rather than run the risk of any more talk to-night. He was afraid there was but a poor chance for any other of his boys in the same way ; though his wife had been so sure that the placing of Tom would open a way for them all. He could not see how his family was to get on, he was sure. He had been taken for one of the paupers to-night, and several times lately ; and he began to fear that he did indeed look too much like that sort of people, and did not see how he should soon be much better than they. He had heard of people dying away in their sleep, and he almost wished sometimes to go off in that manner, and have done with his troubles. Except being beadle, his family might carry on his little employments, and he be quiet in his grave. One of poor Waters's fits of despondency was upon him ; and he looked mournfully on the sluggish brown waters of the river as he slowly proceeded along the quay.

Guthrie's reception at home was full as comfortless as that of poor Waters had ever been. He had been detained some time on the way by Pleasance, who had come out of a blind alley just as he passed, and made him hear what she

had to say;—how it was a sad pity that he should be burdened with Tom Waters, and that the burden should not be got rid of: and that it would be a thousand pities that the town should be set talking about Charlotte's affair; and that if that could be got rid of too, it would be a fine thing for Guthrie. Guthrie writhed under the mention of these things, and not only showed, but said that nothing would make him so happy as getting rid of Charlotte's affair altogether; and that he really should enjoy spiting Gillingham by sending Tom Waters about his business, if it could be done legally and properly. Pleasance's look, as she moved away, made him think that a word to the foolish sometimes goes as far as a word to the wise.—He let himself in at his own door very softly; but he might have spared his caution. His wife was sitting with her feet on the fender, and her elbows on her knees. A large handkerchief which she had thrown over her head concealed her countenance; but her attitude revealed ill-humour. She did not stir when her husband entered. Patty, who was standing reading a newspaper, just looked up, and then resumed her study.

“Did Tom put up the shutters, and do everything properly?” timidly asked Guthrie.

“To be sure,” replied Patty. “You know I was here to look after him. He does very well at present, but there is no saying how long he will, in such a house.”

"I'm sure I wonder any decent people come near us," murmured the wife from under her handkerchief.

"I declare," continued Patty, "it lies upon my conscience to have a young lad brought here to see such an example before his eyes."

"And no man could say prettier things than you did once about cherry cheeks fading making no difference to you ; and about my being your own Deborah, and all that sort of thing," said the wife: "and now, with a daughter growing up before your eyes,—I can see through hypocrisy as well as any one, though you fancy I can't. I have seen through it all along."

Guthrie turned from one to the other, to beg and pray for an explanation ; but they were in too mighty an indignation to vouchsafe one. Patty threw down rather than placed the bread and cheese before her father, and drew the cork of his bottle of porter with a jerk and a pop which might be heard up into the attic. Guthrie had no idea but of trying to eat, though his heart was in his throat. While he munched, Patty observed, with a scornful laugh, that her father was growing famous in his old age. She supposed he had never seen anything printed about him before ; and she handed him the newspaper, where there appeared before his dazzled eyes his own name again and again and again, in the larger type of the local newspaper, published this evening in the town, and to be

circulated through the county, and in many distant places to-morrow. The article contained a few compliments to Guthrie at the beginning, as a spirited and highly respected townsman, but proceeded to comment in a highly offensive manner on his conduct as overseer. The charges followed one another so rapidly, and the lamentations over his errors were so insulting, as to be by far too much for the poor man's fortitude. His tongue was parched, and drops of perspiration stood on his forehead, as a quick succession of torturing imagery passed before his fancy. The Dixons now, at this very moment, laughing and wondering how he would bear it; and the vestrymen stopping one another in the street to-morrow to talk about it; and Miss Lane taking the paper abroad in her black silk bag to read it to old Mr. Barber, and blind Mrs. Johnson, and her intimate friend Mrs. Goose; and the editor looking in his face the next time he met him, to see how he took it; and Gillingham talking to his work-people about it; and the vicar,—O misery!—glancing at it by his fire-side, and perhaps saying to Mrs. Kinnear, "Here's a fine dressing for Guthrie this week;" and Sir Edward Mitchelson, not thinking any harm of Guthrie at this moment, would most likely look up from his newspaper at breakfast to-morrow morning, and bid his little boy be quiet, and ask his lady how long it was since she was at Guthrie's shop, and seriously advise

her to have nothing to do with those people any more; all this passed, as quick as lightning, before the overseer's excited fancy, and subdued him utterly. He looked with anguish on his wife and daughter, before he laid his head down on the table, and said,

“And you are both against me too? I cannot think how you can be so cruel!”

Mrs. Guthrie thought it a fine thing indeed to talk of other people being cruel. If he called anybody cruel, it should be those who did not keep his vile secrets. He might have known that such things always come round. When she had said all that she was moved to say, and had duly slammed the door on going up to bed, nothing remained but for her wretched husband to suppose that some tell-tale had come from the vestry with scandal respecting Charlotte Lucas. Guthrie might safely be trusted with knives under any degree of desperation; and Patty therefore retired also, leaving her father to repent, for as long as he chose to sit up, his misfortune in having been persuaded to meddle with parish affairs.

“Dr. Hudson gone!” exclaimed the vicar, when he found his lady at work alone. “I am afraid you let him beat you too easily at chess.”

“No, indeed, I held out two hours: but he has been gone nearly an hour. I am afraid you have had a stormy meeting.”

“A cloudy one:—a very disgusting one,—God keep me from being disheartened! but to see

the labour of the clergyman undone by the magistrate,—to see whatever I say on the Sunday put to scorn on the Monday,—it is very hard!”

“ You used to say so in the days of the open vestry ; and then you thought that matters would prosper better under a select vestry.”

“ And so they do ; and the appointment of a paid overseer has been an excellent thing for the funds of the parish——”

“ And therefore for the morals of the parish. A saving in the funds proves that there are fewer applications for relief. O yes, there must be an improvement.”

“ There is ; but I have strong doubts whether even this degree of improvement will last. I much doubt whether we shall not have returned to an open vestry by this time next year. The jobbers so far outnumber the disinterested, that the open vestry may be restored as soon as these jobbers may find it suit their purposes to carry their points by clamour.”

“ O dear ! Of all parishes, that you should have come to this ! ”

“ This is no worse than many others, my dear. Put down a workhouse any where in the neighbourhood of butchers, bakers, and chandlers, throw the administration into the hands of these tradesmen, keeping away the professional men and gentry, and you will have jobbing, and patronage, and extravagance ;—and, with them, all the consequent vices of

idleness, lying, fraud, and sensuality, — as surely as weeds spring up in your hot-bed.”

“ And how long do you mean to go on contending against all this corruption ? ”

“ As long as there is this corruption to contend with ; — as long as the true method of prevention is delayed. Whenever a blessed society of three or four wise men in London shall be appointed to superintend, and their country agents to administer without fear or favour, so that our poor shall cease to be an object of barter and sale, I may hope to do some little good among those who want it most. In those days, Mr. Thorn will still be benevolent and wise, and the Waters family will be as honest and patient as ever, with less temptation to be otherwise ; while Gillingham will mind his own business, and Dixon be content with fair profits, and Pleasance Nudd will find something else to wonder at than that girls should wait upon their parents without hire. In those days, poor Guthrie's voice may also be heard again in song. It was a sad mistake, his being made overseer : but every parish is liable to such errors as long as it must administer its own affairs, and may contain weak and timid men.”

“ I cannot think what is to become of the poor man under the lash of *The Mercury* this week. Have you seen it ? No : how should you ? Well ; do look at it while I pour out your tea.”

“ Very harsh ! Very unfair ! ” said the vicar, presently. “ He ought not to regard it ; but

he will. I will see him to-morrow, and show him that we think nothing of it."

"I cannot imagine how any one could have the heart to write it!" observed the lady.

"It is known that Guthrie is to be governed by fear; and it is thought necessary to govern him; and this article follows of course."

"I wish you could put a stop to it. Would not a word from you make up matters?"

"For a week or so, perhaps. Influence may possibly prevail against influence for so long; but this is a dangerous sort of contest. I had rather try to put an end to the state of affairs which requires that Guthrie, or any one else, should be thus governed at all."

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## CHAPTER V.

### A WORM WILL TURN.

WEEK after week the cholera spread, till it became the principal topic of thought and conversation in the parish. New rates were called for with terrible rapidity; and all the spare hands, in and out of the workhouse, were employed in cleaning, fumigating, and nursing among the poor dwellings in the alleys and along the quay. Pleasance carried two-thirds of the messages, and was always ready to go to the spirit shop for what brandy was neces-

sary, and to the apothecary for laudanum. She occasionally assisted in heating water and bedding, so as to pick up a few marvellous or shocking circumstances to be dropped to the next person she conversed with; but she preferred dawdling from house to house to give her friends warning that they would certainly have the cholera, and to see that they had brandy and laudanum by them. She had a great regard for John Waters and his family, it now appeared, though no one had suspected it before. It was astonishing what trouble she took on their account.

John Waters was rising in the world. He looked no happier than before, it is true; but every one wondered at this, as he was made master of the workhouse school. Just when he had become reduced to such poverty that he must have asked parish aid the next week, this appointment was given to save him the necessity. He was considered by Orger, and those whom Orger influenced, as proper a person for the situation as the parish was likely to afford, feeble and sunk in spirits as he was; but John had not so good an opinion of his own aptitude. He accepted the appointment, because he had no choice; tried to be delighted, because he saw that his wife was made happy; and went unwillingly into the school every day, and trembled every hour before his own scholars, because he was conscious that his physical weakness was not only a subject of ridicule to the almost

hopeless objects of his care, but might, at any moment, prove a temptation to absolute defiance. It was really a relief, though he dared not own to himself that it was so, to be called away to attend the frequent funerals which were taking place; on which occasions his wife and one of the bigger boys upheld his sway till he came back. Pleasance was also very kind, not only in giving him due notice, but in helping to keep the children in order during his absence. She crept about between the forms, and patted heads, and whispered so low that there was unusual quiet as soon as she appeared.—Nothing did Waters's throbbing head so much good as Mrs. Nudd's entrance. He felt as if he could fall asleep in two minutes. Her presence was welcome for another reason;—that she often brought tidings of Tom:—not always cheerful tidings, but generally some,—for she appeared to be oftener at Guthrie's than any where else. Sometimes she was sure 'Tom began to look blue and shrivelled; and sometimes that his master had been scolding him, as he showed that he had been crying. Now she hinted that Guthrie was not a kind master; and then she insinuated that Tom was thought by some people not to be quite so good as his parents believed him to be. Still, there was probability each time she came that she brought news of Tom, and hope that the tidings would be pleasant; so that John Waters always looked wistfully towards the door when he saw the

children near the window put on the mock-foolish look, which was always the token of Mrs. Nudd's approach.

"Dear me! Good morning, Mr. Waters," said she, one day, when she entered with a peculiarly placid look. "I hardly expected to see you here to-day. I looked to find your wife."

"And how is that, Mrs. Nudd?"

"O, I thought you had been at Guthrie's. I'm sure they must be wanting you there; only Tom will hardly be for meeting you, I suppose. There! see how my shoes go down at the heel! Those workhouse shoes——"

"But what is the matter at Guthrie's? If there is anything the matter, tell me."

Pleasance could seldom fix her eyes, but she did this time, while she told that there was talk of 'a lark' that there had been at the cooper's, the night before, while the family were out:—that 'Tom had got three or four companions into the shop, with a drop of spirits among them:—that Tom had first made two of his friends tipsy, and then got so drunk himself that it was necessary to carry him up to bed in a hurry, at the last moment before the family came home; and that the lads who carried him could escape no farther than the yard, whence they endeavoured to get away over the rails, but were caught by the watchman, who caused the discovery of the whole affair.

"Some one has been at my boy," said Waters, bitterly. "My Tom never did such

things of his own mind. Some one has been at my boy."

"'Tis like," said Pleasance, giving no hint that it was she who carried the spirit; she who invited the companions; and, lastly, she who bade the watchman be on the look out as to the rails of the yard. She now readily engaged to keep the school quiet while Waters went to satisfy himself what had happened, knowing that she might trust to poor Tom's promise not to tell that she had any thing to do with the frolic. She assured Waters that there was no time to step home to send his wife, as poor Joe Burcham's funeral was to take place in an hour; and there were two more waiting. There could be no harm in leaving the children to her for once, and she would teach them a pretty little song which she used to hear when she was their age.

"Well; I dare say you don't like school so well as running abroad," said she to the children near her, when the door had closed behind their master. "I wonder why you are kept close so much more than others. You used to be let to run abroad, like children in other work-houses; but your master likes to hinder your play, I fancy. Hey?—What are you wandering away for, you little things?" she asked of two children who slunk back, hand in hand, from her approach. They stood still, looking at her in fear, and grasping hands more closely as the big boys began to bluster and threaten about not being kept close by any body, and

giving it well to any body that thought to punish them.

There was some show of doing school business in the usual way. Half-circles of little boys were formed round the lesson boards which hung on the walls, and slates were placed before those who sat in a row; but it did not appear that any thing was done; and never before had so much squalling been heard from the younger, and so much clamour from the elder boys. The girls, who had one end of the room to themselves, almost all laughed or cried as the confusion increased, till every needle was dropped, and all the knitting pins stood still. Pleasance let matters take their course while she seemed to be making a great friendship with two of the oldest,—decidedly the two idlest and surliest boys in the school. When the clock struck, she remembered that it was time she was looking for the funeral from Key's Court, and assured the children that their master would soon be back; reminding them what they had to expect if they did not happen to hit his fancy by their diligence in the mean time.

"O, don't go," cried one or two little voices; but they were silenced by some wiser companions, who jogged their elbows, and whispered that there would be a better chance of pleasing their master if Mrs. Pleasance would take herself off.

"Can't you let us out before he comes back? Just for once!" besought some of the timid.

“ Dear me ! No. What am I to say about the sums and the writing not being done ? You must do all that first, or you know what will become of you. So, mind, I warned you.”

And Pleasance was gone. The big boys seemed disposed for play, for they would carry away one of the girls’ benches, and place it behind the door, and jump up and down, making such a clatter that no arithmetic could be done in their neighbourhood. The less boisterous could not settle to any employment, but stole perpetually to the window to peep for their master.

“ Here he comes !” cried one of the girls, at length. “ He looks rarely bad, to be sure, to-day. You, there ! Make haste to your places ! Here he comes, I tell you !”

The two big boys did not choose, however, to go to their places. They mounted the form, after snatching, the one a ruler from the desk, the other the broom with which the school-room was swept. Every body stared ; some giggled, and two or three cheered.

Those who cheered had some idea of what was going to take place. They started from their seats at the click of the latch. There was little time for any one to observe how very ill the master indeed seemed. The two wretches behind the door threw themselves upon him, laid him flat in an instant, and kicked and beat him brutally while he was on the ground, telling him that such was the way to serve those who played the tyrant, and kept people shut up

against their will.—It was a minute or two before Waters was offered any assistance by the better disposed among his scholars; and when they did rush to his rescue, they were so much less strong than his foes, that his best chance seemed to lie in an unobserved escape from a general fight. The girls proved his best defence. Their screams brought in several of the old men from the yard, who laid about them with their sticks, raised poor Waters, and seated him on the bench.

“Give me my crutch,” cried he, before he had had a moment’s time to recover himself. “I will have my crutch;” and he attempted to snatch it from the friendly hand that would have obliged him to sit still and regain his breath. He would not listen to any fears, or answer any questions about his being hurt; and twitched his coat from those who would have brushed off the dust with which it was covered. It was thought best to give him his crutch, that he might get out of the way of the children, to whom the sight of his passion was a triumph. He sped across the yard,—scarcely like a cripple, and appeared before Orger while the old men were still looking after him from the school-room, and wondering whether John Waters had ever been so put out before.

“Bless my soul! Waters, what is the matter with you?” cried Orger, starting from his seat at the sight of his visitor.

“I’ve given up keeping your school, Mr. Orger. If you had been any thing like a man,

you would never have put me into it. I wash my hands of you all, and you especially.—No, I *won't* stop a moment. You've made mockery enough of me already, among you.—No,—nobody has belied you. There's no need; for you are all alike. I've done with you, every one."

He waived off every attempt at reply, and was gone, leaving Orger in a state of wonder that he should have got a man of so violent a temper appointed to the school. If he had had the least suspicion that poor meek John Waters was subject to such passion as this, he should never have exposed him to the irritation of managing parish children. He sat down to his accounts again, hoping to set all right with Waters when he should have grown cool.

He was presently roused from his calculations by becoming sensible that the paupers in the yard were flitting past his window in unusual numbers, and with strange rapidity. On looking out, he perceived that all the inmates seemed to be pouring out at the doors, or gazing from the windows. Something was certainly happening near the outhouses.

"What is it, Jones?"

"A man is dead, it's like, by the way they're carrying him."

Orger was instantly on the spot; and in two minutes more, Waters was brought into his room, everybody but a nurse and one steady man excluded, and the porter sent to bring the surgeon.

“ I can bleed him : rip up his sleeve, nurse. Toss those flowers into the grate, and bring the basin. Get those people moved away from about the window. We must have air. If his neck is not broken, we shall recover him. He cannot have hung more than a minute.”

The person who found him thought he saw him move his feet a little, the nurse said. The life could hardly be out of the body yet.—The life was not out of the body. Presently there came a slight, struggling attempt at a sigh. The blood began to flow, and the surgeon’s work was half done before any signal was given of his approach.

“ Here he comes,” declared the assistant, seeing that the groups in the yard were making way. “ No ; ’tis the wife. Shall we keep her out, sir ?”

“ Keep her out !” said Orger, indignantly. “ Go you out yourself, and show her the way in. You may stay outside. We shall want no more help now but the surgeon’s.”

It was scarcely conceivable how Mrs. Waters’s eyes could be so swollen already ; and she was not now in tears. She laid her hand on her husband’s forehead, and he opened his eyes, and closed them again.

“ How are you now, John ?” said she.

He groaned, and turned his head from her. His wife sprinkled his face again with water ; but he raised his hand, as if to push it away. His lips moved with an attempt to speak.

“What is it you say, love?” said she, leaning over him.

“’Tis not that. Leave me alone.”

She drew back, and sat down, watching every breath he took. He certainly breathed stronger. —After a long pause,

“You are better now, John. If we raise you up—”

“No, no. I am more ill than you think,” said he, seeming suddenly to rouse himself, and looking upwards with wide-opened eyes. “I hope the doctor will say I shall die.”

“O, John! you have other children to live for.”

“Better not talk of dying,” interposed the nurse, while Orger was meditating what Mrs. Waters’s words might mean. “Why should you think of dying, when you—”

“Because I cannot live,” said the poor man, faintly. “I have been struggling to live, all my days, and every body has been against me; and the best thing for me is to go away from them all.”

Orger, seeing the expression of utter misery in the wife’s countenance, sent away the nurse, hoping to give, at the same time, evidence of his own opinion that the patient was doing very well, and the relief of being without indifferent witnesses. The moment she was gone, Mrs. Waters said, in a low voice, to Orger,

“I am sure, sir, he is far from being himself. It is so unlike John to complain of people in

this way! His trouble has been too much for him."

"His act shows that. But he will be himself when we have relieved him of his trouble. No more shall be said to him about the school."

The school!—Mrs. Waters knew nothing yet of that sad grievance. When Orger had related to her the story, as he had just heard it from his assistant, the wife spoke briefly of a much greater woe.—The master might well look pale when he came back to the school. His son Tom had been detected in a theft upon his employer, and was about to have his indentures broken. The tale was told to Orger in as few words as possible; but the mother could not pass over her firm persuasion that the boy had had foul play. She could say nothing against the act. It was too clear against him. But she was certain he had been frightened or seduced into it, to serve some other person's purposes.—Whose purposes?—That might be no easy matter to find out, in a place like this, where everybody seemed to have some deep purpose or another, and plain, simple people had no chance, either in earning their daily bread, or bringing up their children to be honest. The same people who had ruined Tom had now to answer for crazing his father.

"I trust not," said Orger. "We must turn his thoughts to common things,—immediately, if possible. We may find out,—but I wish the surgeon would come,—whether his fall, or the injuries he may have received in the school—

room, have affected his head.—Waters,” said he to the poor man, who seemed to be eyeing them, “what is the most you have earned in a week by your shoemaking, since your employer left off supplying the workhouse with shoes?”

“O, I forget: but I believe ten shillings a week was the very utmost. And then I had a large family to provide for. Very generally it has been less than ten, or half ten.”

“So I told some of the vestry, when they were fixing what families might live for,” said Orger. “I told them something about the kind of living that respectable, independent people made out of earnings like your’s; and I had you in my mind’s eye at the time.”

“We lived very fairly then,” observed Mrs. Waters, stifling a sigh.

“You had meat, I dare say. One question was, whether any meat could be got in such a case as I put.”

“Yes: we had some little meat in a week, sir.”

“And all for me,” said Waters, now joining in the conversation. “For all I could say, nobody was to touch meat but me. It used quite to hurt my mind sometimes, sir.”

“We had the dripping,” observed the wife. “Two pounds of meat on Saturdays lasted some way into the week for my husband, who wanted it, to fit him for his work, more than we did. Then we used to get fried potatoes for dinner; so that we all had the use of the dripping.”

“And what had you morning and evening?”

“Coffee and bread ; and sometimes milk or tea instead of coffee. There was half a pound of butter, now and then. You know my husband earned a little matter by other ways than his shoemaking. But we had many mouths to feed. It was not often that the children got a bit of butter or cheese.”

“I have often thought of that,” said Waters, “when I was concerned in my office about the vestry dinners. Those parish dinners have once or twice made away in a year with a third of the year’s rate. When I saw the venison, and all the fine things, going to be eaten by the managers of a charity I was above asking for my family, I could not help thinking bitterly of how seldom my children tasted meat.”

“And we had not a fair chance in other ways,” observed the wife. “Those that hang upon the rates can more easily get credit than such a man as my husband. There was a way till lately, sir, by which the paupers got credit, and the overseer saved himself trouble. The overseer would just let Mr. Dixon know how much would be due to such a pauper, and such, at the end of a week or a month ; and then Mr. Dixon knew to what amount he might let them take out bread.”

“I know. I got a stop put to that practice. But I should think it was never any real evil to you to find it difficult to buy upon credit. Part of your good name comes of your paying your way honestly ; which I understand you have always done.

Waters thought the less that was said of their good name the better. It was gone now, and was not worth trying after any more. No man had ever tried harder for a good name than he; and since he had tried in vain—

Orger wondered how he could speak in this way. He believed, if the parish was canvassed, there would be a universal testimony to Waters's deserts.

“Then why has my life been what it has been, sir? The natural wages of my employment have been deranged by the plotting and managing as to supplying the workhouse with shoes. It has been impossible for us to live in a neighbourly way among the people of the parish, helping one another as we should; for they have all run to the parish for what help they wanted, and had none to give us without hire. And did not they inveigle my boy to taste gin first, and now, they say——But *I* say that if he has done any thing much amiss, it is owing to the deceit and plotting he came to a knowledge of among his neighbours. His very being thought of, and put to Guthrie's was a trick of Gillingham's; and my opinion is that Guthrie has been put up to a trick to get rid of him, and that it was done by seducing the boy himself into a trick. How does it signify what the parish thinks of me, if this is the way it treats me?”

While saying these last words, Waters started up, or began to do so; but he suffered so se-

verely from the effort, that it seemed to embitter his thoughts more than ever.

“They have finished all to-day,” said he, with a groan. “The children that I used to indulge in their play in the churchyard,—the same little things that my wife had always a kind look and word for, have made cruel game of me to-day, and trampled upon me. They treated me like any idiot,—as I was when I took charge of them.—And I have some recollection, sir, of quarrelling with you, though I am not clear how it was. If I was off my guard, it was they that made me so. I suppose they will not have done till they have robbed me of my last friend.”

“Stop him, sir; for God’s sake!” cried Mrs. Waters.

Orger perceived, he said, that John’s memory was somehow treacherous to-day. Great things seemed small, and small things great. Nothing had been said to himself that was worth remembering; and as to the insolence of two or three school-boys,—it was a very sad thing for themselves, but could not hurt John, any further than the bruises which it was to be feared he had got. But how came John to forget the vicar, and some others of the first men in the parish, when he called Orger his last friend?

Waters did not mean to deny the vicar’s good will to him, nor that of Mr. Thorn and some other gentlemen: but what could they do for a man who was above asking charity, and wanted only the common justice of being allowed to earn his bread and bring up his children as

his religion would have him? The vicar could not help the goings on in parish matters, and could not therefore remedy Waters's misfortunes. He had done what a Christian clergyman could in persuading him to patience,——

“But yet your patience left you sadly, to-day, John,” said the wife, “when you forgot your other children in your distress about one. The comfort of my life is gone. I shall never dare to let you out of my sight again.”

“O, yes, you will,” interposed Orger: “and you must not lose your patience, Mrs. Waters, nor forget that your husband is not so fit to bear a shock as people that are in health. I hope he will let himself be well nursed till he is strong, and then all that has happened may be looked upon as illness.—Here comes the surgeon. He will tell us how soon you may expect to be well, John.”

John's affliction now was about the fatigue he should impose upon Prissy; and he suddenly awakened to a sense of the cruelty he had been guilty of towards her, in attempting to leave her to bear the full weight of cares which he could not endure. His prayers for forgiveness from her were too agonizing to be permitted in his present state. The surgeon and Orger were obliged to put on quiet looks, and question John about his aches and pains, while Mrs. Waters received a hint to draw back out of sight till she could recover herself.

John was easily persuaded, out of consideration for her, to go to the infirmary. He was

severely bruised, and likely to be for some time in a state of nervous excitement which rendered his poor home an improper place for him. Orger would take him to the infirmary in a coach directly:—an offer which was thankfully accepted; for, even in the midst of his many troubles, it had entered John's confused mind that he could not consent to go in one of the sedan-chairs of the workhouse.

“ You will find yourself so comfortable there, Waters, that you will be willing to lie still till you feel yourself more fit to move about than you have done for a long while.—Well; don't trouble your head to-day about what is to be done without you at home.—Shall you still be beadle?—To be sure. You will be more fit than you were before. You may trust to the vicar for watching over your interests. He will not let you be supplanted; and nobody will desire to supplant you. I only wish, John, that we were quite as sure that you would bear in mind some things that the vicar has pressed upon you,—upon ‘ the weary and heavy laden,’—as that he will not forget you and yours.”

John covered his eyes with his hand, while Orger went on.

“ No one dared to say that you were too anxious while you felt that your family depended on you, and that you could not do for them what you knew to be necessary: but now that it is God's will that you should be laid by for a while,—now is the time to show him whether you can trust him.—And if you find, as I

am sure you will, that in this time of need he raises up help to your family, you will be much to blame if you ever after——”

“ Say no more, sir. I see it all.”

“ Well, John, is there anything else I can do for you when I have put you into Mrs. Watson’s hands ?”

John could not take anything more kindly than Mr. Orger’s going with him to the infirmary. Orger disclaimed all credit for so doing ; and indeed John was not aware how glad Mr. Orger was of any opportunity of going to that place. There was one thing more which might give relief to Waters. Would Mr. Orger be kind enough to see, at his convenience, the master shoemaker, and reason with him about the high prices he put upon workhouse shoes ;—prices which threw the bargain with the workhouse into other hands, and deprived some of the oldest of his workmen of their bread ? If the workhouse would but take shoes as before ! O ! John had no thought of expecting that the workhouse should buy dear shoes when it could get cheap ; but if the shoes could be once more provided in the parish, it would make all the difference in the world to him, and to another whom he knew to be almost as ill off as himself.

Orger readily promised to do his best to persuade the shoemaker. He did not tell Waters that he was convinced his errand would be in vain. But such was his conviction, because he saw that the shoemaker hoped, not without reason, that the parish would soon be in its old

state again, and that capital bargains might be made, as formerly, by tradesmen, in the absence of a paid overseer.

No time was lost in removing Waters, as his wife was anxious to get back to her unhappy son Tom, and Orger to adopt some vigorous measures about the school, and the culprits who were detained there, awaiting their sentence, and plotting resistance to it. It was not till the coach moved slowly away that the paupers indulged in any contemptuous remarks about Waters. There was something in Orger's face and manner that kept them silent while the patient was within hearing.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PASTOR AND HIS FLOCK.

MARY Kinnear had opportunity to make a great many riddles for her papa's amusement, for he was very little at home when the cholera spread in the neighbourhood of Key's Court, so as to cause much alarm in the parish. No patient in that court had recovered or died without receiving some kind office from the vicar's own hands; and it seemed probable that some lives had been saved by his presence. Confidence, first in his judgment, and then in his experi-

ence, gave strength to the friends and stimulus to the nurses ; and it was frequently remarked, in a grateful spirit, that it was well he did not absent himself on the plea that spiritual aid was out of the question in a disease of this nature. In the dreadful agony, and the surrounding bustle of this malady, nothing is possible but to use with all rapidity the methods which may or may not be useful ; and many clergymen, the people said, might have thought they had done their duty when they had ascertained that the requisite comforts were not absent from a scene where surgeons and nurses were the proper agents. But no surgeon could persuade the patients not to importune for cold water, as Dr. Kinnear did ; and no nurse had his power of keeping the family of the patient in a state of quietness. His step was watched for on the creaking stair of many an upper chamber ; and the wearied assistants sent glances through the windows in search of him, from dawn till the moment of his appearance.

Widow Burcham, whose husband had died of the disease soon after it was first heard of in the parish, lived with her three children in a ground floor room in this court. She was reduced by her husband's death to great poverty, and had willingly listened to the proposal of taking a lodger to help her to pay the rent of her good sized apartment, rather than leave it for a smaller. Pleasance Nudd knew a little of widow Burcham, and had been kind enough to get her a lodger. Indeed, it was Pleasance who had put the scheme

into her head, and the very next day brought a young woman who was kind enough to excuse the widow's distraction of mind, and her being scarcely able to take any notice of her lodger, from terror and grief about her little girl,—her only girl,—who seemed to be dropping down in the disease. The young woman was so obliging as to want no assistance about her accommodation; but got quietly to bed at one end of the room, while Pleasance stayed to help the unhappy mother and the little patient at the other. It was very unfortunate that the lodger should be a patient also before the morning. All the neighbours that heard it were solely grieved for poor Mrs. Burcham, and expected to see the whole family laid low by the disease. Several were talking of it in the court when the vicar came, after his early breakfast; and Mrs. Burcham's name was the first he heard. It was not omitted in the tale that Pleasance had conducted herself most meritoriously. She would not allow Mrs. Burcham's child to suffer for the sake of a person that she had brought into the house. She had had enough experience to want no help, and the young woman seemed to wish to have nobody else about her. If she got through, it would be all owing to Pleasance; and indeed, Pleasance thought that she had already a better chance than poor Mrs. Burcham's child.

The vicar lost no time in offering his assistance. On seeing him, the mother burst into tears, and, pointing to the livid, shrunken face

which appeared above the bed-clothes, said she hardly fancied she was in her right mind when she looked there and did not know her own child. One little boy stood twirling his peg-top and gazing uneasily, while his elder brother pulled his fore-lock to get notice, and then eagerly told the clergyman that the doctor said, last thing, that Sally was better. The woman who was busy about the bed was also sure that a change for good had taken place within two hours, and she really thought the child would get through. Dr. Kinnear was presently so nearly assured that this was the case, as to have some thoughts to spare for the patient at the other end of the room. All was so quiet there,—the curtains drawn close, and no complaints or movements heard,—that he moved towards Mrs. Burcham, who was then mending the fire, to make his inquiries in a whisper. He stood with his back to the fire while doing so, and, as it happened, in sight of a looking-glass which slanted from the wall, reflecting the greater part of that corner of the room which the drawn curtains otherwise concealed. The first accidental glance showed him Pleasance, in such an attitude, and with such a countenance as not only fixed his attention, but made him grasp Mrs. Burcham's arm that she might see it too. Pleasance sat on the side of the bed, holding something at arm's length on her knees, and staring at the wall, her lips compressed, and her face paler, if possible, than ever. That which was covered up on her lap certainly moved.

"Have you heard a child cry?" demanded the vicar in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes, sir, twice just now: but she said it was a neighbour and her baby at the window behind there,—come to inquire."

Dr. Kinnear strode round the bed, and laid his hand on Pleasance's shoulder. He could scarcely perceive that she started. Even now she could smile. Before she had time to drawl, he had pulled aside her apron, and found,—what he had expected,—a dead infant,—strangled;—the string still round its neck.

The mother must know nothing of this, was his second thought,—rejecting the passing idea of its being partly the mother's work. In two moments, he was out of the room, with the victim and the murderer. Pleasance, as she passed out, looked as idiotic as anybody had ever seen her. Even the widow said at the moment that she would go on looking so till she was out of this scrape.

Mrs. Burcham stayed no longer from her child than to see what room Pleasance was taken to, while the constable was sent for, and attempts were being made to restore the infant. It was well she returned when she did. Her lodger was dressing herself. Whether she would have attempted an escape by the window or the door could not be known, as she was arrested in her purpose.

"You will please to get into bed again," said Mrs. Burcham. "Neighbour,"—calling to her assistant, "do you look to the young

woman while I tend my child.—Don't lose sight of her till the proper people come," she added in a whisper.

"Why, Charlotte Lucas!" cried the neighbour, much shocked, "what brought you to such a place as this?"

"My father turned me out."

"And your mother?"

"She is ill. She does not know. She won't miss me."

The neighbour knew that Charlotte was not one of those daughters whose mothers miss them most in illness; and she asked no more. She had the discretion and kindness to advise Charlotte to say nothing to any person whatever, and to keep herself as quiet as she could. Yet she could not be sorry to hear, some time after, deep sobs which she hoped were some signs of remaining grace.

A crowd attended Pleasance to the magistrate's,—a crowd divided in sentiment. Some few groaned, and would have had every body else groan; but the majority remained silent from their uncertainty whether the woman was sane or not. Many who had before given her credit for a sufficient portion of sense, now doubted,—so vacant and quiet was her countenance as she walked on. It seemed incredible that any conscious person could look so, who had felt such a quiver and convulsion as had taken place under her hands within an hour.

Mr. Gillingham took care that the crowd should have due notice to enable them to follow

his officers and see his warrant executed upon Guthrie. He had no objection to Pleasance's defence escaping from the justice room, and getting buzzed about in the street. The poor silly creature said that she had strangled the child, because Guthrie had asked her to do it as soon as it was born; and she had promised not to tell any body. And she should not have told any body, if the vicar had not found it out: so she hoped his worship would not let Guthrie find any fault with her.

Patty was sitting smilingly in the little parlour at home, stitching a wristband, while her cousin William was amusing her with making droll sketches of her mother, who did not seem to see that they were in the room, when somebody burst into the shop, in such a hurry as to make the bell on the half door ring as if it would never cease. Even Mrs. Guthrie looked up, and Patty cried,—

“Have done, William, will you? There's somebody wanting me.”

The “somebody” did not give her the trouble of moving from her seat. Lucas and three dogs stood before her in an instant.

“Where's your damned father?”

“One would think you knew where to look for him by the words you use, Mr. Lucas. If you will leave your message, he shall have it safe.”

“Then tell him——No: 'tis not fit for you to hear.”

"Then I'm sure it is not fit for him. I hear all that is said to my father, sooner or later."

"For your own sake, child, never say that again. You don't know what it may bring upon you. If I find him——"

"Go with him, William, can't you? He will set his dogs upon my father.—There! hark to their voices!—Mercy! I must go."

William held her back. Her mother again looked up, as if longing for peace and quiet.

"O! don't listen, William. Go away! Go away this minute, or I'll never speak to you again," cried Patty, as she heard Lucas upbraiding her father for Charlotte's seduction, and the disgrace of her family.

"I did not think your father had been such a scoundrel, Patty. 'Tis too late now. I hear it all as well as you. If my own mother had told it of him, I would not have believed it."

"I wonder what you would have said if you had seen the valentines he used to send me," sulkily observed the wife. "He said then he should never change."

"And now you will think I kept this from you on purpose, all this time;" said Patty to William.

William kept silence.

"How should we know?" she continued. "Who was likely to tell us?"

"I can answer for you," said the mother, "that you never knew a word of it till that evening,—the same evening that we had the

newspaper that your father did not like. It was the 12th of May, I remember."

Patty stole a glance at William's face, met his eye, and repented of her glance.

"I am sure, William, you would not think of exposing a parent——"

"Not needlessly. Not to those who had no business with it," replied William, gravely.

"Now you are going to quarrel with me. Now you are going to give me up," said Patty, breathlessly.

"Not for any thing your father has done, Patty. You had no part in his doings;—or, rather, you need have had no part in them——"

"But it was no more than natural to hold my tongue."

"I see you know what I was going to say. Nothing could be more natural than to hold your tongue, if that had been all. Then, if I had heard of this affair, I should only have been anxious to take you away the sooner. But, if you look back to all that has passed between us since the 12th of May, you will see that there has been more on your part than holding your tongue. You will see——"

"I see that you want a hole to creep out of. Here is one,—big enough for you,"—and she insultingly opened the single-pane window. "You had better make haste, for here comes the parish to mob us. If you make haste, you can hide yourself in the saw-pit. Good bye, cousin William. If they pull my father to pieces, my mother and I can do without you."

"Do you think they will pull your father to pieces?" asked Mrs. Guthrie, rising to see how the street was filling. "I never thought of such a thing."

"Not you: or you would not have gone about, letting Mrs. Goose and Miss Lane get out of you whatever was in your mind."

William had not forsaken Patty. He was only gone to warn Guthrie to make his escape. Lucas would have prevented this, however, even if Gillingham's officers had not been already at the door.

Patty turned her face away as her father showed himself at the parlour door.

"God help me!" cried he, leaning his forehead against the door-post. "Nobody,—not my own child believes a word I say."

"Believes you!" said Patty, laying down the work which in bravado she had taken up. "Why, father, do you mean to say you have not done it?"

"I have sworn it twenty times, and I swear it again. I have sworn it twenty times."

"On Owlshurst heath, I suppose, where nobody could hear you."

"You would not hear me, any of you. You bore me down. You——"

"Make them wait for me," cried Patty to William, as she darted past him, and flew up stairs. Almost before the officers could receive the request to wait, she was down again, with her bonnet on.

"Go on, father. Lucas is outside, poisoning

the people's minds. Good bye, cousin William. You and my mother can take care of one another; and if you sit in that far corner, nobody will see that you are here; and we won't tell,—nor my mother either, if you ask her not."

William neither looked angry nor smiled at her taunts. He made haste to call Lucas to account for prejudicing the mob against the overseer. Lucas denied that he had done any such thing. He had not spoken a word beyond his next neighbours in the crowd. His looks of bitter contempt, however, had had more effect than any words. When Guthrie showed himself, a howl arose which made even Patty's heart sink within her.

"There is Dixon," said William to her. "He looks as if he wanted to get to us to speak to us. He will let us through his premises, so as to reach Mr. Gillingham's by the back way. I will go and ask him."

"No need," said Patty. "We never asked favours of Dixon before, and I am sure I shall not begin now."

Dixon bustled and pushed his way, with a look of solemn condolence. He addressed himself to Guthrie.

"My dear fellow, this is a shocking business. That, of all people, it should have happened to an overseer! I feel it acutely. Cannot it be hushed up? Is it too late to hush it up?"

"Not if you can lay the parish to sleep for a twelvemonth, Mr. Dixon," answered Patty.

"Upon my soul, I would do any thing in

my power to stop the affair. Lucas, you should remember something besides your parental feelings. Think of the scandal to an overseer! Private feeling should be set aside when——”

“Do make way, Mr. Dixon. You can have your talk out when we come back again,—in less of a hurry. And then, perhaps, you may know better what you are talking about.”

“You don’t expect to bring your father back with you, Miss Patty? I cannot allow you to be deceived. It is a very serious case.”

“For those whom it concerns. Who those are, you may know better than my father. You cannot know less.”

Dixon was unaware that Guthrie had even attempted to deny the charge. He had had no opportunity yet, and Dixon seemed determined to give him none now, Patty thought; so anxious did he seem to detain the party.

The vicar’s presence was so far a restraint upon Mr. Gillingham, as to oblige him to maintain something like impartiality. Pleasance was, of course, particularly crazy. The only thing that she seemed at all collected about was Guthrie’s order to her to put the baby out of sight, and to tempt Tom Waters to run away. Nobody who heard what she had to say,—rambling as most of it was, and the whole unsubstantiated by any witness,—could think it such as would justify a man’s being committed to prison. There was no reason to suppose that Guthrie knew or cared anything about the baby. Charlotte had taken no oath, nor even made any

direct assertion against him; and the by-standers were of opinion,—some that it was a hallucination, others that it was a plot,—of Pleasance Nudd's. The crowd soon learned that Pleasance would no doubt be found guilty of lunacy on her trial; and they separated, agreeing, as they walked away, that it was a wonder people were so anxious to be overseers, their situation exposing them before all others to be made a convenience of. If a pauper went crazy, too, the first person likely to be annoyed was the overseer; and it was well known that more people go crazy among paupers than out of any other class. Nothing is more natural than that those who take their fill of gin on pay-days, and then fast more or less till next pay-day, should go wrong in the head sooner than others; and being subject to their fancies or their malice is what every man should lay his accounts for when he lets himself be made overseer.

The vicar remained with Mr. Gillingham when the prisoner had been carried off, and when Guthrie and his daughter had departed on the disappearance of the last of the mob. He wished to know whether the question of Charlotte's settlement was really to be litigated.

"To be sure, sir. What was the law made for, if it is not to be acted upon? The case is removed into the Court of King's Bench."

"But you have not the majority of the parish with you."

"We must do our duty, sir, for all that."

"What sort of duty?"

“ To the girl and to the parish, sir. Here we shall have to pay the apothecary nobody knows how much, this time and on any future occasion. And she has rights, sir, as well as ourselves. She must be protected.”

“ Whether she has rights in any other parish is, we think in vestry, too doubtful a matter to be put to so expensive an issue. As for protection to the girl,—it seems to me a strange kind of protection. Not to stir the question of whether it has corrupted her,—it has certainly taken her out of the care of her father and the pale of her family, exposed her to the suspicion of being concerned in this murder, and——”

“ What can you mean, Dr. Kinnear?”

“ I mean that whoever put it into her head that she had a claim on a distant parish for pay for nursing her mother, brought her into contact with a bad set of people. She was degraded in her father’s eyes by her appearance before the vestry as an applicant. He was hardened against her when her disgrace became known to him; and, instead of concealing her shame, and trying to reclaim her, he cast her out, throwing her upon the tender mercies of Pleasance Nudd. Then comes all this plot against Guthrie——”

“ Plot, my dear sir!”

“ Yes,—plot. Now that Guthrie’s daughter has taken the matter up, I expect the whole parish will know before sunset that Guthrie is as ignorant of the whole affair as I am myself. I am firmly persuaded that he knows nothing about it. Well; here is the persecution of

Guthrie, the complete corruption of the girl from the deplorable exposure, and the expense of a law-suit which the party to be protected would never have proposed, because the protection would not have been wanted. Lucas is far from being a poor man. Why you should be so anxious to put one of his children upon the rates, against his will, is more than I can account for."

Gillingham did not think it necessary to enter on a defence of the law of settlement. His business was to see that its protection was secured while it was the law.

"Certainly, when it is asked for, and no advantageous compromise is to be had. But, in this case, there has been a going out of the way to plunge the parish into a great expense, to the injury of all the parties concerned."

"We have the power, sir, and we are responsible to no one for the use of it. You may bring the whole parish at your heels, and it will be of no use. The thing is done, sir. We have the power, sir; and you cannot point out any responsibility."

"That is the very thing to be lamented. I do wish, Mr. Gillingham, that while you boast of your freedom from legal responsibility, you would calmly review the moral responsibility of magistrates in a case like this. Consider that this is the only security the parish has."

"If it is not good enough, sir, you had better petition for a better."

"We are going to do so. Meantime, you

must be aware that the importance of your trust justifies any anxiety, any strength of remonstrance on our part. I have no appeal to make on my own account; but I do implore you, on behalf of my parish, to consider what you do in putting in force the law and the power that you hold, against the wills and the interests of almost the entire society amidst which you live."

Mr. Gillingham bowed stiffly; and the vicar proceeded to concert with a wiser and better magistrate, how to set forth to government, with the utmost force, the grievances under which the parish suffered, and how most persuasively to propose the principles which must afford redress.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### WHO PETITIONS AND WHO RULES.

THE rate-payers who were dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs, and who found all their efforts after co-operation, for the purpose of introducing reforms, rendered abortive by the opposition of one popularity-hunting magistrate, considered it their duty to put on record their sense of the faults of the system under which they suffered. The following petition was soon before the eyes of every inhabitant of the parish.

“To the Honourable the Commons, &c.,  
the Petition, &c. &c.

“Sheweth,

“That the powers granted by law to open vestries, in respect of administering relief to the poor, are so involved in doubt and obscurity, that it is difficult to declare what authority in respect of such relief belongs to an open vestry, or whether it has any authority at all.

“That the practical influence of an open vestry being, notwithstanding, very great in every parish where it exists, it becomes of the highest importance to ascertain whence this influence is derived, and to what purposes it is most naturally applied.

“That such authority is derived from the personal influence of those of its members who are most important from their station, wealth, or activity. As there are inducements for most members of rank, and all belonging to a profession, to absent themselves, and for all who can derive advantage from certain modes of expenditure of the parish funds to be peculiarly active in their attendance, the influence of the vestry is lodged in the hands of these last.

“That the strongest temptation being thus offered to waste and malversation, and no check existing but the interest which each rate-payer has in the reduction of the rate, the influence of the vestry is naturally, if not commonly, applied to purposes of corrupt patronage, jobbing, and private interest in every form.

“That though certain open vestries have, by

the intrepidity of benevolent individuals, or the public spirit of whole parishes, constituted themselves honourable exceptions to the censure more or less applicable to open vestries in general, yet, as their wise conduct depends on the virtue of individuals, and not on any principle of the system under which they act, such exceptions are to be regarded as fortunate and temporary accidents, and not as any vindication of the principle of their constitution.

“That the evils inherent in the constitution of open vestries were attempted to be obviated by the establishment of select or representative vestries, consisting of from five to twenty elected rate-payers, besides the clergyman, church-wardens, and overseers for the time being.

“That though the introduction of this method of management has proved highly beneficial in numerous cases, it has failed to banish the abuses which it was designed to obviate.

“That the members of the representative, being selected from among those of the open vestries, are exposed to the same corrupting influences. They are equally free from responsibility for the abuses which they may have admitted or continued. Moreover, wherever it happens to be the interest of the constituency by whom they are elected, to perpetuate abuses, the select vestry is most likely to be composed of those who will most readily pledge themselves to the continuance of bad practices.

“That in proportion as select vestries are found to be an efficient check upon the selfish

interests of the bulk of the rate-payers, they are liable to be discontinued, and the old system resorted to. Accordingly, there has been a great and accelerated diminution in the number of representative vestries, three hundred having been closed of the 2868 which existed in 1827.

“That though by making vestry decisions final, one great class of evils,—those arising from magisterial interference,—would be lessened or excluded, and by other specific methods specific grievances might be remedied, there can be no security for a wise and virtuous parochial government till the administration of parochial funds and influence is committed to disinterested persons responsible to a disinterested head,—contrary to the proposition that every parish is the best manager of its own affairs.

“That a tribunal and conditions of relief might be established by which economy might be secured, partial interference prevented, the claims of rate-payers and rate-receivers adjusted, and their rights defined, and the intrigues and heart-burnings which perplex and embitter the intercourse of neighbours in a badly regulated parish wholly excluded.

“That the institution of district boards, acting through salaried officers, and responsible to a central board, would answer the purposes proposed.

“That, finally, instead of the interests of several thousands of persons in a parish being at the mercy of a few irresponsible managers, placed in circumstances of strong temptation,

your petitioners desire to see those extensive interests placed under the protection of an administrative body which shall have at once the power and the inducement to make the support and discipline of the indigent consistent with the rights and interests of the independent.

“May it therefore, &c.”

It was very displeasing both to Gillingham and Dixon to pass groups of people assembled round the shop windows where this petition was exposed, and to see one respectable ratepayer after another turning into the place where the original was deposited for signature. As often as they observed an elderly man rubbing his spectacles, they looked to see how he was about to use them; and as they passed ale-houses where a reader was giving due emphasis to the several clauses, the magistrate could not help feeling as if the public mind was reckoning up his vexatious summonses, and the overseer looked for troublesome questions about hot bread and summer-made candles served to the workhouse, and perplexing investigations into his pauper relationships. Perhaps it would be the best plan to get up a counter petition, or occupy the parochial mind with an animated meeting for some purpose or another.

An occasion was not long wanting to those who were on the watch for one. The paupers had not been paid for a week; and when Orger was asked why he did not distribute the money, he answered that he had none. His salary had

not been duly discharged. He had given notice of the state of things to those whom it concerned; but no money was forthcoming. This afforded a charming opening for Dixon. He determined to have a meeting, to communicate his opinion that the rates were too low for the interest and honour of the parish; and he thought he could so manage the affair as to secure the attendance of friends alone.

The point of having the vestry meetings held earlier in the day had been carried some time before, as it happened to suit the convenience of most of the members. Dixon had not forgiven this opposition to his will; and now was the time for revenge. The notices were always given for eleven o'clock, in order that the paupers and others who were to attend upon the vestry might be in readiness on the arrival of the members, all of whom understood that the business would not begin before twelve. On this occasion it was Dixon's object to get the business over before the vicar and his other enemies (as he called them) should arrive; and a private intimation was therefore circulated among his friends that they must be on the spot at eleven precisely. They were so; and Dixon denied himself much declamation on the poverty by which the paupers were this week deprived of their rights. His eloquence was not needed, for his companions took his word for it that the rates were much too low, and spent a very few minutes in encouraging him to lay

on a heavier one than had been allowed since Orger came into office. They would have to bear their share of this rate—at least all who could not coax Dixon or frighten Guthrie into leniency towards them; but the paupers who stood by said very flattering things, and Gillingham would be pleased, and the vestry would get the name of being liberal once more; and besides, there would be a buying of high-priced goods by the paupers; and all these advantages together would more than compensate for the increased rate to each individual. To save appearances, they talked a good deal of economy, and found fault with one or two items of expenditure which Dixon presented but did not defend. The surgeon's charge for attendance and medicines for Charlotte was pronounced monstrous. Dixon mentioned in excuse that it was proposed under the idea that it was to be paid by another parish. As, however, the cause in the King's Bench was likely to be lost, the bill must be reduced, and there was no doubt of the surgeon being reasonable when he knew the state of the case.

It was a prodigious amusement to the victorious party to see the enemy gathering in the field too late. The very paupers, who understood the stratagem, lingered and laughed. They had been told that more had been gained to them by it than would ever be lost by all the petitioning of their foes; and the insolence of triumph was in their deportment.

"You had due notice, gentlemen, to meet at eleven o'clock," said Dixon. "I don't know what you have to complain of."

"Of your laying on a heavy new rate," said Guthrie, "when there is money owing to the parish. I am ready to pay 70*l.* that is due from me."

"So you are in debt to the parish, Mr. Guthrie, are you? Your servant, sir. You will excuse my not being aware of the fact."

"It relates to those accounts which I unfortunately exhibited in an imperfect state. It was a pure mistake,—owing to the hurry and confusion of my mind. It was Mr. Orger who helped me to find out the mistake; which was, that I had kept a separate account, for some reason that I forget now; and I forgot to insert it. I came down to say that instead of a balance of seven pound odd in my favour, there is a balance of 70*l.* against me. It would have been forthcoming with the interest, and you might have been saved the laying on the new rate."

Dixon laughed vehemently at Guthrie's ingenuous disclosure; but he was obliged to stop, to listen to Orger's question whether there were not still funds in reserve.

"What funds should there be?" Dixon asked. He was always guarded in his replies to Orger, whose knowledge and accurate memory made him a formidable interrogator.

Was Dixon ready to swear that the money in Messrs. Taylor and Snipe's hands, for which he

was receiving five per cent. interest, was not parish money, but his own?

It was money which he had a fair title to use, Dixon said. Not his own, certainly, in the common sense of the term, but his own to use till the end of the parochial year. It had always been an understood thing in the parish that it was not necessary for the overseers to deliver in on the instant what was collected. The money in question was what Orger had nothing to do with;—arrears which Dixon had taken the trouble himself to collect,—recently,—very recently; and it would shortly be paid in.

“With the 5 per cent. interest, if you please,” said the vicar. “When the vestry happens to have a little money beforehand,—which is seldom enough the case,—we cannot get more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. interest. We shall feel ourselves obliged to you for introducing us to a better investment.”

Dixon had no intention of attending to the vicar’s words; but he left off laughing at his brother overseer. The vicar passed on to make his inquiries of certain of the paupers who had sick children, or some other cause of trouble at home. Orger followed him, looking rather disconsolate.

“Sir, what is to be done?”

“About these money matters? Why, we seem equally at the mercy of the honest man and the—the consultor of his own convenience. I think we must take care to be in time another day, and propose that all the funds

shall be lodged in the bank as they are collected; and that it shall be for the vestry to draw."

"And if the vestry should not agree to your plan?"

"Then we must submit, I suppose, to leave our overseers without any other check than that of having to exhibit their accounts, and to pay their own share of an extravagant rate:—checks far too feeble for the case.—You shake your head, Mr. Orger. I am afraid you think we are getting from bad to worse in our parish affairs."

"I do not see how they can well be worse, sir. That the overseer and the pauper should be receiving interest for parish money while I cannot get my salary paid, is a grievance that I cannot but feel."

"The pauper get interest for money?"

"Yes, sir. Did not you hear? Pleasance Nudd is the one I mean.—O, yes; when we looked into her little affairs, the other day, on her being sentenced to the asylum, we discovered that she had forty-seven pounds out at interest. She was so much vexed at our finding it out, that you would hardly have taken her to be so wrong in the head as the judge and jury found her."

"Well; this is a reasonable relief to the parish. I suppose, however, her maintenance in the asylum will be expensive."

"Nine shillings a week. Her fund will last above two years, and when it is exhausted, she

will cost us less than she has done. It was next to impossible, even if our overseers had wished it, to guard against her devices for getting money from all in turn; and what she obtained on her own account, was nothing in comparison with what she stirred up others to claim. If we could shut up one or two more of our neighbours in like manner, we might do very well yet."

"Shutting out is better than shutting up," the vicar observed. "We cannot spare our manufacturers and our bakers from our society. The best kindness to poor Pleasance,—be she weak of head or corrupt at heart,—is to seclude her from the power of doing anything in society, because she can do only mischief. And it would be the best kindness to these other neighbours of ours to take from them the power which they use mischievously, and place it where it may benefit themselves and everybody else."

"Guthrie would say amen, if he heard you, sir. The cares of his office have heaped twenty years upon his head."

"And his clever daughter has lifted ten of them off again. Look at him as he stands now with something like a smile on his face. He was never seen with such a smile as that, from the day the newspaper interfered against him till his daughter took down Charlotte's confession in my presence. That was the best cross-examination I ever heard; and she had no better fortune than she deserved when she completely established her father's innocence."

“ And what said Lucas ? ”

“ He made more apologies than Guthrie was willing to receive, and has since cleared the cooper’s premises of rats. He feels how very nearly a worthy neighbour was sacrificed between his daughter and himself.”

“ He will not even smile with the neighbours when they make their natural remarks on poor Guthrie’s restored domestic happiness, which the wife takes care that everybody shall be aware of. He shows very proper feeling about that.”

“ He sees that if that happiness had not been unnaturally disturbed, it would not have had to be naturally restored. Let the wife be as foolish as she will, it does not become any one of the name of Lucas, or any fellow-parishioner of Guthrie’s, to smile sarcastically on the occasion.”

Orger was quite of this opinion, and his demeanour had previously shown that he was so. Indeed, any of his neighbours could testify that he had been guilty of many more sighs than smiles of late.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE REFORMER'S REWARD.

ORGER's friends at the infirmary were willing to allow all that he said in praise of situation and scenery when the leaves were out in the dell below, and the sloping garden was gay with flowers, and busy with the voices of those who were making trial of their returning strength in its cultivation. The terrace was admitted to look very tempting to a reviving patient when the morning sun shone upon its rows of trim plants: but neither Barbara nor her mother pretended to share Orger's admiration when his praises went on through dreary November, and rainy February, and windy March. There was one March day, however, when everybody who could seemed disposed to go to the window. The sun had shone into the matron's parlour so warm that Mrs. Watson could bear the window open at breakfast time, to let in the twittering and chirping from the copse below. It was just the day for poor little Bexley to attempt her first walk out of doors; and Barbara had leave to carry her down stairs, and superintend the one turn along the terrace and back again, which was all that was allowed. It was so long since the child had been abroad on her own limbs, that she did not know how to be moderate in

the use of them. She limped here, and she limped there, and made so many zigzags in her one walk along and back again, that Barbara found it the most prudent plan to spin out the pleasure, and seat her charge every minute, under pretence of getting her a flower, or a white butterfly, or whatever else came in sight that might be made a prize of. All this took up so much time, that Mrs. Watson put out her head from between two camellias to see what the pair of babies could be doing. All this exhausted the child's spirits too, so that when she was carried up-stairs again she was a little fretful, and Barbara contrived to be at leisure to hold her in her lap beside the window, where her charge might have the choice of looking out or dropping asleep. She sat down for this purpose in a window-seat which commanded the second best view in the ward where some of the convalescents were distributed.

" 'Tis a wider view here, miss," said Mrs. Waters, who had been just shown up to her husband, and was knitting beside him. " Do take a seat beside me, miss, if you won't take mine.—O, dear, no, ma'am; you can't disturb us and our talk. I have no secrets to tell my husband to day; and if I had—— "

To induce Waters to seat himself again, it was necessary to do as his wife desired; so Barbara was presently comparing the ways in which the two patients looked out upon the landscape;—the little girl keeping her head im-

moveable on her friend's bosom, while her eyes languidly followed the shadows from the clouds, moving now over meadows where the cattle did not look up to see what darkened their pasture, and now over fallows where flocks of birds flitted and settled by turns ;—Waters, in restless pleasure, rising and sitting down again, making out a cottage on the farthest hill,—a white cottage which his wife could not see, and laughing aloud at the frolics of two frisking ponies in a field. The town lay on the other side of the building, quite out of sight from this window : but some of its sounds came now and then with the gentle puffs of wind.

“ How oddly those bells go !” said the child, sleepily. “ They ring and leave off again every minute.”

“ What, my dear ?” said Barbara, stooping her head. “ Bells, did you say ?”

“ Yes, miss, the bells are ringing,” said Mrs. Waters, very smilingly ; “ and you may hear them, if you listen when the wind comes. They are bells that my husband has a right to know well.”

John rose, and once more looked towards the road to Owlshurst, which wound visibly from a near point till it was lost among the hills. His wife told him once more that there was no use in watching yet.

“ O, Miss Guthrie is married this morning, I suppose ; and you are looking to see the bride pass on her way home.”

“ We shall scarcely see the bride, miss, inside the chaise as she will be ; but we may chance to see somebody else sitting beside the driver. Our boy, miss, our Tom, is going to be servant to Mr. and Mrs. William.” Seeing Barbara look rather surprised, she continued, “ This may seem rather strange to those who know why his master was discontented with him ; but Miss Patty satisfied Mr. William how the boy had been tampered with, and driven into the offence, as it were, and Mr. William was equally satisfied of his repentance ; so he said that they should want a boy to keep his pony and the chaise, and work in the garden, and clean the shoes and knives, and be handy in the parlour, and drive the market cart, and help in the mill when he has nothing else to do, and——”

“ And is your Tom to do all that ?”

“ He is to learn, ma’am. His breeding has been of a different kind, so far ; but he is quick at learning, and will be more so, now a character is of the first consequence to him. We are only to find him one suit of clothes in a year ; and when he is found a clever servant in all these things, he is to have wages.”

“ It was Miss Guthrie that made that bargain with you, I dare say ?”

“ The part about the wages, miss ? Yes. But it is a happy one for us. It has taken a load off my husband’s mind, and mine likewise. He will be out of harm’s way in the country, his master having nothing to do with

overseers, and such people as are about them.—My heart was in my mouth, miss, as you will believe, when they sent for me on particular business, and desired me to bring Tom with me. I had the greatest mind to have left him behind, and sent him out somewhere, so as to be able to say I did not know where he was, in case of any harm being meant! But I am glad enough that I did not do anything so ill-mannered.”

Waters shook his head, without, however, looking very grave.

“And when we went, Tom slinking behind me, it was all so different from what we thought! Miss Patty’s best wedding things were some of them lying about; and as we went in quietly, as became us, they did not find us out, and Mr. William had on a cap with smart blue ribbons of Miss Patty’s, and he turned his head about and made faces before the glass, till my poor boy, that little thought to laugh in that house, had to step back into the shop to help bursting out. Miss Patty put on, when they saw me, being very angry with Mr. William; but she was not really offended, I’m sure.”

“Mrs. Guthrie was not there to tell them you were at the door, I suppose?”

“O, yes, she was: but she seemed the busiest of the three. She had lots of old papers before her, some of them with pretty cut and painted borders. These she kept calling Mr. William to come and read, and spoke very

prettily of how her husband used to admire her; and Mr. William called them all very pleasing; but I fancied he looked as if he had rather not have read so many, but have been free to do something else."

"And so he was ready to speak to you about Tom?"

"Very, indeed; though he rather put it upon Miss Patty. I was in a fright all the time lest Tom should not look grave enough after what he had seen; but I could scarcely help laughing myself when the thought of the cap came across me. However, it was all soon settled, and then—"

"'Tis them! There they go! Huzza! Huzza!" cried Waters, waving his crutch, in the absence of other instruments of rejoicing. Barbara's little charge started from her doze, and the patients at the other end of the ward all looked round at the same moment.—The chaise was distinct enough in the white road, Barbara allowed, and the parents declared they saw two people on the driver's seat, which Barbara was quite willing to believe.

When the vehicle had finally disappeared among the hills, Waters turned round, and said he was now ready to go at any moment; and his wife hastily put up her knitting.

"We were glad to hear you had the surgeon's leave to go out now when you liked," said Barbara: "but you had better take your time. Do lie down once more, and go home after dinner. Why should you be in a hurry?"

"Because I am wanted at home, ma'am. There is plenty of work waiting for me there," replied John with alacrity.

"Indeed! I am very glad to hear that."

"I doubt whether everybody will be glad, considering the cause of it," observed Mrs. Waters: "but the having work is of such consequence to us, that we can't help being glad of whatever brings it. The parish has gone back to the old plan with the workhouse, miss," she went on, in answer to Barbara's troubled look of inquiry. "Our employer has got the contract for shoes again; and he is calling out for my husband, as the best of his workmen."

"How do you mean 'the old plan?' Are we to have open vestries again?"

"Yes: the party that was against them was quite beaten at the meeting, yesterday morning.—They that have got their own way say rather more than they need about having worsted the vicar; but as to the overseers——"

"Ay; that is the worst part of it," said John. "Mr. Orger's going away will be a matter of great concern to many; and, I am sure, greatly so to us."

"Mr. Orger has been a kind friend to us," said Mrs. Waters; "and, considering how he has been so to every one that really wanted it, it seems strange that the other overseers should carry it over his head as they have done. They are both in again: Dixon, because he wished it, and Guthrie, because they over-persuaded him, he says.—There are many that cannot help

giving much weight to what the vicar and his party say about what is likely to become of us : but it is a great thing to us to have the making of the shoes for the workhouse again."

Barbara wished in her own mind that they would be gone. A darkness had come over the landscape. She could not bear the weight of the child on her lap. She was sick of the terrace, the fleecy sky, her daily business, her life. All was wrong.

"Yesterday morning!" she thought bitterly. "Yesterday morning! and he has never come to tell me.—I had no right, however, as I have said to myself all along, to be certain,—to suppose—He never said any thing——I dare say, I have been in a mistake from the beginning,—and very vain,—and very silly,—I am sure I have made myself very unhappy at last. Here have I been making myself so proud and so happy, without any body knowing; and now nobody cares particularly about me, after all. I am not worth any body's thinking about; and I dare say he has been engaged to somebody else, the whole time, and was never thinking of me at all. My mother should not have looked as I saw her look, one day. I dare say I should never have thought half so much about it but for that. I wonder how people can put such things into one's head, when they might know——"

Her heart interrupted her head. It beat so that her thoughts swam before her mind's eye.

—Orger was on the terrace below, and he beckoned her to come down. She shook her head once, after having pretended for a minute not to see him ; but she ended by going down.

“ They have carried all their own way in the vestry,” said Orger. “ There is an end of every thing. They packed the meeting, and carried all by clamour.”

“ Well, I suppose they must do as they choose.”

“ To be sure they must,—ruin the parish,—send every thing in it to rack and ruin,” replied Orger, vehemently chucking pebbles from the terrace wall into the garden.

“ If they do, you will not be here to see it. You are going away, I suppose ?”

Orger was a full minute before he put his hands in his pockets, and replied——

“ After all I have tried,—after all I have done ! They cannot deny what I have saved to the parish,—what has been done for the children. And, now, every body says so coolly,—‘ You are going away, I suppose ?’ ”

“ O, nobody denies what you have done ; but if they choose, I suppose they must do as they like.”

“ That is clear enough ; but it need not prevent people from——But nobody seems to care. There is an end of my hopes,—of all my hopes ; and nobody cares.”

“ Except the vicar.”

“ The vicar !” cried Orger, contemptuously,

and turning sharp round.—“ I don’t mean any thing but respect to the vicar,” continued he in a moderated tone, “ but I have to do with him only about business. What I mean is——”

He did not say what; so Barbara went on to express surprise at seeing him so very much vexed. He could go and seek better success for his plans elsewhere, she concluded.

“ I must. But one cannot change one’s friends at every turn, and——”

“ No, not one’s friends, certainly; and that is the last thing I should think of being sorry for.” Barbara spoke briskly, and Orger looked up in her face.

“ I never change my friends,” said he; “ but how do I know what they may think of me, or how they may forget me, if I do not get on in the world, and live at a distance, and leave room for somebody else to fill my place?”

“ You can always come and see them, I should think.”

“ May I?” cried he, eagerly. “ But I may not get on in the world elsewhere any better than here.”

He would discover that in time, Barbara supposed.

“ If I do, then I will come and see you. You say I may? Yes; you did say so.—If you do not see me, you will know why.”

“ You are not going quite away now?” said Barbara, observing him direct his steps towards the end of the terrace where his horse was fas-

tened.—He was.—But her mother was within. —He would just shake hands with her at the window. This done, he was gone ; and nothing could bring Barbara in from her solitary garden for hours. This spring day was so very fine !

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UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY  
FOR THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

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POOR LAWS AND PAUPERS  
ILLUSTRATED.

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No. IV.

THE LAND'S END.

A TALE.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1834.

**LONDON :**  
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# THE LAND'S END.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE LABOUR MARKET.

THE merry days of the Cornish miners were over when the adversity of their employers, in 1818, turned hundreds of them adrift, and lessened the gains of those who were still at work. No slight or transient reverse could impair the respectability of this class of men. Unlike the agricultural labourers of their own and the neighbouring county, they act upon the principle that one of the chief uses of a time of prosperity is to afford protection against a day of adversity: so that when the agent of their mine begins to look grave, and purchasers come with solemn faces to the weekly auction of ores, and 'tributers' are to be seen admiring the sunshine at noonday instead of being buried to their hearts' content in the dark chambers of the mine, the public is not made to suffer by the change. The miner retires to the cottage he has built or purchased, to cultivate the garden

he has laboriously reclaimed from the waste; and there he hopes to subsist on his own resources if the ill fortune of the mine be not too long protracted. It has been a comfort to have his club-money to look to, in case of being disabled at his work; and now he is sure, having regularly paid his sick-money, of succour if illness should attack any of his family during their season of difficulty.—Such is the state of the Cornish miner during any transient stagnation of his employment: but the reverse which followed the failures of 1818 proved too long and too disastrous to be withstood by any but those who had previously been remarkably fortunate as well as careful.

The Wheel Virgin, near the Land's End, had been, till that period, one of the busiest of the copper mines of Cornwall. Its fifteen hundred workpeople, men, women, and children, might be seen flocking to their employment in the morning, and sauntering away from it at night, while its engines were for ever at work, one bringing up water, and two delivering ores, appearing to the spectator as if they were spontaneously plundering the treasures of the earth out of pure favour to man. Now, some years after, the scene was languid. The mine was worked; but by comparatively few hands: and these did not set about their business with the same alacrity as formerly. A general depression had settled down on the society of the district, the distress of one class having as usual affected the rest; and those who still had employment

were anxious about its continuance, and saddened by the neighbourhood of those who were less fortunate than themselves ;—saddened, not merely by sympathy, but by the perpetual apprehension of the effects of competition. The more there were who were out of work, the more eager became the bidding for employment in the field and for pitches (compartments to be worked) in the mine ; so that wages were so low that they could fall no lower, and pitches were let so high as to become too hazardous a speculation for the comfort of sober men.

Philip Nelson had come, among others, to settle beside Wheel Virgin in the days of her highest prosperity. He had put his wife into a comfortable cottage on the down, and was universally regarded as one of the most respectable of his respectable class. He, like others, had felt the fall in the price of ores, and he was now uneasy about the issue of his last speculation. The pitch on which he and his partner had been at work for some days had not answered to its promise. These things were on his mind one summer morning when he went forth to his work, after having been detained for a short time by something which had not helped to raise his spirits. His infant had been fretful all night, and still remained so much so that Philip staid half an hour from his work to nurse the little one, while his wife put her room in order, during which operation it was the child's wont to lie still very contentedly, crowing to itself,

and playing with the corner of the pillow. This morning, not the bright sunshine itself could stop his crying; and when the pattering shower came, the hearkening to the rain drops did not serve as an amusement long. The morning devotions were hindered, and this was enough to disturb Philip's conscience for the day; so that when he delivered the babe into his wife's arms, and went out into the rain, he felt as cheerless as she who was left alone to the harassing sound of an infant's wail.

Though a dark day to Philip, it was not likely to be a rainy day. A few low clouds were hovering above the cairn-crested hills, and light showers were sweeping over the ridges, and pelting the goats which were too busy with their browsing to take the alarm in time. But little touches of sunshine brought out the green and purple hues of the rocks among which the ocean was tumbling, and lighted up one white cottage after another on the down. The scene was never more still than now. The moving sea, the scudding goats, and the engines of the mine, silently plying their task, were all. No human creature was visible. It was too early for farmer Ianson to be abroad in his field on the steep hill-side, and too late for the miners to be visible above ground. Half an hour ago, they might have been seen abounding; but now they were all hidden. The dwellings of the village were not visible, though the smoke of their chimnies might be seen rising from the valley which opened to the sea, but which was con-

ceased from the residents on the down by the hilly and broken ground which intervened. Mrs. Pendreath's shrubbery formed an ornamental contrast to the rest of the landscape; but her large white house, which overlooked the whole village, was itself not apparent to Philip till he had passed the corner of the hill.

He then saw that he was not the only person abroad. He had before fancied that he had heard voices. While he was composing his thoughts as he walked (cheered by a sudden gleam of sunshine,) to his morning thanksgiving, and persuading himself that a token had been sent him that all would be well, he believed that the sound which met him was one of distant mirth; and it was explained when he came in sight of the large half-ruined shed, belonging to a deserted mine, which had long served no other purpose than that of giving shelter to any wanderer who might be caught in the showers of the hills. Here were now assembled more persons than could have come for shelter merely. Here were old daddy Harker and his grandson Josiah, and both the Droops, and Andrews with his little lad; and two or three miners. What were all these labourers here for?

To let their labour, Josiah explained. The parish had settled that all who were out of work should come here every Monday morning to be hired for such wages as employers would give; and what was deficient would be paid up by the parish. It was cruel early to bring daddy out

of his bed; and most saw little use in being kept standing here an hour before any one was up but the overseer and a chance riser or two: but the overseer had his own reasons for it, no doubt, and got his own choice of labour by it.

“But I don’t see Oddy on the ground.”

“Because he has been here, and is gone. He took care to be first, and picked out Owen and Sayer that used to work in his brick-yard, and Sam Andrews, that every body knows to be a good field labourer. It will be long before you see him take daddy or me, for kindness sake, when he is going to pay the strongest and best no more than the least wages we should ask.—I wish you would take daddy and me for your share, instead of keeping us here all day.”

“I! what should I do with labourers?”

“You will have to do with them, I suppose, being a rate-payer; and we should serve your turn. The one will dig your garden, and the other wheel your ores; and you could not get any others for lower wages. Though nobody will offer much for daddy, because he is seventy-two, he has more work in him than you might think; and I hold myself strong of my years, and you’ll find me hearty.”

Philip explained that his employing labour was wholly out of the question; as his paying the rate would be thought to be, if he did not happen to be an out-parishioner, and more scrupulous about the matter than some of his neighbours. He would do his best, if opportu-

nity occurred, to get Josiah employed, but he had no work or wages of his own to offer. Josiah then began to kick pebbles, and declare his belief that daddy and he should have to stand the pleasure of the parish all day, and go home at last as they came. There were too many stout workmen in waiting to allow them a chance.

"I don't see that," said Philip. "Ianson and Mrs. Pendreath will have to take their share for field labour, and there are but few field labourers here. The carpenter and shoemaker will not interfere with you."

"That they will, if there is no work of their sort to be done, and they are younger than daddy and older than me." Tremorne might as well have taken Will Andrews, and left Sam for Ianson. A carpenter can dig clay as well as a mower, but he can't mow. There is nobody here that can mow."

During the time that Philip lingered in the neighbourhood of the shed, it seemed but too probable that Josiah's apprehensions would be realised. Two or three men were carried off, while the poor lad was contemptuously pushed aside; and no second glance was cast upon the old man.

"If I had to choose, now," thought Philip, "I would take the most willing, be his age what it might; and when these gentry have had a little more experience in parish labour, they will find that it is not bone and sinew, nor even skill, that makes the value of a labourer, but the

mind and heart that he puts into his work.—To my mind, this bargain and sale is too much like the slave-market my cousin, the captain, saw in America.” And Philip turned away and pursued his path. “The Lord have mercy on us! We have lifted up our testimony against the selling of flesh and blood. Please Him that it may not come to that in our own land! But I should feel too much like a born slave if I stood under a shed to be bid for.”

The rate-payers did not come to purchase their three or five shillings’ worth of labour, as they were desired. They had had notice of what would be expected of them; but perhaps each hoped that the surplus labour would be all bought up without his help. Oddy, the overseer, had, as Josiah said, been the first on the spot, to take out his own and his daughter’s share. He complained of the necessity, of course; but as he was somewhat eager to secure a brick-maker in his daughter’s name, instead of the old man who seemed better fitted than any brickmaker to aid her shop and school-keeping, it was concluded that the overseer had made an arrangement with his daughter which would prevent any great inconvenience to himself from the method which he had himself recommended. It was certain that he had gained the services of three men at an amount of wages much lower than he had paid to the two whom he had turned off the night before.

Mr. Tremorne, Mrs. Pendreath’s great tenant,

had, in like manner, done his duty by the surplus labour of the parish. He had been louder in his complaints than Oddy, declaring that he must have his rent lowered if he must employ twice as many people in his quarries as he wanted. Nevertheless he had, after settling a sort of compromise with the overseer, taken on one more man than was absolutely necessary. This was considered fortunate when it was found at noon that there was still a surplus,—viz., daddy Harker and his grandson.

"I shall give you a ticket which will entitle you to work," said Oddy, when it seemed certain that nobody else would come.

"To the lady at the White House, sir?"

"Not till other chances fail. Leave her to the last, I charge you, or I shall have to listen to some new scheme of hers before night: and I am tired to death already of being civil to her. What a plague it is that one cannot send a woman to the devil with her schemes, to her face, as one can a man! Leave Mrs. Pendreath to the last, and try the parson first."

To the parson they went. Mr. Palliser was at home, his plain-looking steady man servant declared, as he left his hoeing in the garden to go and let the gentleman know that he was wanted.

"I am sorry to see you on the parish," the clergyman declared to Josiah: "but why did the overseer send you to me? How should I employ you?"

"Perhaps he thinks, sir, that you would be sorry to see us on the roads."

“He is not mistaken there: but he must know that I do not employ labourers, and that I bear more than my share of the charge of the poor already: in fact, that I pay twice over.”

Josiah, made daring by disappointment, looked round, and observed that here was a good sized garden——

“Which Ledley and Mrs. Palliser keep in complete order, you see.”

“And the glebe is in your own hands, they say, sir.”

“Or rather in Ledley’s. It is not too much for him, with occasional help, which we do not want just now.”

Old Harker made bold to ask whether Mr. Ledley was belonging to the parish. In his day it was always thought that the parish had the first claim. The clergyman replied very gravely,

“Ledley is not a parishioner; but he is an old and faithful servant who has attended me all the way from Yorkshire, and expects to end his days with me. I shall not part with him till I am obliged to give so much to my parish as to be unable to keep such a servant at all;—an event which seems not unlikely to come to pass.”

“God forbid that, sir!”

Why did not Mr. Ianson take you? You have not been to Mr. Ianson! You came to me before Mr. Ianson! That removes half my scruples. He will employ you, no doubt.”

Old Harker moved slowly away, and then Josiah returned to say a few more last words to Mr. Palliser.

“There is a little advantage, sir, that you should have into the bargain, if you would take me. My mule, sir, is a young thing, at present, to be sure; but it will carry a little matter of a load already, and it should carry for you for nothing. The thing is, sir, my father and mother are for selling the beast, lest the overseer should hear of it, and refuse me relief on that ground: but I’d as soon be sold myself as my mule.”

“Its keep can cost you nothing, I should think; and it may become a very valuable animal hereafter. It would be a pity to sell it.”

“I rather think too, sir, that the overseer would not object to daddy’s being thrown into the lot with me,—one wage for two. You might have one or other with me, sir, for nothing,—daddy or the mule. You could take your choice.”

Mr. Palliser smiled, and could not be persuaded that he had work or wages for either daddy or the mule. In return for Josiah’s confidence, and in order to show that it was not hard-heartedness that made him impracticable, he related that while the rates had fearfully increased in his parish, the composition for tithe had been twice lowered; so that he had less to spend, while the cails on him were becoming heavier.

Daddy had nearly reached the surgeon’s door before Josiah overtook him. Mr. Atha, the surgeon, had once carried old Harker safely through a fever; and the old man had

now rather serve him than Ianson; and he knew that Mr. Atha was liable to the rate, and had been served with a notice. He took the bridle of Mr. Atha's horse from the servant girl who was holding it, and told his story before the gentleman could mount.

"The wages should be no difficulty, sir. Any sum you like to mention; and the parish will make up the rest."

"That will never do, friend. I shall have you swallowing my best drugs out of pure hunger. But let us see. My lad has taken it into his head to go and set up for himself, some way off; and I want somebody in his place who will not play me the same trick."

"You need not fear me for that, sir."

"Why, no: people do not begin studying pharmacy at seventy-two, with a view to setting up for themselves. But you know nothing about the care of a horse, I am afraid."

Daddy was sure he could soon learn, for he was used to the ways of Josiah's mule. He was not afraid about having to mix medicines, for he had charmed all his grandchildren from the evil eye by a recipe of his mother's. He was good at going errands, for he knew every body in the place. He could not doubt his being stout-hearted, in case of being called on to assist on occasion of accidents in the mine; for he had happened once to be within the walls of the infirmary at Truro, where it was said that dreadful things were going on sometimes. Mr. Atha seemed fully satisfied. He called out,

“ My dear ! ”

Mrs. Atha, busy with a little pestle and mortar, and four children, appeared at the open window.

“ Set Harker to make up the medicines I ordered, and see that he makes no mistakes ; and then he can carry them out. What has that child done with herself ? ”

Miss Julia had only got to the honeypot, and appropriated more than she intended. All her hurry to wipe her mouth and fingers on her frock only made her trespass the more conspicuous, and she was pushed out of the room, roaring. The rest were all smiling at the prospect of seeing daddy Harker taught to mix medicines. The old man smiled at having got the service he wished. Josiah smiled at having himself alone now to let ; and Mrs. Atha at being released from the task of putting the children to bed, because the sole servant must go out with the surgery packets. So that Mr. Atha rode off from the midst of a very smiling party.

Josiah had not yet approached the end of his pilgrimage. Mr. Ianson was unpropitious. Others might turn off their labourers to take on new ones from the parish : but he supposed it was not expected of him that he should send his two sons about their business to take on strangers. Neither should he think of it, (whatever notice he might have had) while there were the roads for the paupers to work on. He would not hear a word of threat or petition. He knew what he was about. He knew the

sin and shame of making a man employ labour, not according to his want of it, but according to the number of acres he happened to rent, or of horses that he happened to keep, or of some other such caprice. Josiah had better be off and break stones on the road, or something might be done to him that he would not like so well.

Poor Josiah's heart now quite failed him. As he hurried away from Mr. Ianson's wrath, he did not know which way to turn. If he applied to Mrs. Pendreath, the overseer would be angry, hating as he did to have anything to do with Mrs. Pendreath. If he went home without prospect of work, his parents would not only taunt him, but sell his mule. To be the only one set to break stones on the road would be dreadful. He should never be able to look up when the miners came from their work, and when travellers asked how far it was from the Land's End. His mind was so dreary that it made all things look dreary, though the afternoon sun shone in his eyes as he came up from the valley, and chequered the down with the lengthened shadows of the rocks and stones which were scattered over it. These were, alas ! the stones which he must break ; and yonder, winding away among the brown hills, was the road that he must mend. This consideration was of itself only too affecting ; yet this was the moment chosen by the sprightly young mule for showing itself from behind a great fragment of granite. It was too much. Josiah could scarcely command himself to speak

so cheerfully as to detain the animal. His face once reclined on its neck, he gave way to his tears, and to his regrets that he could not live by grazing in company with his mule, so as to be independent of selfish parents, cross farmers, and a cruel overseer. Whatever sympathy mules may usually feel with human tears, Josiah's friend stood very still to let its master's flow. There is no saying how long its patience might not have lasted but for the interruption of a cheerful voice, which asked what was the matter with the sorrowful Josiah. It was Mrs. Pendreath, returning from her afternoon airing. Josiah was in no mood for reserve. The lady was soon the confidante of all his troubles, and, as an inevitable consequence, the guardian of his mule. He made no grand promises, but sent a token to Josiah's parents that the interests of the animal were adopted by her.

Josiah went home at sunset, happier, after all, than his grandfather. All the little Athas had been found by their papa on his return in such a condition from the honey and other delicacies of the surgery that daddy Harker could not refuse to the dear little things, because they begged so hard, that the new assistant had been dismissed for the night with a scolding which was quite heart-breaking, considering that it came from one to whom he owed so much. The seeing the most terrible sight in Truro Infirmary could hardly be worse.

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## CHAPTER II.

## THE FLOWER FADING.

PHILIP had worked a full hour beyond the hour of the afternoon when he should have been relieved by his partner, and Spetch had not appeared. Philip determined to wait no longer. It was not only that he was jaded with toil, or even that he was anxious to get home and hear how his child had passed the morning: it had been forcibly borne in upon his mind that he had been too eager about the profit of his labours, since it had pleased God remarkably to humble his expectation this day. When he appeared above ground from the shaft, and looked round in vain for Spetch, two or three idle persons came about him, supposing that he might be seeking assistance in wheeling his ores, or raising them to grass, or dressing them. Times were changed since the tributers had to beg the favour of labourers to work for them. Every tributer was now met by eager biddings for employment. Philip gently pushed his way among the idle, declaring that he had no ores to carry to-day.

“That is plain,” said a woman, “or you would not have left your pitch, I should think, before seeing your partner in your place. If anything is carried off, Nelson, you will be answerable to my husband for it.”

“There is nothing to carry off, Mrs. Spetch;

and if there was, I have waited an hour for your husband, and my child is ill at home."

Mrs. Spetch saw, through Philip's heated and begrimed appearance, that he was sad; and she applied herself to seeking for her husband, while Philip went to wash in the warm water of the engine pool, and change his clothes. Her voice might presently be heard above the noise of the engines, the cobbing and bucking (breaking of the ores by women), and even of the stamping mill: and Spetch was soon by his partner's side.

"What's the matter? What has become of your day's work, Nelson? The lode has not taken horse, I hope?"

"It has done worse. It has taken a heave."

"The devil take it! Those cross-courses . . ."

"What help do you look for, if you tempt the Evil One with profane words?" asked Philip, mournfully. "I have been seeking a blessing since morning, and now you are bringing on a rebuke."

Spetch was not afraid. He would go down and see what was to be done, let the Evil One come or not, as he chose. What had Philip done? Had he told the agent, or would he take the chance of finding the lode again before he said anything about the misfortune? Philip had done his best in examining the extremities of the fracture, and in making an opening for search in the right direction for finding the continuation of the lode. There was no knowing what light would come out of darkness, and

what good out of evil ; and he was disposed to work on for a few days, and see whether the lode was recoverable, or whether the cross course might not contain something worth looking for.

Spetch declared himself of the same mind, but he made no haste to descend. There was little temptation to speed when he had to leave the daylight and his beloved gossip with his neighbours, to work alone and almost hopelessly by the glimmer of a candle. His partner detained him yet one moment.

“ Spetch, do you happen to have been near my place to-day ? Do you happen to know how my child is ? ”

“ Right well and hearty ;—that is, sound asleep,” he added, observing Philip’s look of surprise. “ How can a child be better than asleep ? That is what I call being hearty. Your wife was hearty enough too.”

“ You don’t mean asleep,” observed Philip, smiling at last. “ Yet she has had little enough sleep these two nights.”

“ One would not have thought it. She looked as bright as any balsam in her garden.”

“ Thank God ! thank God ! ” repeated Philip to himself. He now perceived, when he stepped forth from the works, and found a wide sunny landscape spread before him, that he ought sooner to have perceived the signs that were sent to meet him as he came up out of the deep places of the earth. He had besought light in his gloom, and yet he had but faintly noticed

the gleam which burst forth before he had been three seconds above ground. He now looked before him on the snowy clouds which hung over the horizon, and on the heaving sea, and hoped for good news from his partner at night: and if not, no repining word should come from him while his wife and child were hearty. He did not now object to a little society after his period of solitude. He made one of the party trooping to their homes over the down, and was not so grieved as usual at some of their frolics by the way. The children stood upon their heads, the boys took the leap-frog method of getting forward, the young men wrestled or flirted, the maidens laughed and blushed as unreprieved by him, even in thought, as the old folks who paced along absorbed in meditation on the dish of chopped pilchards and onions which was awaiting them at home. He was ready with a cheerful 'good day' to each family, as it parted off to some cottage near the way side. He was left nearly the last; for there was only one cottage further along the down than his.

"I don't see your wife coming out as usual," observed Betsy Spetch. "Pray God nothing may have happened to the child!"

Philip's heart sank at this confirmation of his thought: but he rather slackened than increased his speed.

"I did go out to meet you, love, an hour ago," said Eliza, when he entered: "but the wind was too cold for the child. The wind has changed, you see; and the child changed with it."

Philip had trusted the child would have been asleep.

"No: there is no sleep for it yet," replied the wife mournfully, as the infant burst into a new cry. "Just half an hour's doze when Mr. Atha had given it something, and that is all the rest it has had this day." And the tears sprang to her eyes.

"And all the peace you have had, love, unless it has been graciously dispensed to you in answer to my prayers. I trusted, from what Spetch told me . . ."

"Ah! Spetch looked in just when the child was asleep; and I bade him tell you what he saw, for your comfort. And then, what did he do but wake the babe!"

"Wake the babe!" cried Philip, in a tone which made his wife say,

"Not purposely: no, not purposely. He laughed so that you might hear him as far as the mine. Don't avenge it, Philip. I have striven not."

"By no means," replied Philip, calmly: "but God will judge him for that mirth of his. God will doubtless judge him. Here comes Mrs. Home. If it had pleased to have sent her while you were alone, it would have been comfortable."

Mrs. Home was the widowed daughter of Oddy, the overseer; and she was as busy a person as any near the Wheel Virgin. She not only kept house for her father: she also kept the village shop and the village school, assisted only

by her two smart children of eleven and twelve. She moreover undertook to assist the clergyman in upholding the church against the encroachments of methodism. In the enmity which prevailed between the two parties she took her full share, losing no opportunity of exhibiting the methodist leaders to the contempt of her scholars, and of beseeching vengeance on Mr. Tremorne, the richest of the dissenting party, for his opposition to all the clergymen's interests. Yet she was not an ill-natured woman when religious quarrels and misdemeanours among her neighbours were forgotten. She merged the champion in the woman whenever there was a call upon her woman's sympathies.

"My father had a message for you," said she to Philip, "and, learning the child was out of condition, I thought I would come with it myself, and see by my experience whether you are going on wrong or right with it."

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. Home. I wonder how, in your busy place, you should have found time to listen to anything about us; or indeed how any body should have known of our trouble so soon."

"My dear, 'every down has eyes, as every hedge has ears,' as we say. I might instance that to your husband, too, regarding his prayer meeting, the last evening but two. Fie upon those prayer meetings, when there is a sound church to gather in!—But that is not the affair of the present season. What does Mr. Atha say?"

And then followed a consultation between the

three on the state of the infant, and on what was to blame for its illness,—whether the cold dry wind from the north-west which had prevailed much of late, and to which the cottage was much exposed; or the water which, like all the waters near, had a strong mineral taste, and might be unwholesome; or any errors in the management of the child, proceeding from its young mother's inexperience. It was decided to set about rectifying all that was doubtful in the economy of the household. Philip declared that he should think nothing of going once a-day down to the spring in the rocks for pure water. It was only a mile and three quarters each way. He would go now directly, and every day of his life, with the greatest pleasure. The cottage should not be long without a better shelter towards the north-west. Any one might see the bad effect of that wind by the poor scrubs that were all that came up instead of the most hardy trees, when they happened to be open to that quarter, while there was no trouble in rearing even myrtles to grow as high as himself under proper shelter. That wind had even blown the salt spray into his face when he had been working in his own garden. He would have a fence, a high thick fence of tamarisk on that side. He would stay from the mine on the first possible day that he could so arrange with Spetch. There was nothing that withstood all weather so well as tamarisk. Nothing would hurt it but a very severe frost; and they must trust to having no very severe frosts.

“And how long will it be growing up?” asked Eliza, anxiously.

“To ten or twelve feet,—why, I suppose seven years.” His voice faltered as he looked at his panting babe, and spoke of seven years. “But I’ll be off for the water directly,” he continued, starting up to look for the bucket.

“Hear my father’s message before you go,” said Mrs. Home. “He is surprised at your walking away from the shed, this morning, without taking out your share of labour. He did not expect it of you, he says: (but that, I tell him, is his own fault, for being apt to regard you, and expect from you, as if you were a proper church-goer). However, he sends you word that you are to take your rate of 4s. 6d. in labour in the next six weeks.”

“’Tis sent just in time for the planting of the fence!” cried Eliza, brightening. She was surprised to see her husband shake his head, and to be told that the parish presented this labour on no other terms than its being paid for.

“The very thing Spetch was complaining of this morning,” said Eliza. “He says he is rated because he does not belong to the parish, and that you will soon be so too; and, if you will take his advice, you will not pay.”

“Spetch should learn to speak less like a methodist,” answered Mrs. Home. “He ought to know that he will be made to pay, unless he hies him back to his own parish.”

“It is very hard,” declared Philip, “if his

case be like mine. I have no employment for labour, like Tremorne and your father."

"You have the choice of paying the money, without taking the labour, if you choose. What would you have more?"

"I would have all pay equally. Here is Tremorne—though forced, may be, to take more labourers than he wants—yet having half the wages of his men paid by the parish—paid by us. And here am I, too poor to employ labour, obliged, because I am too poor to want labour, to pay, not only other men's labourers, but a fine for having none myself. It is very hard."

Mrs. Home began being thankful that there were some people in the village who had not such wild, odd notions.

"I don't know what you call 'wild,' Mrs. Home. All I know is, that I pay ten shillings to the poor of the parish where Mr. Tremorne pays six. There is nothing very odd, I think, in calling this hard. You best know what you would think of being compelled to employ a couple of men or four boys for several days, if your father's brick-field was not at hand to put them into, to your father's gain. But I'm not wanting to argue the matter till I have been directed what to do. You will kindly stay an hour with my wife, will not you, Mrs. Home? I cannot be back under an hour and a half, and she has been enough alone to-day."

As soon as his back was turned, and while the

babe was growing tranquil, and giving hope that sleep was approaching, Mrs. Home seized the favourable opportunity of appealing to the mother on behalf of her offspring.

“Pretty innocent!” she said. “Sweet blossom! as the clergyman says. I’ll engage it will do very well, Mrs. Nelson; and in return, you must let me have the teaching of that creature by-and-bye. By five, or five and a half, or even earlier, he will be able to enter into some of the distinctions that I teach my little flock”——

“Oh, Mrs. Home, I dare not! I dare not look forward! Short-sighted creatures as we are, surely it is presumption. If I were certain that my child would be with us five years hence”——

“Much may depend,”—— Mrs. Home suggested, and stopped. “God waits to be gracious, we are told; and who knows but if you were now to engage——”

“To send him to you?” asked Mrs. Nelson, anxiously.

“It would be a way, you know,—a sure way of keeping him out of methodistical delusion”——

“Oh, do not say anything about that while my husband is away. I cannot hear anything against religion while he is out of the way.”

“As you please,” answered Mrs. Home, coldly. “As you please: but if anything should happen, perhaps you will remember that I warned you, in this child’s behalf, against methodistical delusions, and belief in judgments, and other things that are not to be found in the proper church—the church that I belong to.”

Mrs. Nelson was still agitated by these words when her husband returned, though her visiter had been gone nearly an hour. His entrance brought a "a sign" to comfort her. The babe, ceasing for an instant to turn its head from side to side, caught sight of its father's face bending over it. In a moment, the little countenance was grave and still, and then a smile broke out; the hot hand was raised to play with the quivering lips which were muttering a prayer, and a joyous sound once more blessed the harassed ear of the mother.

"Bless thee! bless thee!"

"Bless God, rather," cried Philip, stroking the little hand, and soothing the fevered cheek.

His wife had by this time taken courage to speak of Mrs. Home's denunciations. She did not fear them now. The babe looked like itself again now.

"I should not fear many things, love, if the babe and you would look as like yourselves always as you do now. Come what may"—

"But, Philip, these claims of the parish will not ruin us, will they? But there may be something more,—there is something more. You have had bad speed."

"I have had bad speed, love. Worse than I looked for when I began to think ill of the pitch. The lode has taken a heave, and I see we are not likely to make anything of it. As for paying all this money that they ask for the parish, it is out of the question; and Ianson says so too.—Ah! I see! How the blessed sleep weighs down the little eyelids."

After gazing awhile, the mother went back to the subject on which she had indefinable fears.

"Ianson says so too, does he? And so does Spetch, as I told you. But Spetch talks so wildly; and takes the Holy Name in vain! He is not like you for being careful. Nothing ever abates his spirits."

"And nothing would abate mine, if I had faith. I have been far from taking with an equal mind all that has befallen in the last night and day. God forgive me that I feel sometimes as if I would be Spetch, to be as light-hearted about such things as losing my place in the parish, and making any difficulty about bearing my share!"

"Oh, do not think of wishing to be Spetch! Besides, you say yourself that it is more than your share that they call upon you to pay."

"And so it is. I would maintain to Tremorne's face, that he does not pay half that I do, in proportion. I passed by his lots of ground just now, and I thought so at the time. He has parted off those eight acres into twenty-four parts, and pays no rate; which he would do if he kept them himself. He makes three-and-twenty shillings an acre by those lettings, and we all pay for their yielding no rate."

"I wish you had one of them. We would soon rear a cottage," observed the wife.

"Do you wish it? Would you gladly humble yourself to be one of the poor?"

"Anything God pleases, to see you easy in mind, if the child be but well."

"We shall have to humble ourselves, I see. There is little but want before us, unless by a providence it should be otherwise. I will do my best to meet it like a man. I will give notice, fully, and fairly, and directly, that I cannot pay the rate."

"And what will happen then?"

"God will show in his own time. It is for us to wait."

"But they will not come and seize, and"—

"Distrain? I don't know."

"But the neighbours, the brethren,—they will not let you suffer need. You have done much for them."

"According to my gift, I have done what I could; but not for lucre of gain. Many of our brethren are suffering in like manner with myself; and if they were not, I dare not sell the Word."

"But nobody would suppose you meant that. You have taken no hire or reward for all your service; and it has been much."

"Nor will I, not being an appointed minister. They may see and hear that times are changed with me; but they shall not learn it from me. The poorer I grow, the more it behoves me to testify that the Word is to be spoken for the Word's sake. There must not be such a handle given to the unbeliever as that Christ is to be preached for his own sake when times go well, and for Philip Nelson's sake when times go ill."

The wife sighed, and inwardly wished that she had her husband's spirit of faith; while he, struggling against depression, mourned over

his own inability to receive all events with an equal mind. Yet he permitted his apprehensions to mingle themselves with his devotions; and, while kneeling beside his wife near the infant's cradle, prayed aloud that he who covereth the heaven with clouds would cause his mildest wind to blow, that the tenderest of his lambs might not perish almost before it had entered the fold.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### DOWN-HILL WORK.

“WHAT! Harry Ianson, is that you?” asked Tremorne. “Is there nobody on your father's ground to save you that hard sort of work?”

“Nobody, Mr. Tremorne. The hardest sort of work is just that which my father and brother and I have to do ourselves.”

The work in question was loading a packhorse with sea-sand, weed, and the pilchards which had been thrown away as damaged. The sands were heavy; the dry, cold north-wester blew strongly; horse and man were damped with the salt spray, and, in spite of their toil, pinched with a degree of cold which was not dreamed of in the valley.

“While your father has so many words to say about employing a man or two more than he likes, it is somewhat strange of him to send you down into this cold, salt drizzle.”

“Where would be the use of sending any body else, I wonder, except my father himself. Either of the men Oddy has put upon us, or the boy, would get into the pannier, and cover himself up from the spray, till it was time to ride home with his handful of sea-weed, and ask for his tenpence. How is our land to be manured at that rate?”

“But you should make them work, and not give way to them.”

“How would you make a man work, when there is no question of either obliging his master or earning his bread?”

“You should complain to the vestry, if the men they send you won’t work.”

“To change with somebody for just such another set, the next day.”

“The vestry should put the idle ones on the road for a punishment.”

“To pull their hats over their eyes, and go to sleep on the greenest bit of grass they can find. Better make less noise about it, and coax them to do a stroke of pretty work — clipping the sunny side of a hedge, or throwing a little hay about among the children.”

“You are bent upon making a grievance, I see, Mr. Harry. Come upon my china-stone quarry on the moor, or go among the overseer’s own men in his brick-yard, and see whether parish men can’t work.”

“I don’t say that parish men never work. If they never did, parish men would never be set to work. That is plain, if anything is.”

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"Then what you said before is anything but plain."

"You may see my meaning any day that you happen to be passing our place, Mr. Tremorne. Which way are you thinking of going now?"

And Harry, having completed his load, stuck his prong into one pannier, and his spade into the other, and instructed his horse to take the homeward road. Tremorne was on the way to his quarry on the moor, and walked his horse as far as the farm, in order to keep Harry company.

"I am glad to have chanced to meet you alone," said Harry, "for I have something to ask of you. I want to have one of your lots to rent. I know they are not all occupied."

"What sort of person do you want it for? A parishioner, or an out-parishioner?"

"For one who may be depended on for paying you your rent. I want it for myself."

"What can you mean? You are not going to leave your father's farm, to settle yourself on a slip that the miners complain of as being too small."

"I am. It was all very well for me to live on my father's little farm when we had it to ourselves; though, even then, the charges on the land made it no easy matter to get much profit out of it. But it is a very different case now that we have two more to maintain upon it,—they being without our interest in the well-doing of the land. The land does not want more than the constant labour of three people; and if three

new ones are forced upon it, it is time for me to be moving off to make room for one of them."

"But you hold that the labour of these three together is not equal to yours."

"I do; and therefore I shall give our farm all the labour I have to spare, after providing for myself out of the lot I ask for. What have you to spare for me? I should like the West-cairn lot, if you have not let it since I viewed it last week."

"I am not disposed, Mr. Harry. I could not reconcile it to myself to be aiding and abetting in your lowering yourself in any such way."

"That is my affair."

"Besides, I make it a rule not to let my lots to friends and neighbours, you see, Mr. Harry."

"And pray, why? You would never have any difficulty with me about the rent, as I said before."

"But I should with the vestry about the rate. My only hold over the vestry is the power I have of bringing strangers into the parish. If I had not given settlements to a few, so as to have them and their families to hold over the heads of the vestry, there is no saying what they might not have tried to do in rating me. I cannot let any parishioner have the West-cairn lot till I see whether I should not do better to put somebody from the next parish upon it."

Harry would have been surprised at the boldness of this avowal, if Tremorne had not before done the still bolder thing of settling in his parish more than twelve families of discharged miners from the neighbouring parishes. He could only

remonstrate against such mischief-making, and complain of the hardship of being, in this manner also, compelled to make way for strangers, for no better purpose than to exempt Tremorne from bearing his fair share of rates.

“A fair share, do you call it?” said Tremorne. “I hold it a most unfair thing to throw the burden of the rate upon the land, in the way that is done now. When the rate was first tried, it was the day of small things with respect to manufactures, and landed property was all that could be made much of, and nobody thought of rating any thing but land. But if the burden goes on to be thrown mainly on the land, when there is plenty of other property quite as able to bear it, the landowners are not to be blamed for shifting off as much as they can of it.”

No one knew better than Harry how the poor-rate presses on the small landowner; but he thought very ill of the practice of terrifying the parish into exempting one man from a portion of the burden which others must therefore sustain for him.

“My father is much less able to bear any of your share, Mr. Tremorne, than you are to bear your own. You cannot say, as he can, that you do not know which way to turn yourself next. Mr. Palliser has been as liberal as could be expected about the tithe; but the increase of the rate much more than answered to that reduction. It was bad enough to have to pay ten shillings an acre in rate; and now to have to give wages

to three idle people into the bargain, is more than ought to be required of him."

"I declare it is just what I have to do with my land on the moor."

"Yes; but your quarries are rented from year to year; and as the rate grows, you get your rent lowered; so that it is Mrs. Pendreath that pays in the end. Ours has been a long lease, and there is no help for my father till his lease is up.—Holla, there! Mind what you are about with the horse. Do you suppose we let our beasts be treated in that manner?"

He was shouting to one of his father's parish labourers in the field to the right of the road. Tremorne followed him when he turned in at the gate of this field. Harry was very angry, declaring that it was more than any man's temper could stand, to see his stock misused as his father's was by these fellows, who cared no more about the flesh and temper of the farm-horses than about so many stocks and stones. His father was more particular than any man in the district about the quality and condition of his horses, and his sons had the same taste; but they had reason to believe that the moment their backs were turned, there was an end of all mercy and kindness towards the poor beasts.

It was difficult to see what the man had been about, besides ill-treating the horse. He should have done ploughing half that side of the field by this time. But he did not mean to plough. If he had been sent down to the sands to get

manure, he could have done that ; but he was not fit for ploughing on a stiff soil like this. He should leave it to somebody that was more fond of it.

“ If you neglect your ploughing, and cause us any loss by not doing it properly, we can punish you, as you well know,” said Harry.

Reason enough for not attempting it, the young man thought. Better let it alone than run a risk for not doing it properly. For his part, he did not think these stiff lands were made to be ploughed.

“ We shall soon see that,” said Harry. “ You do not come here to choose your own work ; and if you won’t do ours, the sooner you take yourself off the better.”

With all his heart, the man said, retreating from the horse’s side, and pulling up his breeches. He should have his tenpence in some other way, that he might like quite as well as breaking his back against a clay soil.

“ Get away with you,” desired Harry. “ Follow yonder horse to the pond-field and unload him ; and then let us see what you will make of a trip to the sands. But if I find you misuse the beast, you shall repent it.”

The man walked off lazily, with a half-smile, and Harry prepared to take up his task of ploughing.

“ Why does not your brother look after these people while you are absent ? ” asked Tremorne. “ This fellow has wasted half his day for want of being watched.”

“ Robert is busy threshing. That is another business we cannot trust out of our own hands. Besides the careless way of doing the work, there is a dreadful deal of theft. When a man feels that nothing depends upon his character, and when he is left alone with the corn, what can you expect but that he should steal it?”

“ But that leaving him alone is the very thing I am wondering at.”

“ Why, Mr. Tremorne, if we find it difficult to pay these men, it is pretty plain that we cannot afford another set to overlook them. In your quarry, you have only to choose your spot where you may stand and overlook every man in your employ; but it is different on a farm, where the work and the stock are scattered and out of sight. The two men and the boy we now have may rob and injure us in all corners of the farm by turns, if they choose; and it behoves us to keep the threshing, at least, out of their hands. You should have seen a sample of barley that Robert brought home from the market one day. It was so mixed that you might almost take your oath that more or less of it had come from every barley field within ten miles. When they get to using pick-lock keys, as they do in some other places where character is become a thing of no consequence, we must give up the battle.”

“ But you do not mean to insinuate”—

“ That we have got to that pass yet? No; and therefore there may still be some use in keeping our threshing in our own hands.”

Harry had now mounted the bank, and was looking keenly around him, into the next field, and along the ditch. He was sure he heard a bleat that should not be heard in this place; and he did not like the kind of bleat. Tremorne had scarcely noticed it; but he fancied it came from the coppice. To the coppice they went; and there, after some search, they found a sheep half buried in briars, faint with hunger, shivering with cold, and only able to look up in Harry's face with a pitiful countenance of appeal.

"There, you see!" cried Harry; "this is the way with our parish shepherd boy—certain sure that the sheep are all right at night, to save the trouble of looking for any that are astray. If that poor animal has been here ten minutes, she has been here all last night.—Can't you lend a hand, Mr. Tremorne? Don't you see she is so feeble she can't stir?"

Harry's temper was fast oozing away; and who could wonder? Mr. Tremorne fastened his horse to a gate, and gave his best assistance in tugging, lifting, and carrying, and afterwards in chafing the numbed limbs of the animal. He even offered the use of his horse to convey the sheep to the farm buildings; but the horse not being equally obliging, Harry's shoulders were burdened instead. As they entered upon the down, the breach in the fence was visible through which the creature had strayed, nearly to its own destruction,—a breach which a careful labourer would have prevented, and a careful shepherd have informed against. Instead of a careful

shepherd, however, there was an idle boy lying on his back in the sun, with a cloud of flies hovering over his face, and one of his untended flock trying the practicability of a low wall which bounded a forbidden field, the rest preparing to follow the conductor of the enterprise.

“Give him a cut across the shins, will you?” cried Harry. “Don’t spare him.”

So far from sparing the lad, Mr. Tremorne whipped his legs till the boy found, being thoroughly awakened, that they were more serviceable to run away with than to stand upon. To run away was not to escape. Mr. Tremorne exercised his horse in the chase; and it was not till he had roared himself hoarse, that the culprit was allowed leisure to learn what was his crime. He was then left to count his sheep, it was hoped, from hour to hour, and to eschew sleep as he would the horsewhip. Not so, however. The moment his persecutors had disappeared among the farm buildings, he vanished from the eyes of his flock in an opposite direction, on his way to the overseer, to demand another service, or refuse to do any. The justice would right him from being half killed by a cruel master because he happened to be on the parish.

Mrs. Ianson was found mourning over her particular misfortune. The third labourer had come an hour too late to his work. She had been commissioned to give the fellow a good and sufficient scolding when he arrived. In the execution of her task, she had, however, been bullied by him, and at last, thoroughly alarmed

by his bringing in a beggar from the road to take his part, as well as demand charity. Besides the charity, the stranger had carried off two prime cheeses from the dairy on his way out; and between fear, anger, and sorrow, Mrs. Ianson was not now in the happiest frame of mind. She hoped the end that certainly must come would come soon. If they were to be ruined by being overrun with these people, she wished it might be before she was frightened out of her wits, and worried out of her life. She could almost wish to witness a distrait on her own premises, such as there was likely to be on some houses above, on the down, rather than go on being at the mercy of a race of vagabonds that were open to no sense of shame or interest. She was the last person who would have spoken so of them but a little time before; but she could not have imagined how any set of people might suddenly change from minding their own proper business to hindering that of every body else. Her neighbour, Mrs. Home, was very confident that this new Catholic Emancipation was to blame for it all. Whatever it might be, the country must go to destruction if something was not done to make labourers more like what they used to be.

Mr. Tremorne could not gainsay the probability of ruin while the spectacle of this little farm was before his eyes;—this little farm, paying ten shillings an acre, and employing three persons who wasted and destroyed more than their labour would compensate for. It was a

ruinous system to import wheat from the channel islands and other places, to maintain the mining population of this district, when the people were not mining, but displacing labourers in other occupations, who, in their turn, were hindering the growth of barley, and impoverishing the tillers of the ground.

His only topics of consolation were that the evil, no doubt, arose from a more remediable cause than Catholic Emancipation: and that, if there were distrains going on in any dwellings on the down, it was in aid of the rate, and in assertion of the rights of the Iansons, and all other rate-payers who were still paying without distraint.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### STORM AND CALM.

It was too true that distrains were going on in certain of the cottages on the down. The overseer found that it was time to take strong measures for the levying of the rate, as the burden thrown on those who could and would pay, by those who could not and would not, was becoming too heavy to be borne without threatening complaints. Not above five in ten of the rated houses paid; and of the five payers, two or three were loud in their murmurs about being unequally assessed, and made to contribute more than double their share. This inequality, originally owing to the changes in the value of

property since the last assessment was made, was aggravated, the discontented declared, by the religious differences which existed in the parish. Many believed that parish affairs were ordered with the express view of ruining the clergyman and oppressing the church party; while the dissenters were comparatively lightly visited. There was sufficient justice in this complaint to compel the overseer, as he valued his reputation, to look round and see which of his dissenting neighbours he might be severe upon. The out-parishioners were naturally the first to be sacrificed; and Philip Nelson's avowal that he could neither employ parish labour nor contribute to the rate as he had done, afforded a good occasion for beginning with him.

The wind had not changed. The cold north-wester still blew, chilling those who dwelt upon the heights, so that even the leafy coppices in the little valley could scarcely persuade them that the autumn was but beginning. The pitch in the mine had as yet afforded no promise to Philip and his partner: but this was a far inferior grief. The cold north-wester still blew. It had not pleased Heaven to hear the prayers of the parents: it had not pleased God yet to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. The infant drooped, day by day; and Philip, who had been taught to estimate the favour of God by the accomplishment of prayer, drooped in spirit under the belief that he was disregarded or ill-regarded by Heaven. It was a fearful struggle for his wife to witness, and himself to experience,—the struggle to order

his hourly conduct so as to avoid in all his inward thoughts and outward observances, even to the most trifling, whatever might be supposed to offend God; and yet, amidst all this fear and caution, to strive after that cheerful faith and freedom of spirit which he felt to be a Christian's duty. The impossibility of maintaining the two states of mind at once and continually, was an affliction under which he could not be comforted. It was a dreary time.

Spetch had agreed to alter the hours of working at the mine, to accommodate Philip. He took his turn from noon till evening, that Philip might relieve his wife from the charge of the child during the latter part of the day, when she felt most weary. Philip left his sleepless bed two hours before dawn, and worked till noon.

It wanted half an hour of noon when Eliza heard a step outside the door, and made haste to open it for her husband. It was not her husband, but two men, who came with orders not to leave the premises without the amount of rate that was due. In vain did Eliza explain that there was no money in the house, —that Philip had no money at all, in consequence of a great disappointment at the mine. As soon as ever he got any, she could answer for his paying all their dues; but they had been obliged to use their credit at the shop, and could not therefore pay to the poor. The men were sorry, but their orders were positive; and if they could not have money, they must carry away money's worth. Mrs. Nelson stepped back to

let them in, only hoping that they would take something which her husband would not miss as soon as he came home. He had a keen sense of disgrace, and she did not wish to add anything to the bad news she had to tell him from the doctor, who had said this morning that the child was near its end.

"If that be the case," said one of the men, "it would be the least inconvenience to you if we were to take the cradle for one thing."

"O, no, no! My child's cradle! My child will want its cradle. Any thing but the cradle!"

The man begged her pardon: he understood her to say that the child would not long want the cradle. He should have thought that perhaps it would be better, afterwards, to have any thing so wounding to look upon put out of sight.

"But I assure you I could not answer to my husband the having parted with the cradle. I could never bear the thought of my child if I let its bed be taken from under it. Please to take any thing you please, gentlemen, but the cradle."

There was nothing in the house which would not bear an objection. There was nothing which Philip would not immediately miss, or which he had not given, to her on some particular occasion, or which had not been presented to him in testimony of some good deed of his own, or of the esteem of his neighbours. The men seemed disposed to be patient; but Eliza soon checked herself, perceiving that it was upon the stroke of noon.

"Take the clock," said she.

The tiny clock was taken down from the corner where its weights had swung, day and night, for the two years of Eliza's marriage. The room seemed dreadfully quiet without its click when the men were gone; but Eliza hung up her cloak to hide the holes in the wall, and trusted that her husband would prove to be less mindful of the click than herself, as he was not so constantly within hearing of it.

Several weary hours were passed by the parents in devising what might soothe the close of their infant's little life. At last the babe was soothed. The twilight had settled into darkness, and the lamp was lighted. Once more the babe's eyes turned to that favourite light. Once more the feeble wail was instantly hushed at the apparition of the flame. The parents could not but smile at the sudden calm; but the smile faded away when they saw how films were gathering, how the eyelids drooped, how the quick breath went and came, and the little hand trembled as it lay. The father withdrew to the table, and covered his face with his hands. The mother could still bear the sight: she would not for the world have left it; but Philip did not dare to look in the face of his innocent babe while thoughts which he considered sinful were racking his mind. He thought of his first day of hope of being a parent, of all the hours of anticipation which he had passed in the mine, of his proud and tender care of his wife, of his undoubting belief that God had appointed him an honourable task in bringing up this child to

serve Him on earth before he should serve in heaven,—and of his complacency in every graceful motion, in every sign of intelligence in the babe, as if all these were his own, and made for his honour :—he thought how all was now to be swept away, and was humbled to the dust. Then Eliza,—all that she had hoped, all that she had gone through,—now seemingly for nothing but a mockery. Were not these wicked thoughts? Then, the little creature itself,—what a frame,—how laboriously wrought out,—with what an apparatus for the action and enjoyment of scores of years,—every part made in adaptation, and instinct with vitality,—that this should be all destroyed by the failure perhaps of one little function, the disorder of one little portion! It seemed absurd,—it seemed cruel. Was not this a wicked thought? It brought a shuddering over him who was tempted by it. He was not aware that such thoughts *will* come in the hour of anguish; that they ought to come to the searching mind in the hour of dark trial; and that it is not in such natural ideas that sin resides, but in the failure to bring others to clear them up;—thoughts of man's ignorance in comparison with God's knowledge, and of the benignity which, being manifested in the general tendency of the workings of Providence, ought to be confided in with respect to each individual event. Philip practiced this faith even while condemning himself as faithless. He remembered the thousands of happy parents who were at that moment rejoicing in the caresses or thankfully watching

the quiet rest of their babes; and, while humbled at being excluded from the number, owned that He who had caused so many springs of joy and hope to overflow could have none but a benignant purpose in drying up this single source, and withering the hopes which it had fed. He owned within himself that while the issues of Providence are generally wise and good, and man is wholly unable to anticipate those issues, it is only reasonable that man should confide and acquiesce.

“Do not sit so far off,” said Eliza, after the lapse of a full hour. She had never raised herself from stooping over the cradle. “Will not you be sorry afterwards that you did not see the last?”

“Is it come to the last?”

He rose, and took courage to look. All was very quiet. There would never be another cry, never another glance, never another motion but this quivering breath. No word was spoken, and the silence was oppressive. The lamp seemed to burn dim. Philip felt himself confused as to whether it was near morning or not. After trimming the lamp, he went to the place where the clock hung to look what o'clock it was. His wife did not explain its absence, and he went to the door to learn the hour from the stars. He was baffled. No stars were visible, but a thick rain was driven in his face. He hastened in and shut the door, and sat down once more by the table. His wife now looked wistfully at him.

“It pleases God,” he said, “to hear nothing

that we pray for. All the days that I have been praying for a mild wind!—and now it has changed as soon as ever it is too late.”

His wife seized upon one hope inspired by these words. Was it too late while the child breathed? Never was prayer more importunate, more agonizing in its earnestness, than that in which the parents now joined that God would even yet raise up their babe. When they arose, and fearfully drew near to look,—they found a corpse.

“Hush! Not a word! Not a thought!” said Philip’s broken voice. “We have been mistaken. God’s will is his own. His will be done!”

“Where are you going?” asked the wife, when a few bitter hours had passed away. “You are not going out, Philip?”

“I will do my duty through every thing. I will go to my work. It must be God’s will that I should get honest bread,” replied Philip. “If it had not pleased Him to bring me to poverty, I should not have thought of leaving you yet. But you will be comforted, love; and I ought to have been at my work this hour past.”

“I doubt whether it be near dawn yet.”

“Indeed!”—Philip’s countenance brightened a little amidst its perplexity. He had entirely lost count of the time; and a dim, passing thought had been that, though it was already morning, it would be no lighter to him till he went to his work and his duty. He had put

it off awhile from dread, for the first time, of his wife's kiss.

She stood on the door sill long after she had ceased to see him in the yellow gleam from the window. Though the mild south wind brought sprinklings of rain into her face, she liked better to stand and listen in the dark to the patter of the drops in the grass, and the long roll of the distant sea, than to shut herself in with light and silence. If Philip should find that his mind was easier for his hands being busy, she was glad he was gone.

Philip's head was clear about nothing. Was it possible that he should mistake his way to the mine? But it seemed as if he had walked miles in the rain, and he saw nothing of the mine. At last, the faint ray from the engine-house gleamed upon his sight, and calmed the strange terror which was beginning to arise. Presently, he saw it obscured by what seemed to be a human form, and then a loud whistle close beside him startled him.

"You will never leave off whistling, Spetch, if an angel from heaven bade you," cried he, in a sudden irritation. The miners have a superstition that whistling in a mine brings "bad speed;" but Spetch—who cared neither for God nor devil, he declared—could never be alarmed or entreated out of his habit of whistling; and it had occurred to Philip to question how much of his late reverses in the mine might not be owing to his partner's contempt of danger.

"Whistle,—ay, for a wind, a wet wind. 'Tis

what I call a wet wind. But, as they say, what can one expect of a man with a child?"

Spetch was drunk. He had wandered hither from the alehouse. Philip could not get away from him till he had heard some nonsense about the pitch being pitch dark, and vengeance upon the overseer for it, and some harrowing words about the plague of a man with a sick child, with an oath against all children. Instead of knocking him down, which would have been nearly as easy as if he had had no legs to stand upon, Philip only wrenched himself away, and used extraordinary haste in getting down the mine. The wind was now so high, and the morning so dark, that he supposed Spetch would soon be unable to get any further, and would lie down to cool his head on the grass till daylight. No harm could happen on the wide face of the down; and if the chances had been the other way, it would have required all Philip's sense of duty to have induced him to bear his partner company for a hundred yards.

When Philip was beginning to descend the long series of ladders down the shaft, he stopped to speak to a miner, just then coming up early to his work.

"Do you happen to know whether Spetch was at work on our pitch till dark, yesterday?" asked Philip.

"I heard his whistle at times till near dark," said the man; "and I fancy he kept pretty close since noon. That is, he went out grumbling that he was kept——"

“Ay, ay, I know. He is close by now, quite drunk. I suppose he will get home safe.”

“He always does that; but ’tis a stormy time. The sea beats the thunder.”

“Whistling again,” thought Philip. “I wonder he has never been hurt for whistling down in the mine. ’Tis not my cause alone.”

Spetch was indeed found to have worked well. The quantity of deads which had been removed since Philip was last here was so great that it seemed scarcely possible to be the work of one man. Heaps of rubbish were piled in the gallery, and the excavation was prodigiously enlarged; all which proved, unhappily, that ore was not the material which had been worked upon. The mine had been prolonged westwards till it extended to some little distance under the sea. As Spetch was aware of this, it was somewhat bold of him to work upwards and onwards so far as he had done; but there seemed less prospect than ever of the work being to any purpose.

“I see how it is,” thought Philip. “He has been blasting. Bold hand to blast so near the sea!—O, my child!” And he almost desired, for the moment, that the sea would rush in and end the agony of his mind.

Very diligently and long he worked, trying to overpower with the noise he made the tumult which resounded on every side. Whether every sense was roused by the excitement he had undergone, or whether something extraordinary was going forward, he was bewildered by noise

above and around him. Where was his child? was his recurring thought; and why was he thus borne down by so much trouble at once? Many wild ideas passed through his brain as to the ways by which he might have provoked the Divine displeasure. If this had been a gold mine, he might have concluded that his work was sinful as gratifying that love of money which he believed to be the root of all evil; but in a copper mine, could his labour be unholy? Copper money, the purchaser of the poor man's comforts, could not easily be done without; and the ships which go to and fro on the sea are mentioned in Scripture, and are only made more safe by copper sheathing; and this is the chief use that is made of the vast quantity of copper that we send to India. But there is another use that Philip's cousin, the captain, had told him of, that he did not like to remember at this moment; but the idea, once admitted, haunted him; the idea of the Hindoo funerals, where pagan rites are used, and where tens, hundreds, and thousands of pagan priests are presented with brazen cups, some formed from the metal of this very mine. He had never remembered before, that what Christian hands here hewed went to assist the worship of pagans. While plying his pick in this dark recess of the earth, by the flickering light of his candle, in the deepest solitude, the image of this pagan funeral expanded itself before him as it had been described,—the long train of dusky mourners, the throng of priests, and the pile for the sacrifice which is

abominable before God,—all this was connected with himself as assisting in the impiety, and with his child as taken away in retribution. The rock on which he stood vibrated, and the light dust was shaken from the walls of the cavity, as the rush and roar of the sea overhead increased. The gathering of the waves rolling in from the wide Atlantic might be distinctly marked, and their plunge and recession were like the explosion and rattle of the loudest thunder perpetually renewed. The very shingle might be distinguished when it was swept and shifted from its place. The echo through the cavities of the mine was terrific. In a momentary interval, Philip's sensitive ear caught the splash of a drop of water, and he perceived that the ground on which he stood was damp. He snatched up his candle, and traced the bright thread of water on the wall up to the roof of the cavity. He tasted it, and found it salt. There was a little dribble from the sea. He stopped up the invisible crevice with clay; and though he had heard of this being done often before, when a level was driven too far, he felt as if his last hour was come. Close and hot as his recess had been till now, breathings of a chill air now came from the gallery. One, stronger than the rest, blew out his light. "My child! Is my child——? Where is my child?" cried he, with some indistinct notion of his child's being sent to execute judgment upon him, and with a strange longing to invoke his own babe as a superior being. The tumult was not to be borne in darkness, and he rushed from the gallery to the nearest shaft.

The commotion was now explained. There was thunder as well as the roar of the sea ; and pale gleams, which could be nothing but lightning, quivered down the shaft. In his present state of mind, it was a fearful choice to him between the tumult below and the storm above ; and he decided to remain where he was. He struck a light, and sat down on a heap of deads which was piled in the gallery, ready to be carried away. The uppermost wish in his heart at this moment, while the scene of his unproductive toil was before his eyes, and its terrors still shaking his spirit, was never to have to descend a mine again. At this very moment, the means of accomplishing his wish presented themselves. Some of the rubbish on which he was sitting gave way, and disclosed something which induced him to look further. His light served him well enough to show that a well-known miner's trick had been practised by one of his neighbours in the gallery. A quantity of ore was hidden under the deads, that the apparent produce of the lode might be small enough to allow of the tributer who worked it having a new lease of the pitch on more advantageous terms than were fair.

When one cunning man plays this trick, the other cunning man who detects it usually makes no scruple of helping himself with what cannot be claimed. To no cunning man could such appropriation be more tempting than now to the simple-minded Philip. Here was what would pay his little debts, meet all his difficulties, and

enable him to issue from these dark chambers, to return to them no more. What he took would never be asked for, never be missed but by one who had no right to it. Nor was this all. If he chose the other part in the matter, and became the depository of a guilty secret, or the revealer of fraud, he had to dread the enmity of a neighbour; and no one had a greater horror of ill-will. If he had been in a frame of complacency, full of self-respect, and without fear, the temptation would have been less strong; but depressed as he was, more than doubting the favour of God, and well nigh reckless of his own safety, there would have been little wonder if he had fallen, and then attributed the whole calamity to the agency of the Evil One. He was afterwards struck with a conviction of the presence now of that personage. The storm and all the attendant circumstances, seemingly arranged for his fall, betokened such agency, he thought whenever he looked back upon it; but at the time his victory arose from a better influence than fear. The thought of his innocent babe again possessed him, and gave him a strength to resist, which he could better enjoy than understand. He filled buckets with the hidden ore, and conveyed them laboriously up the shaft, and to a place where they might safely await the arrival of the agent. It was strange that no thought of the Evil One, no idea of terror, crossed him when the lightning played round his head during his ascent, and the wind almost blew him and his burden down the shaft again; but he

looked up into the parting thunder clouds, and breasted the gale, as Spetch had told him he might do if he was wise enough to fear neither God nor devil.

This task done, he returned to his labour in the gallery, which now seemed quiet in comparison with what it had been before, though perhaps the quiet was more in his own mind. While he diligently wrought, to take the chance of one more trial, he settled his prospects and arranged his plans. It would not be honest to incur debt on the chance of a new speculation in the mine being better than the last, nor on the chance of any thing more being made of the present. Whatever his partner might do, he was resolved to sell furniture enough to raise the twenty shillings fine, which was the condition of his giving up his pitch. He would humble himself to be a day-labourer above ground, if, as was pretty certain, there should be no day-labour wanted by his neighbours in the mine. He might have been spared this downfall if it had pleased the vestry to do what the clergyman wished, in advancing loans to miners who had bad speed. A loan of two or three pounds would have enabled him to try again, without any dishonest risk. But perhaps it was better not. It might possibly have plunged him deeper; and no doubt he needed his present reverses, or they would not have been sent; and there was always the comfort to fall back upon of being permitted to preach God's message to the people near. What a narrow escape he had had from commit-

ting a tremendous sin, instead of hallowing an afflictive dispensation by doing right more strenuously than ever ! This should be in his mind, as a great mercy, the next time he gathered his neighbours together on the hill-side, and in every moment of weakness when he mourned his child. And then he went on to plan what he could say to his brethren, most animating of all that was in his heart, from the Scripture which tells how, though affliction is not joyous but grievous, it yields afterwards the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. This sermon, as it rose in Philip's mind, was more eloquent than any that he had ever preached. It was a mild and consoling eloquence, like that with which he was meanwhile soothed by the whisperings of the now dying winds, and the slow roll of the retiring sea.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE SCHOOLMISTRESS AT HOME.

THERE was a prodigious bustle in Mrs. Home's house, one morning, when a naughty scholar, who had been sent into the corner, gave notice, by suddenly leaving off crying, that something was to be seen in the street from the window near which she stood. Mrs. Home, much shocked that any thing should occur to amuse the culprit at such a moment, rose to draw down the blind, and giving a preliminary peep, saw Mrs. Pend-

reath's pony chaise drawn up near the shop, and the lady herself descending from it.

"Here comes Mrs. Pendreath! Here comes the lady!" reached Mr. Oddy's ears, as he sat finishing his breakfast in the back parlour,—an object of awe to the little creatures, who could conceive of nothing grander than a rasher every day. "Look at Mr. Oddy!" "See the gentleman!" spread in whispers from mouth to mouth, accompanied by many a jog and kick, as the overseer opened his mouth wide to receive three mouthfuls in one, made a significant sign to his daughter, and, in the absence of other means of escape, bolted into the large closet, where the tippets and bonnets of the scholars hung in motley array. Of course, a giggle pervaded the company, when Mrs. Pendreath entered.

"Good morning, Mrs. Home. I have come early for the sake of seeing Mr. Oddy. Don't disturb yourself or your scholars. I will make my own way to him, if you will tell me where I may find him."

The giggle was renewed, in spite of Mrs. Home's solemn looks. She was very sorry that the honourable lady should have had the trouble of coming just when her father had happened to be gone out. She would be sure and tell him that the honourable lady had called, and he would be much concerned that he had not the honour of being at home.—So spake the moralist of the parish,—she who was assisting the clergyman in upholding morals and religion.

“ I am” sorry that I can never succeed in finding him at home,” said Mrs. Pendreath ; “ but I see that he has business enough just now to occupy him abroad. How many of those new cottages is he going to build in the lane ? Do you know ? ”

Mrs. Home’s policy was always to be entirely ignorant, in Mrs. Pendreath’s presence, of all Oddy’s proceedings. Was he building cottages ? In the lane ? She had not been in the lane since she did not know when :—an edifying declaration in the ears of those of her pupils whom she had last evening scolded, and sent home from their jumping among the rising walls of this very row of cottages. She supposed he had had a building order,—perhaps from the honourable lady herself. Did not the lane belong to the Hon. Mrs. Pendreath ?

“ If it did, Mrs. Home, I would not build cottages till I knew who was likely to want them. I wish you would ask your father who are to be his tenants,—whether any of our own people, or strangers. Ah ! I see you think this a meddling question ; and so it is ; but when our property is meddled with so as to make it doubtful how much will be left, it is time to be asking a few questions.”

Mrs. Home did not suppose there was any idea of erecting these cottages at the expense of her Ladyship’s property ; but if her Ladyship pleased, she would ask her father.

“ Not erecting, but occupying them at the expense of myself and a few others. You must

see, Mrs. Home, that while our neighbours are giving up paying to the rate, and begging for work from house to house, they can be in no condition to rent new cottages. There must be an expectation, either that the parish will help these to pay their rents, or that strangers will come and occupy."

Mrs. Home played with her apron-string, and was sure she did not know.

"It is more Mr. Palliser's affair than any one's," continued the lady; "but Mr. Palliser is exactly the one who finds it most awkward to speak for himself; and so I speak for him. It is of less consequence to him, he says, to pay away all his income than to cause ill-will among his parishioners."

"Yes, indeed, that is Mr. Palliser's way, indeed, as your Ladyship says. Anything rather than be like the methodist party, with their improper doings. Peggy, don't stand with your finger in your mouth, like a stupid mule; but set a chair for the lady. Won't your Ladyship sit down after your ride? Ah! ma'am, what can we do for Mr. Palliser against those methodists?"

"Whether they be methodists or church-people, something must be done to relieve Mr. Palliser. One might really think that parish matters were ordered with a view to ruining him. The vestry goes on rating him according to what the tithes of the parish were in the late clergyman's time; and we all know that Mr. Palliser does not recover half the amount. They put

labourer after labourer upon him to be employed, so that he is going to send away Ledley—You know Ledley.”

“Know him! the dear good man!” cried Mrs. Home piteously. “The ornament of the parish, next to his master! Send him away! Well! as I say, the winter wind is not so bad as man’s ingratitude. The plain truth is, the methodists can’t abide an honest man near to watch their ways, and so they are for banishing Mr. Ledley.”

“I do not quite agree with you there, Mrs. Home. I do not know that methodism has anything to do with the evil. I am speaking of parochial matters, merely.” And she glanced towards the dissenting portion of the little population which filled the benches.

“I see what your Ladyship means; but I never disguise my sentiments, and should have small conscience in my duties if I did not do my best to protect the little souls of my charge, as far as in me lies, from the contagion which has come upon us,—come sadly upon us since the awful day of Catholic Emancipation, when the day of the Church was darkened. I am sure there is an instance in that corner, if I were to tell all;”—and she glanced significantly towards the culprit, who turned to the wall with such a look of shame that Mrs. Pendreath forbore to inquire what she was an instance of;—whether of Catholic Emancipation, or of the darkening of the Church, or of Mrs. Home’s conscientiousness towards her pupils.

“ Truth, truth,” continued the schoolmistress, with another glance in the same direction. “ As I say, what is to be l pped without truth ?” To cover a little noise in the closet, which made the children look at one another, and clasp their mouths with their hands, Mrs. Home went on to tell how intrepidly she had spoken the truth to the Nelsons, about what might become of their poor lost babe if they did not promise her to let it be redeemed from methodism. It made her heart ache to see Philip at work in the quarry, like a meaner man, and the wife wandering about to seek employment because there was no baby at home, and to think how it might have been if they had not been dissenters, believing in judgments and such dreadful things. Her Ladyship said she thought of parochial matters only. Was not Mr. Tremorne a great parochial person ? and was not he a methodist ? Had not Mr. Tremorne been heard to say that he paid tithe to the parson, and so the parson should pay rate for him ? Awful blasphemy ! But she had always predicted what would come of letting Catholics overset the Church.

“ Well ! but about these new cottages,” said Mrs. Pendreath. “ I am very sorry not to see your father, because I am going to London,—going to set out in three hours ; and nobody knows but that these cottages may be filled with strangers by the time I come back,—adding not the less to the parish burdens for letting well, and filling the owners’ pockets. If they are so filled, the next thing will be for the parsonage to

stand empty. When Mr. Palliser comes to sending away Ledley, we may be sure he cannot make many more efforts. So——”

“ If I could but manage to find my father ! ” softly exclaimed Mrs. Home ; and then, in her zeal to save the Church and Mr. Palliser, she ventured to ask whether the honourable lady would condescend to sit in the shop for a few minutes, while an effort was being made to find the overseer.

“ I will not disturb your pupils,” said the lady, smiling at Mrs. Home’s speaking in a whisper. “ I will sit here for as long as I can stay, and you can all go on with your business.”

There was no help for it. Mrs. Pendreath was in so little hurry, though about to set off for the greatest city in the world (as Mrs. Home told her pupils), that she could take out her spectacles and examine all the samplers in the school, the hidden overseer meanwhile chafing at his detention, during which there was no saying how idle his pauper workmen might be, or how much labour might be standing still, for want of his superintendence. It took some time to examine such samplers as were produced in Mrs. Home’s school. There was a church with a yew on each side of it at the bottom of each ; and the inventor piqued herself on the variety of her churches,—two with steeples, three with spires of different orders of architecture, and each with a different bird perched above it (a robin or parrot as it might be), ready to carry away the church in its beak. The morality found

room on each side. For instance, "No circumstance, time, nor place in life will ever efface from memory the past." "Love stands by itself, and exceeds any of the ties of nature or of friendship." The better sort of copy-books were quite as moral, and even more worth seeing. They all told the same story;—that "Although we experience many trials in this life, from fate and fortune, or otherwise, yet the sight of a friend, whose sincerity we have oft experienced, fills our heart with joy, and makes us superior to the ills we feel." It was very strange that, while reading all this, Mrs. Pendreath never turned her back towards the closet for a minute at a time. When she sat down, there was nothing for it but patience. But Mrs. Home's patience was not of prime quality. She began smoothly enough with her teaching. The children were "little dear," and "love," and a pitying smile followed every mistake; but when the little dears became more open in showing that they were attending more to the lady's green shawl than to their governess's epithets, she lost her composure, and finally broke up the class, saying,

"Your Ladyship's presence has an extraordinary effect on my young lambs. There is no getting them to say their letters, you see; but I hope you will consider it only as honourable to yourself. It is not an event which happens every day."

Mrs. Pendreath could not but go away on such a compliment as this. She enchanted Mrs. Home by a request that she would write to her

in town, acquainting her with the progress of events in the parish; and especially who was to live in the new cottages, and whether Ledley was really sent away. Mrs. Home could scarcely have been more delighted if she had been appointed parish clerk under Mr. Palliser. She promised to write with all expedient fulness, and to carry up her epistles herself to the White House to be forwarded. Here was delightful employment for her leisure moments,—to plan letters to Mrs. Pendreath! She began before the pony-chaise had well driven off, and before she could have any idea what she should have to say. She herself began the button-hole for Nanny Beck, and then cuffed Nanny for working it on the wrong side. This was the consequence of the extreme pathos she was putting into her imaginary description of Ledley's farewell.

There was little pathos in Oddy's farewell when he went forth at length to his morning's business. He had overheard every word, and was full of indignation at women's meddling with what they knew nothing about. He would not say a word about the new cottages. Mrs. Pendreath might wait to see who was to live in them, and learn, if she chose, that it was a woman's business to pay the rates, and leave it to the men to manage them.

His wrath drove him to seek Tremorne, the partner of all his parochial schemes, as well as of the cottage property which was rising up in the lane. He just looked into his brick-yard as

he passed, informed the men with an oath of what they previously knew without,—that they never did a stroke of work but when his eye was upon them,—glanced about for Tremorne in the lane without finding him, and strode on to the quarry, which was the busiest scene above ground in the parish, and the place in which Tremorne might usually be found.

It was busy because Tremorne employed more workmen in digging and shipping his china-stone than anybody in the parish, on any other work, always excepting mining ; and the tenant of the quarries was always on the spot, because idlers and curious persons made this place their resort, and nothing but his presence availed to prevent his labourers being idle too. If, like Ianson and every other farmer, he had been obliged by the nature of the occupation to set his men to work out of his sight, he would soon have been weary of hiring men at half-wages to do less than half-work ; but he possessed the advantage, like Oddy, of having all compact under his own eye. Clustered together in the quarry, digging and wheeling, the motions of all and each might be observed from either above or below ; and on the edge the great tenant might be seen, every fine day, looking abroad like an eagle from his perch, while gossips from the valley lay on the grass, lazily looking down ; or swung on a gate, wondering whether it was good fishing to-day ; or amused themselves with leaping bouts down the clay-slope which descended to the beach.

There, on the present, as on most fine days,

were assembled all those who had fewest private interests to attract them elsewhere. Daddy Harker had been sent out with medicines; but he had found his way to the quarry, as usual; and blisters and bark lay inoperative beside him, while he stretched himself on the grass, and joked with one or another of the barrowmen as they passed. Josiah stole back to his heap of stones on the road, as soon as the overseer became visible, while Spetch turned himself round for another doze, when he had sworn at Oddy for threatening to kick him down the quarry. Spetch and the overseer were not on good terms. Spetch had found his way on the morning of the storm, not home, but to the overseer's. He had knocked up Oddy to demand parish relief, because of the failure of his pitch, and had been committed to prison for a few hours for his evil deed. 'The next thing was to put him upon the roads, where he would not work; and it remained to be considered what should be done to relieve the parish from the burden of himself and his family.

"'The old dame has got hold of us,'" Oddy informed Tremorne. "'She has got scent of the new cottages; and now nothing will serve her but she must know who is to live in them, and how the rent is to be paid.'"

"Well, tell her."

"Tell her what?"

"That she is to help to pay the rent, and to find work for the tenants."

"But you know she won't. She will employ

none but upon full wages, as you are well aware."

"If she chooses to pay twice or three times over, she is very welcome. If she pays her own people high to please herself, she must not the less do her part by the parish. She will gain nothing by being inquisitive about the cottages, unless she can prevail on other parishes to keep our people from coming back upon us."

"It was provoking enough that I could not answer her a word, though I heard all she said. I popped into the closet to get out of her way, leaving my daughter to manage her; but my daughter was wheedled over in a minute when the parson was mentioned, and she managed no more sensibly than any one of the brats she teaches would have done. I longed to call out, and ask where she meant to house Smith and Beaver, and all the rest that are beginning to flock home."

"I suppose those men will serve my turn in the place of such as we must send away."

"Scarcely. They can hardly be worse than Spetch, to be sure; but I doubt whether you will find them fit for better than road-work. But are you thinking of sending away anybody else besides Spetch?"

"That will depend on what Smith, and Beaver, and the others are like. If there is a pretty good one among them, we may as well be rid of that poor fellow. His grave face is enough to sadden a whole parish."

"Which?—he that is working below as if he

was digging for golden guineas? You might do better than part with him, if it be Nelson that you mean. He does you good work for your money; and I should really feel some scruple about sending away one who has paid his part to the rates till so very lately. If you could make it convenient——”

“How should I make it convenient to keep him when I can get another on better terms? It is out of the question. The proper time for sending him away will be when the Spetches go: they came together, and let them go together. It is time there was an end to Nelson’s cabals with the parson.”

“Oh, ho! that’s it. I wondered what had so suddenly set you against one of your own party. Nelson and the parson can meet and comfort one another in their afflictions, without wanting to cut one another’s throats, and you grow jealous. If Nelson were to-night to preach a sermon against the parson, we should hear no more from you about sending him away.”

“There is no occasion to suppose that. When other parishes send back our labourers upon us, we must retaliate.”

“That is exactly what they say; and we shall be well off if those that come back are anything like as good as those we have dismissed already, to say nothing of Nelson. Really, Tremorne, if we can find a worse man to send home in his stead, it is a sort of duty to the parish to do it. Nelson will be in a condition to bear rating soon again, or he is not the man I take him for. You

could not do a worse thing than throw him on my hands. If you once do that, away he must go, being an out-parishioner.”

Tremorne said it must depend upon circumstances.

These circumstances soon arose.—While Philip was thus being discussed, he was working away as if, as Oddy said, he was digging for guineas; little dreaming what was being planned against him. By selling some of his furniture, he had paid his fine of twenty shillings for giving up his pitch, and set himself at liberty for other work. None but a miner can understand the pain he felt in losing caste—in becoming a day-labourer in the quarry, after having been long a tributer in the mine; but he braved the humiliation, only praying to be allowed to support his wife in comfort, and to remain in his present dwelling, in the neighbourhood of his infant's grave, and in the society to whom he ministered humbly, but acceptably, in spiritual services. He persuaded himself that he was very fortunate in being immediately employed by Tremorne; and said much to his wife of the pleasure of seeing the sun shine through the day, and of having the sea and the green down before his eyes continually, and of breathing the fresh breeze from morning till night, instead of living amidst the gloom and vapours of the mine. But not the less did both feel that they had lost caste, and strive to recover their ability to enter upon a new speculation. Wages had been reduced grievously by the practice of

paying a part of the labourer's subsistence out of the rate ; but yet Philip and his wife thought they should succeed in laying by something. He was now roused by the bustle which was spreading from group to group in the quarry. All within earshot were talking indignantly about the pride and cruelty of the rich, who grudged good house-room to the poor. The lady might be content that she had her own fine white house to live in, and not be troubling herself because her neighbours were likely to have decent cottages. Nobody expected such a thing from her as that she should build them any ; but when the overseer himself made the bricks, and the man who paid her the rent she lived upon built the houses, there was no occasion for her to be meddling, and to be getting the parson to join her. The parson complained, they supposed, because he could not tithe houses ; but he might be satisfied with taking tithes of every thing else from those who held a purer Word than he, and never set foot within his church. Tremorne was standing here and there as his people talked, and showed himself clearly of their mind. Sometimes he shook his head, and looked solemn : then he shrugged his shoulders, and smiled ; taking care, before he left the quarry, to let it be known that Mrs. Pendreath had set out for London. Then, when it was conjectured that she might be gone to induce Government to interfere with the building of the cottages, he offered no other answer than perfect silence.

He soon went away, to let matters take their course. The course they took was one which grieved Philip very much. The groups joined ; and the more the people gathered together, the more furious they grew. There seemed some fear that they would pull down the large white house, because its owner did not approve of building up little ones ; and it would be well if they did not do something to Mr. Palliser. Philip was almost the only person in the quarry who did not leave his work and threaten vengeance. Perhaps it was on this account,—perhaps because he was a sort of teacher among some of them,—that they moved towards him to demand his opinion.

“ I do not well see how I can give an opinion,” said he, “ unless I know more of the matter you are talking about. What has the lady done ? ”

The complaints were very various. She thought the ground good enough for the poor to lie on. She wanted to cross the overseer, and to ruin Tremorne. She was gone to set the Government against the poor of her parish.

But had she not, up to this very day, given better wages than anybody in the parish, even while she was paying to the parish too ?

Oh, but she always declared she was better served for doing so. She was a gainer by it.

Philip was glad of it : he wished it might lead to others trying the same plan. However that might be, it appeared that Mrs. Pendreath paid better wages than others. Had anybody heard

the lady say that she thought the ground good enough for the poor to lie on?

Yes; Mr. Oddy.—Not Mr. Oddy?—Then it must have been Mr. Tremorne. Never mind whom she said it to; it was bad enough saying it to anybody.

But if she thought so, why had she encouraged the little Scotts to lay by their Christmas-boxes and their earnings, herself adding threepence to the shilling, to buy a bedstead for their mother? And if she was averse to the poor living under a decent roof, why did she desire the Harkers to help themselves with her straw, and set one of her labourers to put Harker in the way of thatching his cottage anew, that the rain might not come in as often as there was a storm? Perhaps they had better find out who knew that the lady felt as was reported.

But the care she took of the clergyman! She had desired Mrs. Home to write to her once a week, to tell her how Mr. Palliser went on; and if so much as one person said a rough word to the clergyman, no doubt Government would hear it the same day.

If the lady was anxious about the clergyman, it was no more of a wonder than that all the friends, both of the lady and the clergyman, should be anxious about them, in the present state of affairs. There was one circumstance which had not, perhaps, been enough considered in judging of them both. It should be remembered that they had not the opportunity of explaining themselves, any more than of managing

parish affairs, like those who had the building of the cottages. The clergyman found it best not to show himself in the vestry while he had to cross so many of the Dissenters in their wills; and the lady's great tenant had several votes more than anybody, and could carry everything over her head, while she could not even explain. For instance, had she not declared that it pained her to see her neighbours at work on the roads, and offered to the vestry to employ all the men they thought of putting upon the roads?—and had the men themselves,—had Josiah Harker, who was now drooping over his work on the moor,—ever heard of this offer? And this was in addition to paying full wages, in order to have a decent set of people about her, who would do her work better than parish work is done.

“The parson does not pay so. He does not keep anybody off the roads.”

“Perhaps he will when he can pay wages to his own old servant, and employ all the labour that is put upon him. One may say this, whatever be the reason of Mr. Palliser being so overtaken. It cannot surprise any of us that one of the world's people, holding a corrupt Word, should have fallen into tribulation among his neighbours; but this seems to me no reason why he should be harshly dealt with by those that have found the right way;—and I call it being harsh to reckon and rate his tithes as if he had them all, and to cry out upon him when he makes no complaint for himself, but is only

fearful of new burdens being brought upon the parish. Though he be a church clergyman, this seems to me to be hard treatment."

"What harm can the cottages do him?"

"Ask the parson in the next parish. He has been getting the great landowner there to pull down every cottage in one row; and that is one reason, as the overseer will confirm to you, why so many of your old neighbours are coming back among us. If, as fast as cottages are pulled down there, they are built up here, and the parish is relied on to pay the rents, the parson seems to have reason to begin consulting with Mrs. Pendreath about holding out encouragement to new comers. What I mean is, that church parsons being, as it pleases God, worldly men, it is not for the unworldly to be too strict with them in a plain case like this."

One dissenter looked another in the face to see whether this was not considered going a step too far in toleration. Philip saw the look, and said,—

"It is not given to everybody to have faith that stones may be made bread, and that the rock will give out water at God's bidding more easily than the worldly can get it with all their calculating; and no power that I know of is given us against those that lack this faith. We must see that the brethren all have such faith before we lay hands on those that are not of us. Their unbelief be on their own heads."

The clergyman had won over Philip with a few soft words, it was feared.

“He spoke comfortably to me when my child was taken away,” replied Philip, with emotion. “If I was too ready to take comfort from such an one, God pardon me! Mr. Palliser had nothing to gain by giving kind words to me; and I have nothing to gain by remembering them.”

One or two uttered something about back-sliding, and the general notice that had been taken that Nelson had let the parson tempt him; as was shown by his having been less diligent of late in giving out the Word.

Philip’s heart smote him at this. It was true that he had slackened in his public exhortations of late; but it was only because he could not trust himself with the topics he could speak best upon. Since his troubles had accumulated upon him, his faith had grown stronger; but his emotion in speaking of it had strengthened too. He was now struck with the weakness of this shrinking, and offered to hold forth at sun-down the next day at Goats’ Cairn.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A FAR LOOK-OUT.

WHAT it might be at sun-down the next day remained to be seen; but the morning was rainy—a very unfit morning for work in the quarry. Philip doubted whether he should find

anybody there; for the place must be very like a quagmire, little tempting to such fastidious personages as parish labourers, whose toil must also be much less profitable to their employer than in dry weather.

On the way, he met little companies of work-people, sauntering in the dripping rain, as if it had been the brightest sunshine. Tremorne had no employment for them to-day. They were to work on the roads to-day. Even these humbled, comfortless, reckless people grew indignant, as the wet pelted in their faces, at being made tools of in this way. They had borne with the parish paying half the wages of the labour of which Tremorne made profit in fine weather; but that they should be cast wholly upon the parish, and put to the lowest labour when the weather prevented Tremorne's making his usual profit by them, threw a strong light upon their own degradation, and, at the same time, upon the injustice to all the rest of the parish. If they found that Oddy was doing the same,—if his brick-yard should be perceived to be deserted, and his men charged to the lady, and the clergyman, and the shopkeeper, they should think that Mrs. Pendreath had indeed something reasonable to say to government in the way of complaint. It was still considered as shocking as it was yesterday that she should object to the new cottages; but she had never been known to employ people in fine weather, and turn them upon the roads in bad. They went a little out of their way to a spot whence

Oddy's brick-yard might be overlooked. There stood the little sheds dripping, with no man under them. There were the long ranges of bricks covered with straw, with no man tending them. Oddy and Tremorne were doubtless acting in concert. Why should not the labourers act in concert too, and refuse to be made thus odious to the lady and the clergyman?

Philip pursued his own business, making the best of his way to the quarry, where he hoped, by dint of pains, to achieve a tolerable day's work in spite of the rain. He was stopped by Tremorne as he passed the shed where that personage was wont to hold his seat.

"Nelson, my good fellow! Nelson! There is nothing doing here to-day. Nothing is doing, you see."

"I hope I shall be allowed to do something, sir. I had no notice but that there was work every day; and it is a serious thing to me to miss a day's work."

"No man need miss a day's work in our parish. But you see there is nobody here. You had better follow the rest, if you make a point of your day's work."

"Follow them where, sir?"

"O, you know where our people work. Up on the road there."

Philip struggled with his anger before he replied,

"You do not see who it is you are speaking to, sir. I am Philip Nelson."

"What of that, Philip Nelson?"

“Just this, sir; that I am not a pauper asking relief, but a hired workman. I have been working for you, not for the parish.”

“We do not make such distinctions. The parish has been paying some of your wages this week past——”

“No such thing, sir. I deny ever having taken one penny of——. I cannot speak the word, sir, in relation to myself. I admit that I no longer pay to your parish; but I protest that I am your workman, and nobody’s else. You are still in your morning’s sleep, I think, sir; or you would never think of confounding relief and wages.”

“None but a hair-splitting preacher, like you, would think of such nice distinctions. I defy you to separate the two things here; and where is the occasion to separate them?”

“All the occasion in the world to my honour, sir.”

“Let me advise you, Nelson, to humble that pride of yours, before you are so ready to exhort other people. I wonder you take upon you to preach as you do, when you have such a vice in you that it will be by grace if the devil does not catch you.”

“I cannot say that that is not true,” replied Philip, humbly. “If God pleases to bring me down to taking parish pay, I hope to submit and be thankful. I only say that that has not been yet.”

“You are mistaken, you are mistaken. Oddy can show you your name among the rest, I dare

say. At least, it is reckoned just the same thing here. We don't make distinctions without a difference, like you, as I said before. We are not all preachers."

"I do not know what I have done, sir, to be so treated. I have always—but I am not going to make any proud boasting."

"Better not. I will tell you what you have done. You have shown a backsliding that— You remember, perhaps, how you spoke up for the parson last night. Who will listen to you after that, do you think?"

"But not for the church, sir. Only——"

"No more hair-splitting, Nelson, if you please. I think the parish deserves some better thanks from you than you seem disposed to give, for helping you in your time of trouble. You have no claim upon the parish, remember."

"I make none, sir."

"Only to be passed home, I suppose. You cannot get work in the mine, I conclude, or you would not be here; and there is no other work to be had, unless Mrs. Pendreath gives it to people that make distinctions without differences; and Mrs. Pendreath is gone to London. If you want to be passed home, ask Oddy; and I can tell you, if you stay much longer here, without work, Oddy will ask you."

Philip did not trust himself to make any kind of answer. He walked away, — not towards home, but in an exactly opposite direction. There was a spot at no great distance, to which it had been his delight to repair when an acci-

dental holyday gave him liberty to watch the sun travelling towards its setting in the western waters. He had never seen the place except in sunshine ; and when he now mechanically bent his steps that way, it might perhaps be with some unconscious expectation of finding sunshine there. It was gloomy enough, however. The little inn which bore on its sign-board, "The Last House in England," and on the reverse, "The First House in England," looked comfortless, and its sign creaked in the wind as he passed. The bare common beyond was soaked, and the few bushes sprinkled over it were black and dripping. The perpendicular rocks at the extremity of the promontory are never otherwise than dark ; but now they looked dismal, with streams of rain descending from their crevices, and a turbid sea rolling in among them. Except where the terrible reef of rocks—the Long Ships—interfered with the waves as they came in from the Atlantic, the whole expanse of sea was as murky as the sky. The one was emptying itself into the other, and both were wrapped in the same grey gloom. Cape Cornwall stood frowning forth to the right ; and the large bay which it protected, and to which Philip had been wont to turn for cheerful images when the solemnity of the scene became overpowering (as it does on the brightest day), was now as dreary as any other part of the landscape. No boats, with groups of busy fishermen about them ; no watchman on the height, looking over a sunny sea for the purple shoal of pilchards ; no

little children seen moving like dark specks on the silvery sands, as they ran out to their play; nothing of life to break the desolateness of the scene. Philip felt as if it was made thus desolate for him,—particularly when the thought occurred to him, that on the other side of this very sea, there was a land where many people went when tired with desolation at home. His cousin, the captain, had told him what a fine country America was for honest men who could not prosper here, and what a fine place for worshipping God. He had told Philip, not only of the farmer's log dwelling, and the cleared spaces in the woods that he could call his own, but of the devout assembly that was congregated in the heart of the forest to honour God and aid the Gospel. Philip had often thought of that gathering, where silent thousands were seated on the prostrate pines, listening to the voice lifted up in the wilderness, while the glare of torches shone on their raised faces, and the deep darkness of the forest shrouded them round. He had often fancied that God must needs prefer such a service as this to the homage of the handful who could be here collected to worship on the bleak down, or in the shadow of a barn. Now the apparition of that land seemed to rise out of the gloomy waters, as Philip had seen from the shores of Mount's Bay the Mount dressed in the soft hues of the sunrise, while the sea which surrounded it lay still in gloom. Like this, the bright shores of America were before his mind's eye, and beyond, the forest in which he thought

he could acceptably worship. The strength of the impression was like a call to go thither, occurring, as it did, just after he had had warning that he must leave his habitation, leave his child's grave, leave his occupation, and his little flock. The call might be meant mercifully to spare him the humiliation of returning in beggary to his native place—a mercy which he had done his best to deserve by relieving as he could the beggary of others in his day. If a voice would but come through the roar of waves below, and the whistle of winds around,—if a voice would but come to make all sure—

“Hoy! Oy! Oy!” was the cry that did come from behind at this moment. Philip felt every pulse in his body as he turned,—not half sure but that his ears had deceived him. He saw a traveller, walking beside his horse, coated, caped, and muffled, as if he never meant to house himself again, shaking the wet from the brim of his oil-skin-covered hat, and then soothing the rising terrors of his horse, which had probably never been in so strangely noisy a place before. This was not exactly the costume which Philip had prepared himself to expect whenever he should encounter angel or devil; but there is never any offence given by a reverential demeanour; and Philip was naturally more afraid of failing than exceeding in respect.

“Just be so good as to hold my horse,” said the stranger. “I cannot safely get him any nearer, and I must see the point myself. It is lucky for me that you happen to be here; for

there seems to be no place that I could fasten him to. Thank you. You can walk him up and down a little, or let him stand, as you like. I will not detain you long ; but I could not turn back without seeing what I came for."

Philip's was a very mixed mood as he stood patting the horse's neck, and watching the figure of the stranger standing on the verge of the abyss, with all his capes flapping in the wind. It was true that he did not want to stay very long. He looked straight before him ; he looked right ; he looked left ; he looked below ; and then returned.

"Now I have seen the Land's End," said he, when he resumed his bridle. "I am glad I came ; but I have seen other Land's Ends better than this."

"Have you indeed, sir?" said Philip, unwilling to let the interview end here. "Over there, sir? On the other side of the world?"

"Over there, on the other side of the world ; and perhaps I may see them again. You do not want to go, do you?"

Philip was too much confounded to answer. The next question was less agitating.

"You are not a miner, I suppose, by your dress. If you had been a miner, I should have had something to say to you. You never were a miner, I suppose?"

"O, yes, sir, I am a miner."

"A clay mine, I suppose. I never saw a copperer or a tinner so daubed with clay. What do you call yourself?"

“A copperer, sir. I am of the Wheel Virgin, in this neighbourhood. I was a tributer there till misfortune overtook me very lately.”

“Then I wish you would come and taste the ale with me at The First House in England. You will help me to some things that I want to know, I dare say.”

Upon further acquaintance, there appeared to be nothing mysterious about the stranger himself, though his appearance at that time and place was rather remarkable. His name was Quain, and he had come into Cornwall to engage miners to accompany him to South America, to work certain silver mines in the Andes. South America—not North. The mystery gave way in this point. Mr. Quain had to tell, not of vast forests, but of boundless plains; and on these plains, instead of a devout assemblage met to worship, were peasants flying in pursuit of the wild bull, of whose flesh the country people made their food, instead of from the wheat of the settlers' fields. But still here was perhaps an opening for going to the other side of the world, just when the thought had arisen; and this was certainly extraordinary enough. Mr. Quain had succeeded in picking up a few miners by the way who would be willing to work an American mine for twelve guineas a month, all the expenses of their transportation being defrayed. Did Philip suppose that there were any good workmen in this neighbourhood who would be willing to join the Company on the same terms ~

Had Mr. Quain made any inquiry in the neighbourhood?

Not yet. He had come to his extreme point first, and was intending to survey the mines, and cultivate the acquaintance of the miners. Would they probably be disposed to go? Did any in Philip's neighbourhood seem likely to be favourable to such a proposal?

Of twelve guineas a month? And for how long?

As long as the lodes yielded ore, to be sure. There were no lodes so rich, so extensive, so absolutely inexhaustible, in all the world, as those of the very mines in question.

And why did the Americans let strangers work them?

Oh, the Americans knew nothing of working their own mines. They were lazy, ignorant fellows. The mines in question were burnt during a political revolution: the galleries fell in, and this frightened the natives from doing any thing more, though the silver lay below, as rich and plentiful as ever. They had been obliging enough to leave this wealth to be wrought out by the British, who knew rather better how to set about it. Nothing could be more contemptible than the style in which the Americans set about working their mines;—a party of skinny natives, climbing the mountains with their tools in their hands, and their stock of hung beef at their backs, sinking shafts in a small way where the fancy strikes them, and bringing up the ores, even from the greatest

depth, poor devils! upon their backs. They would stare at the lessons the Cornish miners were going to give them.

Philip thought the Cornish men would stare no less. He wished to know,—he feared that if the natives were so ignorant and lazy as this, there was but a small opening for the propagation of religion, and not much regard for it. He was informed that there are not at present revivals and camp meetings on the Pampas; and that the only nooks in the Andes used for worship are the extremely few where the Virgin is enshrined in some friendly rock, or where a rude cross shows that some one had here breathed his parting breath. The stranger did not know the importance of this information to the person he was conversing with. A bright hope had begun to arise in Philip's mind that he might find not only a competence in a foreign land, but an opening for promoting the spread of true religion; but if the natives, few and dispersed, were Catholics, he feared the day was not yet come. He would ponder the matter, however: he would consult with the brethren upon it when they met for the evening exhortation. Meanwhile, he made bold to ask Mr. Quain if it might be supposed that he should be acceptable, if he offered himself to the Company. Though he now appeared in the dress of a labourer from the quarry, his captain could give him a character for skill and diligence which he believed would ere this have secured him employment at home, if the times had not been bad. He did not mean, of course, to pledge himself suddenly to any thing so new;

but did Mr. Quain suppose he had any chance, knowing, as he did, nothing of the new country but through his cousin, the captain?—Chance? The best chance in the world, if he was really a good workman. It was not two or three that were wanted, but a great many.

Philip began to think that he had had no great loss in being turned back from the quarry this morning. It is impossible, he repeated to himself for the thousandth time, to discern the ways by which we are guided, and whither they lead; and by the issue, God reproaches faithlessness. He went home to make the remark to his wife, after having informed Mr. Quain where he might be sure to fall in with some good miners out of employ, if the evening should clear up, as the parting clouds seemed to betoken that it would.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE LAW AND THE PROMISE.

MR. QUAIN made such good use of his hours, and of Philip's introduction to the miners in the neighbourhood of Wheel Virgin, that by the evening most of the brethren had their heads full of America, and before their eyes the glistering vision of fifteen guineas a month. The stranger was among them beside Goats' Cairn before the first hymn was ended; and he remained during the exhortation, for the sake of

hearing what should afterwards be said about his mission. He was not a Wesleyan, nor was he in the habit of attending religious meetings; but he hoped to avoid yawning and other manifestations of weariness by amusing himself with the prospect, in the absence of other entertainments. There was enough in the prospect to interest a stranger for as great a length of time as sermons usually last,—enough, independently of the down and the little valley, the shaded rocks and the sea, which now reflected the pale, cold sky which overhung it. The people were unlike any other congregation which could be assembled in England. The sturdy figures of the broad-shouldered men, with their sagacious brows and their air of proud independence, struck Mr. Quain even more than the comeliness of the women, celebrated as the latter are for a roundness of form and delicacy of complexion which might be thought incompatible with toilsome occupations in the open air, if the cause was not known to be the oily nature of their diet. It was a chilly autumnal evening; and nothing marked more strongly the difference between the mining and the agricultural population than the difference of the effect of the weather upon them. The miners were for the most part amply and respectably clothed; and such of them as were not,—Spetch and his family, for instance,—seemed enabled by their comfortable bodily plight to withstand the seasonable cold which was setting in. The few field labourers who came up from the valley to

see what was doing, or who halted on the outskirts of the little crowd as they passed from their work, shivered in their scanty clothing, and looked too much like the town poor, who may be seen on their way to the gin-shop to warm themselves with a glass of spirits. The leader seemed scarcely to belong to either class. He was as athletic in his form as any miner of them all; but his dress was that of a labourer, and nearly as poor in kind and condition as that of the humblest ditcher in his presence. Mr. Quain's attention was first fixed by the strangeness, to him, of the circumstance that so powerful a man should be bowed in meekness and trembling under the yoke of an unseen power; that he should be evidently at the mercy of every incident which might be interpreted into a sign, and submissive, without shame, in a degree which would have been repugnant to him in the feeblest period of his childhood. Before Mr. Quain had done with this wonder, he found himself thoroughly interested in the discourse which he had supposed would be too dull to be listened to. Perhaps it was its familiarity which attracted him.

“And what is the reason, brethren,” Philip was saying, “that I have not called you together of late, and have brought upon myself the rebuke which some of you justly gave me last night? It was because I could not appear as creditably clothed as I persuaded myself a messenger from God ought to be. But my eyes are now opened, and I perceive that, since

it is God's will that I am brought into the condition of a labourer, it can be no offence to him that I appear before him in the dress of a labourer. I see too many others here who are sharing my lot; and I feel myself moved to say a few words upon that lot. Has not God shown that there is nothing in clothing which can make worship more or less acceptable in his eyes? Was it not acceptable to him when the builders up of the Holy City came thronging at the call of the trumpet, with dust on their clothes, and tools as well as swords by their sides? And did not men in fishers' dress speak of his gospel to the people? And does St. James tell that he loves purple apparel and a gold ring on the finger in the synagogue? No more need be said about this. When God sees his beloved at his footstool after their labour, the dust of their toil is better than the ashes of their penitence; the meanest dress is to him as bright as Joseph's coat of many colours, or as if it had been woven out of his own rainbow. So is it in his sight when there is a humble, loving heart beating under it. But if God be thus merciful, he is also just; and will he not inquire, if he sees that the plain dress has become tatters, and then that the tatters are leaving nakedness?—will he not inquire why his law is broken, that the righteous shall prosper, and that the hand of the diligent shall make rich? If there is sin somewhere when the seed of the righteous are begging bread, will not the God of the righteous find out that sin? It cannot be kept from him who

guides the morning light into every dwelling, and who comes down in the shadows of the night to look into the hearts of men while they sleep.—Why should he not inquire here, even here, as when he called his Hebrew children to account concerning his law in his holy city? The law that we hold is not less clear; and we his children are not less precious. His law is still, that there shall be no oppression of the hired servant that is poor and needy. His law is still, that if merchandise be made of him who cannot help himself, the evil shall be put away. His law is still, that no millstone shall be taken to pledge,—that no man shall be compelled to give up that on which his living depends. His promise is still, that if this law of justice and mercy be kept, there shall be a blessing on the city and in the field; a blessing in basket and store; a blessing on the going out and coming in. And, as for his children being still precious,—does the mother yet forget her sucking child? Then neither does the Lord forget us.”

He paused for a moment, probably because he saw, as he spoke the last words, that his wife's head suddenly drooped upon her breast. He went back to his topic of God's law.

“And how, when the Father comes down round about us, will he find that his law is kept? Is there here no oppression of the hired servant that is poor and needy? Then we know of no tributer whose little furniture is seized for a debt which he never incurred: we know of no willing labourer who is made a beggar without his own

knowledge and consent : we know of no faithful serving-man about to be sent away from his attached master, without fault of his own. As for making merchandise of the helpless, which of us is not sold to the quarry and the brick-yard, that we may be made profit of by those who have received a commission, not to buy and sell, but to succour us ? As for giving in pledge,—is not his farm to the farmer, and his glebe and tithe to the clergyman, the same as the nether millstone to him who lives by his mill ? And I now tell you, what you may not have heard, that the farmer is giving up his farm, and the clergyman his glebe, because they can no longer pay to the poor, but only pledge. Oh that the oppressors would for once heed the law, and restore the pledge when the sun goes down, that the debtor may sleep in his own possession, and bless the just ! But the sun is even now going down, and there is yet no thought of restoring the pledge. Not this night, therefore, shall the promise descend on yonder village and those fields, and on our coming out and going in. Is there any sign of blessing in those crumbling fences, and in the pastures where the cattle are drooping, and in the fallows where stones lie thick as if they had been rained from heaven, and thistles are beginning to grow up against the harvest ? God's blessing is not here, brethren, though his deep sea is about us, and his changing sky above us, and the treasures of his earth under our feet, and his word in our hands. His blessing is not here, though

we need it more day by day. His blessing is not here, though the poor and needy from other places are flocking in, and demanding bread. Brethren, what must we do?"

Mr. Quain, now supposing that something concerning him or his proposal was about to be brought forward, prepared himself to listen more attentively than ever; but his eye was caught by a little bustle at some distance on the down, where a boy seemed to have found something in a scraggy bush which gave him great delight, and caused him to beckon his companions, who, with a careless listener or two, detached themselves from the group, and hastened towards him. Their gestures of pleasure were so lively that Mr. Quain could not help moving away to see what had happened, determining to return by the time Philip had finished his exhortation to penitent prayer, and had resumed what Mr. Quain chose to call the more practical part of his discourse. The boys were all talking together when Mr. Quain approached.

"They said at the Last House that two days more would not pass over," declared one of the boys.

"'Tis well the wind did not change in the rain this morning," said another. "A small cross would have perished the poor thing."

"And the plenty that are behind," added another.

It was a woodcock, — a single exhausted woodcock, that sat trembling under the fatigues of its long flight, as much perhaps as with

dread of its captor. The boy was merciful, as a matter of course ; this being the first woodcock that had been seen this season. He cherished it in his hands and against his breast, kissed its long bill, and declared that it should be let fly as soon as it was sufficiently rested. He followed Mr. Quain back to the company, hoping that some few would be so far inattentive to the speaker as to perceive who had had the honour of capturing the first woodcock of the season. Philip was practical enough at this moment, and Mr. Quain was sorry he had quitted his place so as to lose a part of the description of the American mines.

“If it be true,” Philip proceeded, “that it is a clear good that some should remove to leave subsistence to others, and if, at the moment, God opens a tempting way, what remains but to settle who shall pursue that way? In the case of some of you miners, without a pitch to work, fathers without bread to give to your children, with able bodies, and no work to keep you here, and willing minds with no hope before them in this suffering country,—for such there can be no doubt. Let them commit themselves to yonder wide sea, and magnify the Lord among the mountains of a new land. But there may be a case not so clear. There may be a case in which your prayers may be required for light, and which the Lord may think worthy of a sign. Suppose a man fearing dependence with the proudest of you, and brought into it as innocently as the youngest of these babes. Suppose

him conscious of having contributed more than his conscience allowed to what has proved the oppression and sale of his poor neighbours, and tempted to anger at being dismissed when there is fear that he may have to take back some portion of what he once gave. Suppose him obliged to turn his back on his home, and be sent away, as if he were not worthy to stay, when he has done the little he could to credit and serve his neighbourhood; and that he must, at all events, turn his back on the only spot of earth he cares for of itself,—one little grave. Suppose all this, and it seems plain that such a man should be one of the first to hasten to a new world, and seek a better blessing in a new scene. But there is one more thing to be considered. This man has been called to serve God as I am now striving to do; and may he give up this charge, and go where such another charge may not await him? The man I speak of is myself. If I go to the New World, there may by possibility be made a glorious opening for letting in the true light upon the dark minds of idolaters,—there may be in store for the meanest of the Lord's servants a work of conversion, which would be a glory to an apostle. But there may also be no such work designed; and, if I remain, I shall still be near enough to you, my brethren, to meet you here. Though I must go, I shall not go far; and I will not give up my work among you till it is taken from me. You listen to me, though I am not what I was,—though it has been permitted to degrade

me. You will listen to me if I should be brought yet lower; and, for my part, though I will take nothing from any of you, I will appear with you here, even though men, having taken away my cloak, should take my coat also. He that trusts to a wedding garment being kept ready for him need not fear but that it will cover his sordidness. Brethren, pray for guidance for a troubled brother when you pray for your own; and perhaps it may please that a sign should come. I have stood in the place of Nehemiah the prophet, striving to read God's will towards you, as Nehemiah read the law—giving you the sense, and making you understand the reading. Help me, brethren, in doing the same with God's will towards myself."

There was a murmur of voices almost before he ceased.

"They took all he could pay; and now they want to send him away," said one.

"That there may be his house for some of those that are coming back."

"He may truly say he has coveted no man's goods or apparel; but, on the contrary, given to many."

"Paying to support his partner's family,—paying for Spetch's drunkenness! There's Spetch engaged to go for fifteen guineas a month; and a ten times better man is waiting to decide for beggary at home, if it be God's will!"

"Pray God, Philip may go wherever good speed is easiest found! But it will be fainting work for us if his words of comfort be taken from us."

While this murmur was rising, Philip's eyes were directed westwards. A little dark speck was seen in the air, which he watched intently. As it grew larger, he rose eagerly, and the next moment a fluttering bird, unable to pursue its flight farther, dropped almost into his hand. Mr. Quain turned quickly to the boy who had caught the first woodcock. 'This was another; for the first was still nestling against the lad's bosom. Quain could almost sympathize with Philip's emotion when he murmured, "A sign—a sign!"

Everybody turned who heard him speak; and that made others turn; and each was ready with an opinion when implored to help in reading the sign. Who ever fails to be ready to read a sign? It was soon found that nearly everybody supposed that this woodcock came from South America. When it was made known that woodcocks do not come from a warmer climate to ours at the approach of winter, but from a colder, some hinted that this altered the question so much, that it now appeared doubtful whether this was any sign, unless it was supposed that this individual bird had betaken itself alone to South America, for the sake of coming back again at this juncture. The lads, however, pointed to where a dim advancing cloud in the clear sky betokened the approach of a multitude, from which the two already arrived were no doubt stragglers. Philip was convinced that the analogy held sufficiently, whencesoever the bird might have come. It had reached a new

shore after wandering over the wide sea. It must be a type of himself—poor fluttering thing! as the approaching company was of his brethren who were going. He would see what came of it. He put down the bird upon one of the stones of the cairn, and watched, now it, and now the darkening cloud. When the latter had attained the land, some dropped instantly upon the rocks, others fluttered down among the bushes and stones, while more held on their flight, and passed over the heads of the silent gazers. The silence was first broken by the cry of a boy beside the cairn. A dog, whose presence had not been perceived, had insinuated a way for himself, sprung at the solitary woodcock, and carried it off. He had as many pursuers as there were persons present, and was immediately compelled to give up his prey. The bird was quite dead.

This moment settled the question of Philip's remaining. It would be impossible to act against such a sign. There was a short concluding prayer and hymn, and then men, women, and children dispersed with alacrity to see how many woodcocks they could catch before it was dark. While almost all the dogs in the parish were poking their noses into every crevice of the stones on the moor, and between the stems of the bushes; while the children stroked the plumage of the little victims, and the women held out their aprons for a share, and the men set on the dogs, or hastened down to the shore to see if any which had fallen exhausted into the water were

drifted on the sands, Philip stood leaning against the cairn, pondering the fate that was reserved for him, and his wife forgot to do anything but look up in his worn countenance. Mr. Quain, meanwhile, wondered what was to be done with people so superstitious as these when they should get into new regions. They would be making miracles of every appearance which they did not understand. They would suppose the world was come to an end if a thunder-storm should overtake them among the Andes. When the snows began to melt, they would presume a second deluge; and when the summer heats came on, that hell was opening for them. If they should chance to see a ship upside down when they looked towards the sea, or a herd of cattle with their feet in the air over a sultry plain, what would they not suppose? He wished they might not all hie home again in a panic before they had come within sight of the mines. Theirs was a religion of love, too, he perceived, when, by the time it was dark enough to be turning homewards, the finest of the birds were slung in a string, and presented to Philip's wife.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE COMPLETE LETTER-WRITER.

Not only were all Mrs. Home's spare thoughts given to the composition of her correspondence with Mrs. Pendreath, but all her spare time also.

She made her daughter pick out the nicest sheets of foolscap from the school store of paper, and divide them into slips, little more than ballad width; the reason of which was that her writing was none of the straightest, and made the most creditable appearance where the lines were shortest. 'There really was a great deal to be said, so that it was not merely from ostentation that the packets looked very thick.

"Madam,—I have taken the liberty to send you a line, and it is to say, that the cruel absence of one so dear to us has great effect. From my hearing of it first, it took such an effect upon me that I can never bear to think of it without due preparation. But if these lines find you perfectly happy, we have some hope, if God is pleased to preserve us in life, that we shall see your ladyship again. Certainly the time is much nearer than it was, and we are much obliged by your ladyship's kindness to us in all respects. Considering the various vicissitudes and changes that await us in life, hope must in some measure be our support; or, as an old writer says, 'hope on, hope always on the score.' But, speaking a little to our present purpose, when your ladyship visited us last, we hoped for your safe return home, on account of the ill consequences that attended Catholic emancipation. Now we hope God will in mercy preserve all from influenza. We have heard very distressing news from many parts respecting it. We that are in the country consider ourselves at some distance from it; and yet we see there is no want of

diseases sufficient, please to turn over, to convey multitudes to the grave. But to return, we are all of us yet in life. Yet, dear madam, I often desire a calm departure on the wings of time. Time brings many evils; it also continually takes away many. I wish to say that everything is much altered with us since your ladyship's departure. Mr. Ledley is calmly preparing for his departure; but this subject lies too near to be expatiated in till nearer the end of these few lines. To use a metaphorical simile, it seems as if all our people were playing 'my lady's toilet;' to illustrate which, here is John Droop, who never complained of his back while a shoemaker, echoing the place with complaints of the quarry-work breaking his back, bowing like Issachar, he says, between two burdens, his digging and his wife, whom no digging can maintain in the flaunting finery which your ladyship, though in silence, cannot but disapprove. The junior Andrews feels his mind hurt with cleaning shoes and knives for the Athas, and is too apt to send his little lad to do the same while he goes after the woodcocks on the down; thinking, of course, of your ladyship all the time. There is on this account but one opinion,—grief that he should be no better employed than this. And the same may be said of the old man, who is also at Mr. Atha's, used in the surgery. His old spouse (706 years of age) was much in her old way, till her trouble was much increased. Her old spouse hath been much astray since your ladyship's departure. He

hath been much bewitched with that old singular lady, Sayer's sister-in-law. He hath been shunned of many on account of the matter, of which heaven grant he has repented. The old woman seems very true to him. She would not expose him to the dearest friend on earth, and is quite angry with any one that doth. If he walks out, she walks with him to guard his person. I wish to say that my school is coming very low. My father is overtaken with rancour for his office, so that I have lost many; and some, as the Spetches, are gone away from parish affairs. The slightest view of this will torment your ladyship, of whose kindness, speaking without flattery, please to turn over, we all believe the praise that is justly due is seldom heard. We consider you to be adorned with those virtues that make the Christian character; and how amiable those virtues are; more lasting, far more lasting than time itself! Mr. Harry Ianson is also playing 'my lady's toilet' on a narrow slip of allotment of Tremorne's, obtained in time, before his father gives up his farm, as he means to do. But this word leads me to the sacrilege of the church, in our clergyman's having been obliged to give up his glebe as allotments, because he could no longer shift to pay the poor, after having been the willing horse to all human extent. About this, no more can be said. Suffice it that he is becoming an instrument towards bringing a stray sheep to the fold of the church, the work being begun by me upon Philip Nelson. He is accused of a cabal with the clergy-

man, and this is the surest way of bringing him round from the enemies of his soul and peace, though the cabal was no more than thinking that Mr. Palliser paid too much, wrongfully, and had Christian kindness on his tongue when infants are taken away, and that your ladyship's labourers on full pay would rally in case of your White House being burnt, or, as some say, pulled down. Your agent will have asked your pleasure in case of this event, which we will, therefore, commit to Providence, hoping that your ladyship will think nothing of the circumstance."

After an eloquent description of the quarter of the globe to which Spetch and his companions were going, and a following out of the simile she had adopted to exhibit the perversion of labour in the parish, she arrived at the main business of the letter.

"But I wish to observe about the cottages, that they are filling (like my eyes when I think of your ladyship's Christian qualities) with people, in my opinion far from honourable, from other parishes, sent back, as my father says, after years of absence. Of which my heart is too full to speak, when I think of Philip Nelson being driven out, and more fatal still, Mr. Ledley. I might give many messages from hence to the government, the next visit you pay, but will confine myself to one, and that from myself to this effect.—With my compliments, or not, as your ladyship may think proper, it may suit

them to be informed that the overseer is not the office it used to be, but full of dislike and complaint, instead of honour; and it might be as before if Philip Nelson, and especially Mr. Ledley, were ordained to remain, as I am sure it is in their hearts to do, to the oblivion, no doubt, of church and dissent.

“The old woman has just appeared with apprehensions that she shall not live to see her friend any more in this life, but hopes to see her in heaven. She intends to celebrate the day that your ladyship was born, as it is that of her marriage, and hopes to make a little pudding for both, in remembrance of both. She never recollected to remember herself to you before this time, but I think it was her duty to have done it, as she thinks you far beyond many; but forgetful, I suppose. To conclude, may you be blest and think of me, with the highest respect, your ladyship’s humble servant,

CATHERINE HOME.”

Mrs. Pendreath not having been informed of any probability of her house being burned or pulled down, was not disposed to think so little of the circumstance as her correspondent advised. She wrote to her agent, and had his answer; and the consequence was, the following being addressed by her to the overseer, to be communicated to the vestry:—

“Mrs. Pendreath presents her compliments to Mr. Oddy, and hopes that he will agree with her that the urgency of the crisis to which the

parish has arrived is a sufficient excuse for her offering her opinion, as a large rate-payer, on the state of its affairs.

“ It appears that there is a complete dislocation of labour in the parish,—a sufficient cause of ruin, of itself. The shoemaker is digging clay; the carpenter is cleaning shoes and knives; the field-labourer is carrying out medicines; the miner is first set to dig, and then sent away; and the farmer’s son is become the holder of an allotment. The best men, meanwhile, are working for the overseer and for the tenant, who has six votes in the vestry, while his landowner, who really pays his rate, has none, as far as the rate-paying estate is concerned.

“ It appears that some of the best of the working class are being dismissed to their parishes, to make room for some far inferior men who are coming back upon their old settlement, to be housed and provided for at the expense of the parish.

“ It appears that the next parish has seized the occasion of the building of cottages in our lane, to pull down several, as fast as they could be emptied, drawing its labour from the neighbouring parishes, while it shirks the burden of settlements.

“ It appears that the demands upon the parish increase week by week, while the rate becomes more and more difficult to collect: and that out of 105 rated houses, only 46 pay.

“ Who then pays? Not Mr. Tremorne, though his payment is nominally large. — His rent has

been lowered, year by year, to meet the rate-charge, till there seems reason to expect that if we go on as we are doing, the rent will be entirely swallowed up by the rate. Mr. Tremorne's own property is rated according to what its value was twenty-two years ago; and its contribution is a mere trifle compared with Mr. Tremorne's gains, from having the value of his cottage property raised by our custom of exempting small dwellings from the rate, and paying the rent of some from the parish funds. Mr. Tremorne has for some time enjoyed the advantage of having his quarries half worked at the expense of the parish. He is not therefore one of the sufferers by the system. If he had been, he would not have been the first to try to quash, with his six votes, my offer of maintaining the surplus labour of the parish last winter, on condition of his paying the same wages with myself.

"Who, then, does pay? Mr. Atha, more than his share, by as much as others pay less. Mrs. Home, but that, from her connexion with an overseer, she can pay her amount of rate in candles and calico, and can advantageously dispose of the share of labour she must hire in her father's brick-yard,—but for these circumstances, her case would be a hard one.

"Mr. Ianson's case is a hard one. Besides an enormous direct contribution this year, he has had his stock injured, and his property neglected by incompetent and idle labourers, while his own son has been driven off the ground.

"A yet larger proportion is paid by myself.

I say nothing about my plan of paying full wages, on condition of my labourers seeking no parish relief, while at the same time I am paying to the rate. It is my own choice thus to pay twice over. Setting aside the consideration of the labourers whom I pay in full, I still contribute a most unequal share; viz., 200*l.* direct, this last year; half the rent of the quarries; and a portion of my cottage rents, from my small tenants being encouraged by me, for the sake of the principle, not to claim exemption. Owing to the notorious inequality of the assessment, I believe I pay full one-third more in direct contribution than I ought.

“ But there is one who contributes a larger proportion still,—or has contributed; for it is impossible that he should longer sustain such a tax. Mr. Palliser has been rated as if his tithes had not fallen off, and as if his glebe had been as profitable to him as ever. Now that Ianson’s farm is going to lie waste, and the clergyman can no longer cultivate his glebe; now that he has dismissed his old servant, and has nothing to give to the labourers who are sent to him for work but the ground which we are still pleased to call his; it is plain that the plans of the parish must be changed, or the whole will become insolvent. My tenants and I shall change places,—an easy step after what is happening,—my merely holding the land for them. The clergyman will be bankrupt; the poor must take possession of the land; and the neighbouring parishes must be rated in aid till they will wish that the

sea would flow in upon us, and end our troubles.

“ But there is yet time for the plans of the parish to be changed. I am not going to propose again to take charge of all the surplus labour of the parish. I can no longer afford it. But unless the entire procedure is altered, I shall use every means in my power to expose the whole state of the case, to get the labour-rate abolished, a new assessment made, and every house in the parish rated. Our best labourers are already leaving us. The clergyman must soon follow; and Mr. Ianson has given up; and I shall certainly not remain to be beggared by a compulsory charity, which alleviates no misery, and bestows no comfort to atone for the destruction of independence. It will be for the vestry to consider what is to be done next, when the three largest rate-payers have deserted the parish.

“ I make no apology for my plainness of speech. I have seen enough of the misery of degraded labourers, and heard enough of their anger, to feel that this is no occasion of ceremony. There is not a poor man in the parish who does not now know that the men on the roads are kept there in defiance of my offered help, and for the profit of those by whom they are bought and sold. What is to be expected from them if they see their clergyman impoverished, and themselves left wholly to the mercy of those by whom they have been bought and sold? This is no time for ceremony; and the vestry may soon see cause

to thank me for my plain speech. At any rate, let it have a hearing, and a full consideration.

“MARGARET PENDREATH.”

The only thing which could cause Mrs. Pendreath's letter to be better attended to than those which had preceded it was the indistinct dread that she would interest Government in the affairs of the parish, and bring King, Lords, and Commons to her assistance in overthrowing the plans of Tremorne and the overseer. When it was found that she was actually writing to those whom she considered the most suffering and injured parties, to stimulate them to appeal against being rated too high, and that the parish was likely to be involved in an expense of a great many pounds by such an appeal, the lady's letter was dragged forth in vestry from the overseer's great pocket, and read instead of being merely sneered at. The question was, what compromise could be made by which Ianson might be persuaded to hold on his farm, Mrs. Pendreath prevented from thinking of going away and shutting up her house, and the clergyman induced to resume his glebe. By yielding a little, great innovations might be avoided. The labour-rate must be kept up, and a new assessment was the last thing to be thought of; but, as so much was said about the next parish profiting by its own methods of management, and as Mrs. Pendreath and other reformers were known to be friendly to a union of parishes, it was thought that all might go smoothly if the next parish could be persuaded to enter into a partnership,—like two tributers on a pitch,—and

see what they could make by the speculation. It was not very pleasant to the overseer to anticipate an investigation into his management, nor to Tremorne to think how many of his present advantages he might have to part with when the interests of a second parish came to be identified with his own. But these things must happen whenever another district should come to be rated in aid ; and it was only prudent to be before-hand with necessity, and to propose partnership rather than wait a little longer to beg charity.

The next parish, however, did not feel itself at all obliged or complimented by the offer. It was itself not in the best condition ; but in too good an one not to suffer by the proposed change. This failing, nothing more was done, except in the way of profession, before the lady's return from London ; and, nothing being done, the great men of the village had no great inclination to go near her, and every desire to put off till the latest moment hearing what Government had to say about their affairs. If her pony-chaise was heard in the lane, they slipped into a cottage, or behind a fence ; and if the children brought word that she was walking in one direction, they took the opposite. Of course, she met neither of them in her first walk down to Mr. Palliser's.

She took a survey of the field as she approached the back gate, by which she had liberty to enter at all times. This field had been one of the best cultivated in the parish, ever since Mr. Palliser came ; and now it seemed likely to be

tilled with as much diligence as ever. It was dotted over with labourers,—men, women, and children, who were all so bent on being busy, that they seemed to be envying one another the spades which were in use, and which were not numerous enough for all. The lady began to wonder whether, by any miracle, the spirit of industry had visited the place once more. She stood some time to watch them, and was not a little pleased to see them too much engrossed by their work to observe the presence of the greatest lady in the place. The back door of the parsonage stood open; and she went in, as usual, without knocking. The passage led past Ledley's little room, next the pantry; and there was Ledley, taking down from the walls the drawings which he had hung there, one by one, as he finished them on rainy days;—drawings of the prospects in the neighbourhood,—rude enough, but sufficiently correct to remind him of the scenery of the Land's End when he should be far away. He started when the lady spoke, and drew his hand across his eyes before he turned to reply.

“Are your master and mistress out, Ledley?”

“Yes, ma'am. They are walked up the down. I'm sorry to say they have not been gone more than a quarter of an hour.”

“No matter; I can call again. But, Ledley, I am afraid I may not see you the next time I come. You seem to be packing up your things here.”

Ledley looked mournfully round him, and

then began tucking in some article in his chest, which transgressed its bounds. He must do something, and he could not speak.

“Is it not a pity to take away those coloured views?” asked Mrs. Pendreath. “I am sure your master would value them; and if you should ever come back, you know——”

“My master has been pleased to accept two that I made of our place in Yorkshire, ma’am; but he will not want these, having the real scenes at hand, as I shall, so far off. I cannot part with these views, if they were ten times as well worth offering to my master.”

“I am sorry for that; for, if he did not care for them, I should have had pleasure in taking care of them till we see where you settle, after all. You have not made up your mind yet?”

“No further than to try to get situated near my old place in Yorkshire. My own parish is the place to go to, if I must not stay here.”

“But it will be a terrible distance to return from, if there should be room for you here again.”

“I could wish, ma’am, if I may make bold to say so, that you would be pleased not to delude me with false hopes. I don’t wish to be made sport of any more. I have had enough of it, between my master’s lot and my own. When we moved from his snug little place in Yorkshire, and thought it such a fine exchange, we did not fancy how soon one piece of ruin would be brought upon us after another, till we must part, and I am denied even a lot of ground to

get bread from till it can be seen what is to become of my master. If the place cannot keep me, how should it bring me back?"

"I mean no delusion, Ledley, I assure you; but changes are always taking place, you know; and when we have got to the worst pass, there is hope that we shall mend, when, as in our case, matters might mend, if we chose. It is very odd, considering how you have always tried to serve your neighbours here, if they have none of them any kindness to offer you,—any hospitality, till you see whether employment is likely to offer."

Ledley looked bashful, and a little inclined to smile, as he turned once more to his chest, and said that there were people who were kind,—wonderfully kind,—but that he did not wish to work for anybody but his master, hereabouts;—that is, for anybody who was at all likely to want his services. He could not think of doing anything that would lead to ideas,—to expectations,—he should be sorry——Besides, what did he know about keeping shop, or——

Here Ledley became aware that he had been thinking aloud, and abruptly ended with,

"And so I am going to walk to meet the coach this afternoon."

Mrs. Pendreath did not feel that she could justly detain him by any offer of employment while so many who had a prior claim were wanting assistance. She found that his master had promised to write to him; so that communication would be easy, in case of an improvement in the state of affairs.

"Affairs will never improve here, ma'am. Those that have seen the place go down, as I have, will give the matter up."

"Then I think you cannot have been looking at the people at work in your master's field, Ledley. I have not seen such active labour off my own estate this twelvemonth, as is going on now. It is worth your looking out of the window to see."

"And what is it all for?" said he who would not be comforted. "Just because we cropped our potatoes before giving up the ground to the people, and they are greedy after what are left in the ground. Come two days hence, and see if they will be doing anything. It is the servants now, more than the master, ma'am, that would reap what they have not sown."

Mrs. Pendreath hoped that poor Ledley's weak spirits made him apprehend more evil than would come to pass.

"The ground is marked out, ma'am, into twelve allotments of twenty rods each, and the rent a mere pretence, and free from rate and tithe. The whole is in good condition, I assure you. Yet if you will please to come six months hence, and see how many are at work upon it, you will perhaps remember me and my words."

"I shall not forget you, Ledley, you may depend upon it; but I will not detain you now, when you must be busy. I bid you farewell with a kind of hope that we shall meet again."

"If ever you come into Yorkshire, perhaps, ma'am," replied Ledley, bowing low. "In the

mean time, whatever may happen here, I know my master and mistress will have your best comfort; and they are likely to want it, with those spiteful methodists for enemies. It is my opinion they are bent on bringing him entirely to ruin."

"And I am bent on bringing them and him to a friendship. There are spiteful men of all parties and all religions, I am afraid; and I know that there are methodists among us who are no more spiteful than your master. So let us hope that they may be friends at last. But, Ledley, have you no drawing that you can spare me? Leave me one: any one you can best spare; and I will promise that you shall have it back before I die, if you are not here to come and ask for it yourself."

Ledley was much flattered. He laid out his whole collection on the parlour table, and really wished the lady to make a choice. She observed in most of them a female figure in the fore-ground dressed in red. This must be Mrs. Home in her gay chintz; and Mrs. Pendreath would not be so inconsiderate as to select any one of these. She chose a view of the Rocking Stone, where Josiah seemed to be rocking himself for want of something better to do, while his mule was staring at him from one side, and a goat from the other. When she afterwards examined the drawing at home, with the aid of her spectacles, she found that she had made a little mistake, after all. There was a bit of beach, in the extreme distance, on which there was a dot of a figure,—a female figure, still in red, which

must be Mrs. Home again. The lady tried to regret it as little as she could. It seemed as if this figure had been lately inserted ; and if so, it was probable that no drawing of Ledley's could be found which had not a likeness of Mrs. Home.

When Ledley and his chest arrived at the junction of roads where he was to meet the coach, he found Mrs. Pendreath's footman waiting to shake hands with him once more before he mounted, and to deliver him a basket from the lady, containing provision for the whole of his journey, and, at the bottom, something of more permanent value. Long did the poor fellow look back wistfully, losing sight first of his master's blue roof, and then of the White House, and then of the church, and then of the bold projections of the rocks, till the line of grey sea, and the expanse of russet moor were all that remained of so much that was familiar. When the whole was gone, he would have given much to know what Mrs. Home was thinking about.

Ledley's predictions were not likely to be forgotten. In a week's time, only three of the twelve allotments bestowed by Mr. Palliser, were occupied. The rest were thrown up without thanks, as soon as it was certain that no more potatoes were there to be dug out. The nine did not all agree in the same story ; but there was no lack of reasons for throwing up the slips of land.

"After all the digging you have given it these

three days," said Mr. Palliser, "it seems a pity not to go on, and see what will come of it."

"That is seen already. There is no use in a spade in a clay soil like that. Better save the spade for a better purpose."

"Worse than no use," protested another. "There is some stuff, half a foot down, that will prevent anything growing, if you happen to turn it up."

They could not at all tell how the potatoes had grown which they had just been extracting. Another knew for certain that the farmers would never employ them again, if they were known to have any ground of their own to spend their labour upon. Others talked of having the ground manured for them, and the crop carried, and any help in other ways that they might require. Another was too conscientious to be aiding and abetting in any plan which was known to be so bad for the parish as this. It was in everybody's mouth, how much harm Mr. Tremorne's allotments had done; and, with his consent, there should be no more; but each man should demand his right in money from the parish. Mr. Palliser had nothing to say in favour of Tremorne's allotments. He had given up his ground, because it was all that he had left to give. What was to be done next?

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## CHAPTER IX.

## A POINT CARRIED.

SEVERAL months passed away, and Philip was still in the parish. His invincible dislike to returning as a pauper to his native place had impelled himself and his wife to use every honest means of living that they could devise, rather than wander away from their home on the down. By a little fishing, a little work obtained in busy weeks in the neighbourhood, a day's wheeling in the mine now and then, in addition to the produce of his own little garden, Nelson had contrived to subsist, and to keep up the hope of better days. It was again summer, when he entered his cottage one evening, with a bright countenance, and told Eliza that he was going to be employed and maintained for a week, at least. He was afraid there would be no money to bring home; but it was a great thing to be sure of a maintenance for one of them for a whole week; especially as it was in a very honourable employment. The vestry had at last allowed the revaluation of the parish, and Philip was to be one of the valuers.

"It is very odd if they mean to pay you nothing," observed Eliza.

"Not very. Those who stood out for the old valuation had a world of objections to bring to there being any new valuation at all. For these six months past, they have been asking,—not

why it should be done, for it is too late now to ask that,—but how it is to be done, and who is to pay the expenses. Wonderful tales were abroad about the ruinous expense of valuing a parish; and nobody knows how long it might have been put off if Mrs. Pendreath had not taken care to investigate the matter for herself, instead of receiving other people's word for it."

"How was it done last time?"

"Daddy Harker is almost the only person who can tell anything about that, it is so long ago; and he had little interest in it. But now three or four, who have long thought themselves overcharged, have got a sight of the overseer's rate-books, and they have scarcely let him alone, day or night, since; and they have taken steps for the justices knowing all about it at quarter-sessions; and so the overseer has no more to say, but that if they can get it done for nothing, they may."

"They might have asked somebody who can better afford to work for nothing than you."

"They will pay expenses, as I told you; and it is not altogether so easy to find fit persons as you would suppose. They must be acquainted, of course, with the values of property, and be apt at figures,—and especially they ought to be out-parishioners, that they may have the better chance of being impartial. It is my being an out-parishioner that is the main reason of my being chosen for a valuator."

The wife smiled when she thought of Philip's other accomplishments, and told herself that it

would have been very strange if Philip had not been the first person sought for the office. Who were the others?

The grass-captain of Wheel Virgin believed that he could spare a few hours each day on an occasion of so much importance to the district; and a young land-surveyor, a very able man, was willing to join them, on the promise of a fee in proportion to the benefit the parish might receive. Mrs. Pendreath had engaged to the vestry to be answerable for the mere expenses of the week's living, if the vestry should see no reason, when all was done, to relieve her from it. Finally, there was to be a committee of housekeepers to decide unsatisfactory cases, to save the expense of appeal to the quarter-sessions.

“So now, love, mend my waistcoat, will you?” said Philip, “while I brush my coat, and see if Droop can put a patch upon my shoe to-night. I have to go to Mrs. Home’s for some paper to fold into a book. She will let me rule it there with her ink, which is better than ours; so don’t expect me back these two hours or more. It is almost folly to relish, as I do, the being engaged with pen, and paper, and figures again. But it is a long time since I have had nothing but digging, and other labours, that I do not like half so well.”

As Eliza polished her needles, and watched her husband, as he walked briskly towards the village, she felt as proud of him as at any time in her life. It was a great thing to see a hundred

people hanging upon his lips when he preached; but it was a new honour to have him chosen one of three learned men, to help to mend parish matters. She did her utmost for the waistcoat, and mourned that she could by no means make it look like new.

Her husband had refused to listen for a moment to her suggestion, that he should bring up a bit of meat from the butcher's, that he might have a good breakfast before he began his task. He would not allow that this breakfast should be charged among the expenses of the valuation. He dated his engagement from nine o'clock, when he was to meet his two companions at the church; and he took his very spare meal before that time. He allowed that he should be hungry long before noon; but that was no reason why anybody else should pay for a better breakfast for him. Another temptation arose out of his resistance to this. When the party entered Tremorne's very comfortable house, they found the cloth laid with covers for three. The moment they made their appearance, word was passed to the kitchen, and in a trice, a steaming dish of chops and a foaming jug of ale graced the table. Philip happened to be standing next Tremorne, who pushed him towards the seat which had been set for him, and said he must refresh himself before beginning business. Philip was, as his wife had foretold, very hungry; but he turned his back on the good cheer, giving the simple reason for doing so,—that it would not do to begin feasting in their office, since this

would be making a distinction at once between the rich and the poor whom they had to visit. His companions agreed in this, and the chops were left to cool on the table, much to Tremorne's vexation. There was no more hope of keeping his visitors merry and mollified over their ale for a couple of hours, till he got his own way with them. There was no more hope of preventing their inquiring what his rent had been previous to the last year, when it had been much reduced for the sake of the rate he had to pay, and the parish labour to employ. Everything went wrong. They would know the state of the property and the rent paid when the last valuation was made; the improvements since effected; and what the consequent increase of rent would be if the burdens of the parish were put out of the question. They would compare his statements with the entries in the overseer's rate-book, and note down that he rented the property by the year; and, what was worse, they would preserve entire silence as to their ultimate report of his case, letting fall only that the new rating was to be upon the rack rent, or total rental.

"I must say, gentlemen, that this is a most extraordinary innovation. Such a thing has never been heard of in the parish, gentlemen, as rating upon the rack rent."

"Then it is time it should be heard of. There can be no good reason for rating the property at 50*l.*, when it is actually 75*l.* or 100*l.*," observed the surveyor.

"No good reason, but some very bad ones,"

said the captain of the mine. "The officers of the townships began this farce, because the county rate is founded on the basis of the assessment of the poor. It is kept up by those who are afraid of a property-tax. For both these reasons, it is high time that the cheat should be put an end to."

"Cheat is by no means the word, sir," said Tremorne. "You will find the practice universal, or nearly so, I assure you . . ."

"The 'nearly so' condemns you," observed Philip. "The hardship in case of a property-tax being founded on the assessment to the poor; the hardship to those who are assessed on the rack rent, condemns you."

"But the exceptions are nothing, sir. In all this county, I question whether you will find a single assessment on the full rental."

"True; and what do we find instead?" inquired the surveyor. "Scarcely two parishes assessed alike! In the nine last where I have had surveying to do, there have been six different plans of assessment; and none of them the honest and true. Half the rental,—a third of the rental,—two thirds of the rental,—and then a fraction taken of these very proportions again! How is any notion of the actual value of property to be had at this rate? If no other parish in the county is honestly rated, Mr. Tremorne, yours will have the honour of being the first, sir; that's all."

Tremorne's labourers had to rue the valuation, this morning. He was dreadfully cross, and so

strict about their work that they might as well have been any thing but parish labourers.

The next abodes visited were two houses joined, called Vale Cottages, which stood in a small garden. The shutters were closed, and a cracked and weather-stained notice, "These eligible dwellings to be let," told that they had been for some time empty. As it would not do, however, to take their own word for being so, Philip stepped over the paling, and walked round the dwellings, examining doors and windows. He finally knocked.

"There is nobody there, sir," declared a woman who issued from a neighbouring cottage at the sound of the knock. "But I can let you in, if you are thinking of looking at the houses."

"We need not trouble you, thank you, if you will just tell us what is the rent, and who is the landlord."

"And how long they have stood empty," added the captain.

"They are in very good condition, sir, as you will see if you will let me show you over them. They have only been empty since Christmas, and in beautiful condition as you would wish to see. They belong to Mr. Oddy, sir, at the brickyard; and the rent is 12*l.* each."

"Exclusive of the rate."

"Without rates and taxes, sir. When you see them, you will wonder that they have stood empty so long. Only, the garden is a little out of order, you see. I must get my boys to weed it, and then it will look quite a different place."

She was a little disappointed that they did not go in : but their walking round, and making an entry in their books, was enough of a good omen to warrant a very low curtesy from her as she held open the gate to let them pass out.

“How long is it since Vale Cottages paid to the rate?” said Oddy, repeating the surveyor’s question. “Oh, a long time. They have stood a huge while empty. These are no days for letting houses.”

“Did the former occupiers pay to the rate, or do you?”

“I, gentlemen! When they stand empty! Not I, of course. Indeed they never were houses of that quality which ought to pay rate. Under 6*l.* a year rent, you know, cannot pay rate.”

“Will you let the East Cottage to me for 5*l.* 19*s.*?” asked the captain, smiling.

“And the other to me for 5*l.* 19*s.* 11*d.*?” added the surveyor. “That won’t do, Mr. Oddy. The rent you ask is 12*l.*,—down in our books at 12*l.* I hope you will soon let this property; for all the houses in this parish are going to be rated, without any exception whatever.”

“Impossible, sir, that empty houses should be rated!”

“Not without an allowance to the owner, of course, in consideration of their being sometimes empty. It has been found a beneficial arrangement for all parties that the landlord should be made responsible for the rate, (which, in fact, he

always pays,) and that he should be allowed a reduction of half or a third of the rate on houses below 20*l.* rental, on condition of his paying it whether his houses are full or empty."

This reduction was nothing to Oddy,—no more than he had enjoyed ever since he was overseer, without having to pay for his empty houses; so that he looked forward with unmixed dislike to the new plan proposed. He had heard of a large parish where this plan had been tried, and where most people were quite sure at the outset that the produce of the rate would fall off most terribly; instead of which, it had increased more than 1500*l.* a year. The change boded ill to Tremorne and himself. To Mrs. Pendreath it could not make much difference, as she had accustomed her small tenants to pay the rate, even when she had to forego the rent for that purpose.

"We find," said the surveyor, "that out of all that cluster of miners' cottages near Goat's Cairn, not one has paid rate these two years. The inhabitants seem well off, and not unwilling to pay; but they say they have never been asked."

"Such small sums as they pay, sir, are not worth the expense of collecting."

"The trouble, I rather think you mean."

"The expense, sir: for there would be a constant distraining among those people . . ."

"I beg your pardon," interposed Philip. "There is no likelihood of such a thing, Mr. Oddy, among those people; and, if there was,

I don't see how you are to know it till you have tried."

"I think you have good reason to know it, Mr. Nelson. You know something about a distraint in a miner's cottage, I think."

"And why do I know it?—Because you omit collecting small sums, and then lay the amount on those who pay already. This is the way to have more distraints than you would have by collecting from house to house, as your office requires."

The houses near Goat's Cairn all went down in the books. The abode in which they now stood, and the one opposite, were found to be marvellously underrated; for which no other reason could be even conjectured than that they were inhabited by the late overseer, and by the daughter of the present. Down went the new valuation, while Mrs. Home protested that she had always relied implicitly on her father, and that there was no duty she was so conscientious about as paying her contribution to the parish, after the example of their pattern of a clergyman.

The party next came to a cottage at the entrance of the lane, where a girl was sitting on the door step, mending stockings, while one child was kneeling at her knee, spelling in a torn old book, and another was clambering upon her back. Her brother was playing with his mule down in the dry ditch, close by.

"I am sorry your father is out," said the surveyor. "But perhaps you can tell us why he does not pay to the rate."

"Because he is too poor, sir. My grand-

father and my brother there have been on the parish these many months. We have got no help for ourselves yet; but my father can't pay the rate."

"Whose pigeons are those?" asked the captain, as six rose upon the wing, on seeing the surveyor walk round their corner of the dwelling.

"They are daddy's birds. He is very particular about his pigeons."

"And feeds them with parish money. Does that fine mule belong to your father?"

"To my brother, sir. 'Tis Josiah's own entirely."

Josiah wept when reproached for going on the parish while he had such an animal as this in his possession. In the west of Cornwall, where pack horses and mules are used, almost to the exclusion of carts, such an animal as Josiah's mule, strong and handsome, is as valuable as a cottage. But Josiah had many excuses to offer for himself. He had tried to get employment for his mule;—nobody knew how he had tried: but there seemed to be nothing that wanted carrying now-a-days in the parish. To be sure, he had been asked again and again to sell the beast. If his parents had known what sums he had been offered, the mule would not now have been his. He entreated the gentlemen not to tell his parents this. It had never been of his own will that he had been upon the parish. His father had sent him: but if it must come to his giving up his mule or the parish,—he did not care about the parish,—he had no reason to be fond of it; and he and his mule would be off to

some place where they might be more wanted. He had rather be a gipsy at once than stay behind and see his mule in other hands.

Philip drew away the captain of the mine, and told him of Josiah's feelings and language on the first morning when he was put under a shed to be hired. They agreed that such a willing lad was not one to be subjected to the meanness of his parents, and the disposal of the overseer, who seemed no more inclined than Mr. Tremorne to make distinctions without differences. Josiah was requested not to be in any hurry to make a gipsy of himself.

Widow Ford's house stood further along the lane. It was a poor place compared with what the valuers expected to find it, from the assessment which stood in the overseer's book. The door-sill was worm-eaten for want of new paint, and there was a crack from top to bottom of the building, owing to which every door and window hung awry. The old lady's fright at seeing the strangers soon gave way to confidence when she found that they considered her hardly used. She had always managed to pay the rate, she said; but it became a greater trouble every year; and she did not see how she could ever contrive to paint the wood-work, and keep out the draughts in her house, while the poor went on multiplying as they did.

"But why do you pay so much, madam?" asked the surveyor. "You must be aware that you are contributing more than your share. You should not take it so quietly, Mrs. Ford."

“If the overseer would but come himself, sir . . . But he sends one of his men, or more commonly a child out of his daughter’s school. I suppose he knows that he is sure of the money from me, and so takes care that I shall never see him. But if I had a friend to speak for me, gentlemen . . .”

“There will be no occasion now, Mrs. Ford. The figures in our book will speak for you very effectually. You will not have so much rate to pay next time, you will find. I suppose the rate was fixed when the house was superior to what it is now.”

“Not much of that, sir. It was not always in such poor condition; but, as for its being a good house, it never was one, either for the building or the laying out. My maid always complained of the draught through the kitchen, so that never a hot dish, scarcely, came out of it; and she is sadly subject to a stiff neck all winter; and there is not a chimney in the house but what smokes, and always did. And . . .”

“But, Mrs. Ford, why did you stay in such a house? So many new houses as there are building, you might have found one that would suit you better than this.”

“They never would let me look at any, sir. They always said that all were engaged; though my maid saw many standing empty after they told me so.”

“Who owns this house?”

“Mr. Tremorne. But, in my opinion, the

reason why I am rated higher than others is, that my poor husband tried, the year before he went hence, to get the rating set to rights, much as you seem to be doing now, gentlemen. They said at the time he should suffer for it; and I have always supposed they meant to make me suffer for him. My husband would not have let it go on so long; but women, you know, gentlemen, can't go and worry the vestry like men: though this should not be any reason for their being imposed upon."

The valuator found their labours not less required in every quarter of the parish; and, by the end of the week, there was as lively a curiosity to know the result of their inquiries as there had ever been about any event which concerned the district. To the satisfaction of the complaining, there was a very full vestry to receive the report, and an almost unanimous concurrence in the proceedings.

It appeared that, at the period of the last assessment, the population of the parish had been 3000; it was now 5300. The rate, at the time of the former assessment, had been 840*l.*: it was now 2288*l.*; and there was a debt of 200*l.*

As for the rating under the old and new valuation, it was, in some of its items, as follows:—

	Old Valuation.	New Valuation.
The clergyman was rated for		
tithes . . .	£185 0 0	£34 0 0
The Pendreath estate .	176 0 0	170 0 0
The China-stone quarry .	86 0 0	162 0 0

	Old Valuation.			New Valuation.		
Mr. Oddy's house and land	£41	5	6	£86	5	6
Mrs. Ford's . . . . .	12	2	6	4	5	0
The late overseer's . . . . .	74	0	0	137	5	0
In small sums not asked for, there was . . . . .				59	2	8
On houses returned as empty . . . . .				250	0	0
On cottages inhabited by tenants pleading poverty . . . . .				23	0	0
Paid in goods instead of money . . . . .				109	10	0

The proportions were as completely reversed in many of the smaller payments as in those set down above. The facts being once made known, no interest that two persons, however influential, could exert, could stop the course of reform. The overseer was immediately displaced; and four householders volunteered to administer the affairs of the parish up to the end of the parochial year. All payment in goods instead of money was put a stop to;—all defaulters were summoned, and such as could were compelled to pay up;—all dwellings whatever were rated, and the landlords made responsible for the payment; a certain proportion being remitted, on condition of the rate being paid, whether the houses were full or empty. Tremorne's allotments were made subject to the same rule. His complaints were very loud; but they did not avail. He declared that it would no longer answer to him to let either land or cottages; for the tenants of neither could pay the rate; he should have to pay for empty dwellings and deserted land. He was asked who was to blame

for this but himself? He had brought fourteen families into the parish from other places; and he would not have done that unless he could get from them rent enough to make it profitable to him to have them for tenants. He must now lower his rent by the amount of rate, or send his tenants whence they came.

There was a still heavier blow in store for both the jobbers. The labour-rate was abolished. They alone were found to profit by it; and that only because the employment they gave was of a kind which could be perpetually overlooked by themselves. There were instances enough in the parish to show the injurious operation of a labour-rate. The deterioration of Ianson's farm, and of the quality of labour in the parish,—the inconvenience suffered by the clergyman, the surgeon, and many private residents, in contrast with the flourishing condition of Mrs. Pendreath's estate under her system of full wages,—were convincing to everybody. The four administrators were requested to assist with their knowledge and advice in the distribution of labour, after the disorder into which it had been thrown; but there was to be no more compulsion in its employment.

The concluding rule, on which it was hoped no future vestry would infringe, was, that there should be a periodical valuation of the property of the parish, the assessment being made upon the full rental; and everybody agreed that the first savings consequent on the reforms now introduced, after the debt should have been

liquidated, should be appropriated to rewarding the services of the valuers, if, when opportunity had been given for appeal, their assistance should be proved to be as valuable as it now appeared.

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## CHAPTER X.

### A NEW TURN OF THE WHEEL.

Now was the time for people to bestir themselves, if they wished to use the liberty of prospering which had come back into their own hands. No wonder everybody was sluggish when the bargain and sale of labour was managed by a jobbing overseer, who, while he pretended to know other people's business better than they understood it themselves, took care to accommodate himself first, his partner next, and all others according to his private reasons or his caprices. Now that Oddy was no more than a harmless brickmaker again, people asked no leave of him to negotiate with the labourers they liked best. Before Philip had reached home, on the night when his honourable task was finished, he had a hope—no faint hope—that though the parish was in debt and confusion, it might not, after all, be necessary that the better sort of out-parishioners should go away. He told his wife that the “grass-captain” had shaken him by the hand very plea-

santly on parting, and had said——Even at this very moment came “a sign” to confirm his impressions : a little lad from the mine knocked at the door. He had come up from the agent to desire Philip to call at the counting-house of the Wheel Virgin by ten the next morning. It was impossible, even for so apprehensive a person as Philip, to conjecture any bad news that could possibly await him, or to help anticipating something good. This being the case, neither could he object to Eliza’s desire to go with him as far as a certain pile of rocks, behind which she might sit unseen, and await him and his news.

While Philip was dusting down for her, the next morning, with a bunch of heath, a seat on these rocks, which he called an arm-chair, Eliza looked down into that part of the village which her present station overlooked. The churchyard was chequered with the little shadows of the tombs and the tombstones : there were also some shadows that moved. A group, which could scarcely be called a funeral procession, was proceeding from the gate to the church-door, two of them carrying a burden between them which must be a small coffin.

“ Sit down, love, had not you better ? ” said Philip, when the “ arm-chair ” was in due order.

“ It must be Spetch’s child, going to its little grave,” said Eliza, still looking towards the churchyard. “ It died three days ago ; and its parents far away, and nobody to care for it ! ”

“ Its parents getting rich, maybe, and grow-

ing merry upon their riches, and little thinking what is in store for them. What is all the wealth in the world in the same day with such a judgment, or in any future day?"

"And what is poverty, too, in the comparison?"—and the tears swam again in the eyes of the bereaved mother.

"Sometimes God is merciful in repairing the loss. We should think of that mercy, love, in mourning the lost."

"Yes; but no other can ever be the first,—no other can ever be the same. God forgive me if it is sinful to say so!—But go, Philip. I would not have you too late. Do go. It will be nothing but a pleasure to me to watch what is doing below till you come back."

She twinkled away her tears presently, called the seat comfortable, and began knitting diligently, till her husband was out of sight. It was quite past her comprehension, she thought as she sat, how anybody could do as the Spetches did at last,—slip away, leaving their baby to chance and the parish—she knew the Spetches too well to say to Providence; for of Providence they never seemed to think, unless when Spetch now and then swore by it. If the long voyage was likely to be dangerous to the infant, the wonder was that the mother could go without it; or, at any rate, that she did not provide for its being taken care of till it could follow to share the wealth which it was supposed must be the portion of the family. Her knitting dropped upon her lap, and she sat gazing till she could

see nothing, when she was startled by a hoarse laugh from behind. She turned round, and saw two people, more squalid and wretched looking than the worst of the paupers when the parish was in its worst state. She supposed at first that it was from her mind being full of what she had seen that these people brought the Spetches into her thoughts—no Spetch having ever been seen gaunt, sallow, and only half clothed. Repeated surveys, however, assured her that these were the Spetches, and her heart beat thick at the thought of the news she had to tell them,—news which the loud laugh assured her remained to be told. She bent down her head over her work, to gain time to think how she should frame her speech, earnestly hoping that they had not yet observed, or did not recognize her. She again started when she felt a heavy hand on her shoulder. It was Mrs. Spetch, who said,

“ I say, Eliza Nelson ; — what, you won’t speak to your old friends, won’t you ? ”

“ Indeed, Mrs. Spetch, I could not think, somehow, that it was you, at first ; and so I waited—— ”

“ For us to return the compliment,” interrupted Spetch. “ Indeed, I can scarcely say you look like the same person. I fancy your husband must have been preaching you and himself thin and spare.”

“ We have had our troubles ; but I wish, Mrs. Spetch, we could save others from going through what you knew before that we had to

bear. If any prayers or doings of ours could have saved you——”

“ Oh, we won't trouble you, now we are back safe: the parish will take care of us now; and cursed be all countries like that we have been to, where there is no parish! Why, there was nobody to do so much as bury Betsy for us. Yes; poor Betsy died of the fever, like many another; and our leader read the service over her, which it was lucky he was well enough to do; for I had kept scarce enough of my learning to go through it properly. Ah, poor Betsy! It was her you were looking for, I suppose, when I marked you skying behind that big stone, before we spoke. She lies in the sand, poor girl! where we scooped a grave for her, for want of a regular English churchyard; but the service was read over her. I have not seen a churchyard like that, now, since I was in this place last.”

Spetch lounged forward to a point whence he could have a still better view.

“ The service is being read there now—over another,” said Eliza in a tremulous voice to Mrs. Spetch, losing breath the next moment, at the thought that she had been too precipitate—had told too plainly.

“ Well; you must tell us who is alive and who is gone of all the people here; for we have heard nothing yet, being but now come. My baby must have been running alone some time, if it is living; hey?”

"I am glad to hear you say 'if it is living.' It is always well to be prepared."

"'Tis dead then. Poor thing! it was always a delicate little thing, doubtful to rear; and I often thought I might never see it again. John! John! Only think! Our poor baby is dead while we have been away. The Lord will provide better for it than we could have done; but, dear me!—And when was it, Mrs. Nelson?"

They were next struck with the 'curiosity' of their having just come up in time to see the funeral proceeding below. They needed no further comfort when they had once settled that no doubt it was better for the baby, as it was for Betsy, that the Lord should do his pleasure, since their parents could have done little for them at present,—times went so badly. They were afraid matters were little better with the Nelsons.

"Little better indeed," replied Eliza, "or your child should not have fallen sick and died where it did. If I could have thought it right, or have done justice to it, I should have liked nothing so well as to bring home your baby, and see what we could do for it. But it pleased God to forbid us the power; and I begin almost to think that He does not mean any child to grow up in our house."

She was sorry she had said this when she heard the consolations it brought upon her. She could not possibly tell till she had tried again. They wished she had just managed to try with theirs; perhaps the poor thing might

have been living now ; but they supposed it had had all that could be done for it. There was no use in saying that this was not the case ; but the fact was, nobody's sick money was thought to give the deserted infant a title to medical attendance. Nothing had shocked Eliza so much as to learn, after its death, that it had had none. Mr. Atha had never heard of the case ; and even Daddy Harker had not been applied to for so much as a charm.

" Well ; 'tis even better than if it had gone with us ; for it would not have waited till now to die," said the philosophic mother. " You know, John, if it had got over the tossing, and tumbling, and noise of the voyage, it would not have known what to do with itself in the hot weather when you were so dry from morning till night."

" Dry ! and well I might be, after all the salt stuff the captain gave us to eat on the voyage. We have been shamefully used in every way, Mrs. Nelson ; and you and your husband may be glad enough you did not go. The least the Company could have done, one would think, was to feed us well ; but not a mouthful of fresh meat had we after the first week."

" And the heat of the place, to be sure !" exclaimed the wife ; " and the walls so white and glaring, I thought I should have lost my eyesight."

" But that was nothing to climbing up the mountains," interrupted the husband. " The blood was near bursting out of my body as we

went up the steep places,—and all to be cheated when we got to the top.”

“Cheated!” cried Eliza. “Then I think the people do want my husband to preach to them, after all.”

“All the preaching in the world would not make them less born cheats than they are,” protested Spetch. “After all the talk of the mint of money the Spaniards made of those mines, it comes out that there was a very good reason for that in their day; they had none of the expense and trouble of working the mines themselves; but they made prisoners of the wild Indians, and it was the Indians that dug the gold and silver; so that it would have been odd if the Spaniard that took it all had not got rich.”

“We saw something of that,” observed the wife. “It scared me, like meeting a ghost, to see what came out of the mine up the mountain, as we came towards it. ’Twas a skinny red man, almost naked, coming up out of the ground, with a rock as big as that on his back. I would have sworn that no mortal man could have borne such a weight as that on his back; but that was what they expected my husband to do, if you’ll believe me.”

“Why, there was no other way of working such an uncommon mine as that,” declared Spetch. “The shaft was too small to do anything else with; and if it had not been, where was our machinery? The cylinder had to be left at the bottom of the mountain; and the bobs were lying on the road, a hundred miles

behind. I declare the cheating of us in such a manner was as bad as the thieving I saw one morning early, when a party of rascals came and carried off as much ore as ten mules could stand under."

"Why did you not stop them?"

"How should we when they were twice as many as we? The seeing those fellows move quietly off gave me as much trouble as helping to carry Betsy to her grave."

"Poor Betsy! Did she die quietly?"

"O, yes. There were so many going off in the same week, that there was not overmuch time to give to each,—as you may guess by our putting three more into the same grave with her. 'Tis rather hard, I must think, to meet a death just on coming home, when we have seen so much of it abroad."

"It is done and over now," observed the wife.

"Here are the folks coming away from the churchyard, see!"

"You will like to be going down to the little grave," said Eliza.

"Surely, poor innocent! O, Eliza Nelson, it was a weary thing to see so many people die in a day of the fever."

"An awful judgment! It might make the best men tremble."

"The only thing to be done was to get away, and leave those that would be shaking and trembling to take care of one another. What we did was to come away with the clothes on our backs, after giving all our money to the cap-

tain for our passage. So here we are, ready to begin the world again. But I don't know if we are not half ashamed to show ourselves in this plight before our old neighbours. Hey, Bess?"

"Why, I remember Philip Nelson said he did not mind it, when he stood up, shabby, as he thought, to preach. And now here he comes."

Eliza did not much relish the comparison of her husband, in any emergency whatever, with the squalid persons who stood before her. She perceived that there was at this moment more concern for the Spetches in his countenance than they had testified for their own loss.

"They have lost Betsy, too," was her tearful communication to her husband, as he came up.

The story had all to be told over again, with many additional circumstances, to which Eliza listened with quite as much interest as at first, while she held her husband's arm, and all four walked together in the direction of the village.

Philip offered no hospitality or assistance, because, as he told the Spetches, he had no right to offer any; but he explained to them who were the four that had the present administration of the parish, and why? and, finding that all his attempts at religious consolation were needless and useless, he left the careless mourners to pursue their way.

Eliza was far from being so unmoved about Betsy. At every step, she was fancying her, as she used to come home over this down in the evening, sometimes sulking under her parents'

capricious treatment; sometimes romping with the boys who were returning from their bucking and jigging; and now and then having a kiss to spare for Eliza's baby, and a petition to be allowed to nurse it till her mother should come by. And now, poor little girl, she was buried in the burning sands on the other side of the world, with nobody near to mourn her. Philip and Eliza assured each other that they should not forget Betsy, in their prayers or otherwise.

"Well, love, you have never asked me what I was wanted for at the mine," observed Philip.

"No; that I have not: and I should not have believed anything could put it so completely out of my mind. But I thought of nothing but the Spetches, after they once crossed me. What had the agent to say to you?"

"Something that shows how little we know what God means to make of our single deeds, and how he can turn the very devil's temptations to our good. You remember my finding some ore under the deads in the gallery, the morning that the storm within and the storm without drove me almost out of my faith and my reason. It was an awful time; but you remember my telling you about the ores being hidden."

"And you carried them up the shaft in all the lightning. Yes, I remember."

"The agent says he has had me in his mind ever since, to serve me; not so much as a matter of favour to me, he is pleased to say, as because this shows me to be a man that the adventurers he thinks may be glad to trust."

“He has been a long while about it, I think,” observed the wife.

“He could not help it. He did not know. He never heard how poor I was. How should he? But the moment the grass captain told him what sort of an appearance I made when I was engaged with him, and that I was glad to turn my hand to anything, he bestirred himself to get me something to do till some such office of trust as he wishes to put me into should fall into his hands.”

“I do wish such an office would turn up. I am only afraid of your being a tributer again, now that you have nothing to lose. I had rather live on one meal a day, seeing you digging in the garden, and looking out with an open face on God’s sunshine, than take my dinner and supper, dreading all the while to see you come home with care in your face, and a look as if you did not wish to be asked whether your pitch was kindly. It is like the gentlemen in London that game away a fortune in a night,—only, without the guilt.”

“That makes a great difference. But I think there is guilt in taking a pitch, if men have nothing to live upon, and pay the fine with, in case of its turning out badly. But what do you think of so taking a pitch as that we shall be sure to lose nothing, if we do not gain?”

“Who ever took a pitch in that manner?”

“I am going to try. The agent would have made me a present of it downright, saying it was only a part of what I had saved to the ad-

venturer ; but I could not be easy under it as a gift. So I am to have it as a loan ; and he will never distress me for the payment. Indeed, he says it shall go, if I gain, towards the life-rent of our cottage. He says we may begin to think of staying here for life, now that the parish has left off sending away all the best men in it, or bringing back its own worst. I am glad now that I took the trouble of planting that tamarisk fence, though I was doubtful at the time about our staying to see it grow up. I must look to it directly, and to other things in the garden ; for I shall have little time after to-day."

"Do you mean that you go down the mine again to-morrow ?"

"The sooner the better," said Philip, gaily. "There are three pitches that I may bid for, and that I have been examining ; which was the reason of my being away so long. The only thing is how to make my choice."

"And how will you make it ?"

"I must seek guidance ; and that," he added, with some hesitation, "perhaps in more ways than one."

Eliza's respectful look in his face encouraged him to go on.

"There is as much sin in letting God's gifts lie by idle as in misusing them. You know daddy Harker is thought to have a great gift—

"In divining ? Yes. He says the time was when he was sent for miles, this way and that, to use his gift, when any one was about a new adventure. He complains of the clergyman for

having come across his path, and made his gift no more to our people than if he had it not. But you need not ask the clergyman."

"It is rather for him to ask me, as the unbelieving do when they see a sign. He may show contempt"——

"Indeed, I am afraid he will, and others too."

"But we must not shrink on that account, nor leave anything undone. The more unbelief there is, the more is the call for me to show my trust. I will tell you how it must be. We must leave nothing undone, as I said. There must be no occasion for any one saying that there is anything unseen in the case,—no opportunity for others communicating with him. We will say nothing to any one; and I will invite the old man up to-night; and——do you think we could manage for him to sleep in our cottage?"

"O, yes. We can shake down heath in a corner for ourselves. It is a good bed for once on a summer's night."

"And you can get back to your own when we are gone, which we must be by sunrise, to do the thing in the best manner. And it is of such great consequence not to lose sight of him!"

"Then, whichever pitch he likes best, you will take."

"I shall not tell him exactly about the three pitches; but he will show me where the lode is richest, and I shall take the pitch that is nearest of the three. Now, whoever may come, love, be sure you do not drop a single word that may be a weight upon your mind afterwards."

“It would be so unthankful!” declared Eliza.

There were many ways of giving tokens without dropping words. Several neighbours who looked in upon the Nelsons to-day, having either heard that Philip was seen in the counting-house with the agent, or that the grass captain had spoken particularly of Philip, or wanting a little gossip about the Spetches, or about the new aspect of the parish, were struck with Philip's cheerful chanting of an hymn while digging behind his fence, and with Eliza's warm welcome—the welcome of a lightened heart. They all agreed that there must be “something.” There was a yet stronger assurance of this when two or three who were abroad when the moon rose that evening carried home word that they had watched Nelson taking care of daddy Harker over the down, all the way to his own cottage; and that Mrs. Nelson was kindling a bright fire of furze within. There must be something doing with the old man; for none but old blood could want warming on a mild summer night like this.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### OLD HARKER'S GIFT.

PHILIP had given his wife another little secret to keep in the course of the afternoon. If daddy Harker should prove successful in his rhabdomancy, his grandson Josiah should be Philip's wheeler. If a syllable of this was let fall, if any

talk of recompense was allowed to disturb the mind of the rabadmancer, any degree of failure would be deserved, and might be expected ; but Philip had no intention of being ungrateful. Bold as the step was of introducing among miners a member of an agricultural labourer's family ; and little as Philip was usually disposed to be bold, he determined to take this step. If it had been a thing unheard of, it might never have occurred to him ; but there had been instances of men, not of the mining race, who, by dint of meekness and firmness, patience and honesty, had risen to the privilege of being incorporated with the class. Josiah had all the qualifications, and Philip would feel to his dying day that it was a good deed done to put the young man in the way of being independent of his careless parents. If the same opening had offered six weeks ago, he observed, he could not have made use of it. As soon as he was able to take his share of parish burdens, he should have had a labour-rate imposed upon him ; and pauper-labour is not of the kind which he could have taken into the mine. It is altogether a different thing to find out a hearty, likely lad, whose living depends on his serving his employer well, and being compelled to give work to a pauper who must have his subsistence, and he same subsistence, whether he be idle or industrious, honest or slippery. Philip hoped that nothing more would be heard of a labour-rate, which would interfere with Josiah's being adopted into the mine.

Eliza slept well on her bed of heath ; but she was awake in time to see the first blush of morning through the window, and to hear her husband rouse the old man, and devoutly remind him of his office. She longed to go with them, but knew that she ought not to encounter the fatigue.

There was a mischance at the outset. There were no hazel rods in the house, laid by to dry since winter. These were the best rods, the rabadomancer declared, with a shake of the head. He could not think of using any others, if hazel rods were to be had ; and he believed there were some in Harker's cottage. There was nothing for it but going down to see. Daddy wished much that Philip should go in one direction of search and he in another, lest the sun should have drawn up all the dews before they could begin ; but Philip would not lose sight of daddy. He had rather wait till the next morning than separate himself from the operator. The children at Harker's had made away with the hazel rods, and there were none in any of the neighbouring cottages ; so daddy found that others would do nearly as well. He had known apple-tree suckers, rods from peach trees or currant bushes, and especially slips from the oak, though green, answer very tolerably. There were plenty of green oaks in Ianson's coppice ; and to Ianson's coppice the party therefore proceeded. The knocking up the neighbours in the search for hazel rods had had the effect of enlarging the company, and there were as many people in the

coppice as if it had been May morning. A score of forked sticks were offered at once to the operator, all of which he threw into the hedge, declaring that it was folly to suppose the two limbs of the fork could be of equal length and thickness as they grew. There was nothing for it but choosing two slips of equal size, and tying them together; and this he meant to do with his own hands. When he had suited himself, and came to the tying, there was another stop for something to tie with. The jingle of a team was heard on the other side of the hedge, and a zealous looker-on clambered through the hedge and brought back a dozen stout hairs from the horse's tail. Old Harker pushed them away as if they had brought a curse. The tying material must be vegetable, or all would be spoiled. A little fellow who was known to be possessed of a top was despoiled of his packthread in a minute, melting Philip's heart, meanwhile, with his look of dismay. He did not seem to believe, as he was told, that he should have a better piece of packthread by the time morning school was over. A very musical whistle was now heard—in the midst of the tying of the knot—from the quarter where the team was moving on.

"Stop, there! Stop whistling, can't ye?" shouted Philip, with a little display of the irritation which always troubled him when he heard that sound of ill omen. "Such a moment to choose for whistling!"

"Hey day! how busy you all are in the coppice," cried Harry Ianson, from the other side,

jumping up the bank, and showing himself through the hedge. "One would think it was a jubilee, by so many of you coming for green, almost before the sun is up. O, no! not for green, I see. Your rods are not green. Why, Nelson, who is simple enough here to believe in daddy's divining rod?"

"I am," replied Philip, with no small effort.

"You! Whew, whew!—O, I beg your pardon. I whistled again. But, for your comfort, it is not thought dangerous, I believe, to whistle on a farm, whatever it may be in a mine. You think it is? Well, then, I will not do it any more, if I can help it. But I never was in such a whistling mood in my life, I think."

"I am glad of the mood, at any rate, sir. I hope it shows that things are going on as you could wish."

"That are they. Here, one can come abroad again in the dawn, without having some rascal to scold at every turn for sleeping in his bed till the dew is off, or spoiling whatever he lays his hands on. Our farm is our own now, and I begin to think we shall make another trial of it, if we can but bargain in the lease to give up as soon as the parish begins with a labour-rate again. Tremorne made a great favour of letting me have the lot of ground I have been fiddle-faddling with all this time; and now he begs, as a favour, that I will keep it.—But you seem in a hurry to be following the rest. What a troop you have brought with you! But you are quite welcome."

Philip explained that he was unwilling to be out of ear-shot of whatever was said to daddy, made his bow, and was off. His spirits rose almost to whistling point, when, at the moment, the first golden beam shot into the coppice, chequering the whole with dancing shadows, and lighting up the dew-drops, about and underneath. The whole party had got out upon the down, so he could not stay. He leaped the fence at an unaccustomed place, and almost trod upon a lark's nest. The parent bird brushed out and soared. Scarcely a moment did Philip give to a peep at her young, or to watching where she would show herself against a blushing cloud. His first duty was, he thought, to be by the old man's side.

The next duty was to make himself agreeable ; for daddy declared that animal spirits were the main point in the diviner. He could not undertake to do anything if he had any thoughts in his mind : he must hold the rod as he would a fishing-rod or a walking-stick, without any reasoning or thinking. This was imposing a hard task upon Philip, when the operator's feet were bared, and the process had actually begun. However he might succeed in finding something to say, he could not help stopping to cast a glance towards the toe of the right foot, or to see what was the action of the hands and the motion of the rod. Once or twice, when there was a jerk, he started ; and then a fresh grasp had to be taken, and the whole gone over again.

"That was only water," observed daddy. "It was not a spring that you wanted, I suppose, but copper."

Philip nodded.

"If any man wants to build," the old man gave notice, "here is a spring."

Where he stamped, a heap of stones was immediately piled for future guidance. Before he would proceed, he bored a little hole in the rod, and inserted morsels of all the metals of the district, except copper; after which, he said, it would be attracted by copper alone.

After this, all went well. The rod flew up, and touched the operator's hat; and then, when the next step was taken, was turned downwards—irresistibly, the old man declared; and remained so till he had found the length and breadth of the lode, flying up again only when they came to a cross course. Everybody might see the general result; but the particulars were for Philip's ear alone. The word "reward" might now be spoken; and when it was, both the parties were agreed that Philip should lose no time in going to the counting-house to intercept the agent, and declare his choice of a pitch; while daddy went to tell Eliza the news, and ask her for a good breakfast.

Old Harker had on his shoes and stockings, such as they were, in a trice, and was gone, followed by half the reverential crowd. The other half remained, to revere and wonder at Philip, as he brought his science of number and quan-

tity to bear upon the information the rabdomaner had afforded. He measured with his eye, and by paces, the distances from the mouths of the respective shafts of the mine; calculated something on paper; measured the whole over again, to make sure; and then, with a contented look, went to lean against the door-post of the counting-house till the agent should come.

The news of what had been doing had spread in the mine; and many a tributer, who wanted to be doing greater things than his pitch allowed, was eager to pay his fine for leaving it, and to become Philip's partner. But Philip did not wish to be in a hurry to make his choice. Spetch chose to take for granted that Nelson had rather have his last partner again than any new one, and came in his rags and tatters to urge his claim. To him Philip could give a positive answer. He was sure Spetch must deceive himself much as to his own strength, if he fancied he could now hew in the mine. He advised him to get some lighter work, till he should have recovered some of his vigour and muscle.

"So it is the same pitch, if I understand you right," said the agent, "that you thought well of on examination yesterday, that you have decided on taking. The captain says you are a shrewd fellow, and he believes you have picked out the best bargain, though the per-centage was complained of as small by those who have less confidence in the lode in that part. Well, I wish you luck with your bargain; and you

know I am instructed to see that you do not lose. Is there anything more that I can do for you?"

"If you could uphold me, sir, in bringing in a country labourer, it might be doing a service to more than the lad, whom I have a very high opinion of, sir."

"Oh, I see; you might be ill-treated by the miners for the part you took about the ores, and you would have a person under you of your own choosing. Certainly, you have a right to do that, if you and your partner can agree upon it."

"I should choose my partner in part by that test, sir."

"Very well, very well. I dare say you will have no difficulty; and no honest fellow brought into the mine by you will want for my countenance, as you know."

Josiah's day was now come, Philip told his wife, on his return at night. Josiah must have his first lesson the next morning in wheeling ores and bearing persecution.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### LENDING A HAND.

"You have something upon your mind, lad," said Philip to Josiah, when they had been at work together prosperously, and on pleasant terms, for two or three weeks. "So young a man, and so hearty a worker, ought to be more

ready for his meal than to hide himself when the bell rings, and lag behind till all are out of sight above ground."

Josiah replied that he always found he had time enough for his meal; and he had a fancy for going alone to it, unless when he brought it with him.

"But that is not all," said Philip. "It is but lately that you thought and said that a man needed little more than a plenty of honest work, without being meddled with, to make him altogether happy. Now, you have plenty of work, and nobody meddles with you; and yet I have seen you look lighter as you sat hammering on a heap of stones in the road, than you have seemed all to-day, and all this week."

"When people are under one trouble they lose sense of all that they are not under; and when I said what would make happy, I was a thoughtless young lad," was Josiah's philosophic reply.

"And how much older are you now, I wonder?"

"Old enough to see that there is never an end of trouble. I heard you preach that 'man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.'"

"Expounding the text, you remember, and explaining that some read, 'as the young eagles fly upward.'"

"Yes; I remember that. But the young eagles may fly down into these dark places, and the sparks fall heavy, like so many water-drops, before there will be an end of men's troubles."

"I wish God's light may not set the world on fire, or his fruitful rain swell to a deluge before there is an end of man's ingratitude," gravely observed Philip.

"That seems a hard word, if meant for me," said Josiah. "But, may be, I deserve it. And yet, there is no morning and night that I do not struggle and strive to thank God for giving me what I so long desired: but this does not alter new troubles from being troubles."

Philip saw that his young friend's mind must have been sorely worked before it could have assumed so philosophical a mood as Josiah's was to-day. Instead of speaking more of ingratitude, he endeavoured to learn something of the case.

It seems to be God's pleasure," he gently observed, "that men should never be off the watch,—never wholly unexercised in any frame of spirit, though there is a constant variety made in their own lot. No man can say, when the sun goes down, that he has been wholly without sorrow since it rose; and I trust that no man out of a dark dungeon passes so much as an hour without some little gleam of joy. In my opinion, this constant exercise is the main purpose for which men are made into families, that when they are not touched by the finger of God, they may be wounded in others' troubles; and that when His countenance is clouded towards them, they may catch something of His smile from others' faces. I have been thinking that this must be your case, Josiah, for I can

see no troubles of your own that can so suddenly make you find little but toil and trouble under the sun."

Josiah turned, and looked for a moment as if about to make a full disclosure; but he recollected that Philip had no more obeyed the summons of the bell than he. He said something about not missing dinner for the sake of a poor fellow like him.

"You have brought your dinner, I see," observed Philip. "Give me a morsel of it, and you shall sup with me. Come and rest. Do you leave your barrow, and I will leave my boring: and you shall tell me whether anything has befallen your folks at home that I can help to cure. Your father has got work again, I heard."

"O, yes; very good work; and my mother is mighty proud of my being where I am. She has spoken so differently to me since I came down the mine! She says I am grown dull out of pride; but I fancy she is the proudest of the two."

"Because you come in for a few sharp words and a little ridicule from the jealous,—things that are no trifles to bear, as I know, Josiah; but not worth wearing a thankless face for. Then your grandfather—I hoped he would not be found a burden any more, now that his gift is so much in use."

"Thanks to your bearing testimony to it against the clergyman," said Josiah. "Daddy is out of fear of the parish, now that people can buy labour as they like; but I should wish to see him living somewhere else than where he is."

My mother seems to think sometimes that people should naturally go back in age to the care of the parish ; and she says that taking away the labour-rate is taking away daddy's right to employment. I am afraid of his coming to think so too, just from hearing it so often over. I wish he could live somewhere else."

"With you, perhaps, when you come to build up a cottage from the stones on the down?"

Josiah smiled at first, and then sighed, and said that such would be too good luck for him. He never expected to build himself a cottage on the down. The most he looked to was renting one of Tremorne's allotments, as the clergyman had resumed his field. He wished he had spoken earlier about a corner of that field when it was all offered to the poor. Out of twelve portions only three had been accepted, and now the nine were taken back again. He wished he had spoken a little sooner.

Why should he wish that? The lot would barely find him potatoes or bread ; and where was the prospect for the future? Philip thought that men do much more wisely in taking work that can be extended as their families multiply, leaving these little slips of land to be tilled to much greater advantage by those who can afford so to lay out upon it as to make the most of it.

"When you build your cottage, Josiah (which I hope to help you to do, if you work long enough and steadily enough with me,) take in a garden, by all means, and see what your spare hours will get out of the ground ; but it is a

very different thing to rent, or even to own a bit of ground, to which you chiefly look for your living. How is it to feed your children, if you trust to this to marry upon? And when they grow too old and hearty for all to live upon it, what are they to do next? for a bit of ground is not like a mine, or a manufacture, which can be worked at, and made to yield more and more as there are more to live upon it. Besides," he continued, "why should you think of anything out of the mine, while you can have employment in it? You do not mind a little joking, I hope, or even a little ill-will, on account of your not being a miner."

Josiah observed, with a sad smile, that this was a fault which, like being young, would be cured as he grew older. Mere ill-will he could stand against, as well as most people, though it was not very pleasant to be twitted by the men at the capstan as he passed, and pointed out to be laughed at by the girls who were cobbing and bucking, and sneered at even by the little fellow that turned the horses at the whim. But he thought he could stand this, if this were all.

"I see how it is, Josiah. Your enemies in this place are tempting you, or frightening you, and trying at the same time to tie your tongue, to prevent your having guidance and support from me."

"They are; and my trouble is that I don't know whether to open my heart to you or not."

"I cannot tell, unless I knew what is on your mind; but let it be this way. Finish boring

this hole for me, ready for the blasting, and settle in your mind the while whether you will make me your friend when I come back. I am going to see what Spetch is about, and whether he has been tampering with my partner about anything. Remember, lad, there is no kind of honour that can bind you to keep the secrets of any one, be he who he may, who would defraud, more or less, the adventurers of this mine. Your duty, as a servant of the mine, is first to them, and only secondly to me. Take care you don't blow yourself up with the powder while I am gone. Let me tell you," he continued, with a sudden look of gravity, "that there was once a dark time with me, when, if I had been blasting and not hewing, I should perhaps have been wicked enough to put an end to myself with it. I have some idea of having prayed that the sea might rush in upon me, I felt so forsaken."

"You!" exclaimed Josiah. "Thank God! I never had such a thought as that."

"Nor ever will, I trust. What saved me was a gracious opportunity God offered me of doing right by the adventurers. It gave me back all my courage at once."

Josiah said nothing; but his manner in setting about his work showed that he took the saying to heart. He had, indeed, a very heavy weight upon his mind just now. He had been by trick implicated in a common fraud of the tributers; and they hoped to involve him yet further, expose him, and get rid of him. They knew him to be too honest to be open to a direct application

to cheat either his employer or the agent ; but they succeeded in involving him through an act of mere carelessness. A tributer in a neighbouring gallery had fallen in with an unkindly pitch, at the same time that Philip and his partner were making a good deal of money by theirs. He made the frequent fraudulent proposal to Philip's partner to exchange some of their ores during the remaining five weeks of the contract, by which both parties might be gainers,—the unprosperous miner by getting a better per-centage than his own poor ores would bring ; and the other parties, by obtaining a new lease of their pitch on better terms than if it was known how rich it was. This could not well be done without Josiah's assistance ; and the object was to make him disobey Philip's directions, and then keep the secret for his own sake ; after which it would be easy to make him, under the influence of fear, do the same trick for other parties who might be exposed. Josiah had in part fallen into the snare. He had left his barrow with the ores in it to go on an obliging errand, during which time the first exchange of ores was made ; and, in the next place, he had wheeled the ore, as desired by Philip's partner, to an appointed place in the neighbouring gallery, instead of to the shaft. He was allowed by degrees to understand the case, and then shown how the device was designed for Philip's interest, and how profitable a thing it would be for all parties that it should go on to the end of the lease. He knew that he was underbid in his employment

by Spetch, and by others less in want than Spetch, who were jealous of a common labourer working in the mine ; and he feared that if Philip should be displeased with him, he should not have a friend left underground. Every hour of hesitation plunged him deeper ; and he had almost determined recklessly to take his chance, when the kindly interest which his employer showed in his state of mind, and the half hour of solitude which was afforded him when his mind and heart were deeply impressed, saved him. He presently came to the determination to disclose the whole ; and the only doubt was as to the way in which it was to be done.

“ I have done my best, sir, in boring the holes ; and I have made up my mind to tell you what has been lying heavy upon it these few days past. But what I do not know is whether I should wait till those are present that I have a charge against. I am in fault myself, sir ; and have no wish to seem to excuse myself behind their backs, and make the best of my own story ; but yet you may like to be upon your guard for a little, before anybody knows that you are watching. I only wish now, sir, to do what is right.”

Philip thought that the right way was to make a full disclosure now, and to repeat it when called upon in the presence of others. So the whole story was told.

“ I know, sir,” said Josiah, “ that several are trying to beat me down, so that you can only have kept me on because you had confidence in

me ; and that now there is no reason for your having confidence in me, I must go."

Philip was silent.

"The sooner it is over, the better," the young man continued. "If I had done it when I first thought of doing it, my mother would have got over some of her disappointment by this time, and I should have known what to expect ; and now it is all to come yet."

Philip did not yet say a word ; nor for a long time after. It was only that he was thinking what was best to be done ; for he knew too well the value of the quality of mercy, and had too often felt the need of it himself to fail in it towards poor Josiah. By the time that the youth was trembling in every limb, and about to take the liberty of requesting that his master would say something at any rate, Philip was ready to drop a few well-weighed words which, amidst all their gravity, conveyed a little hope.

It was punishment enough for Josiah to hold himself in readiness to tell the story, without extenuation, in the presence of the offending parties. It was almost a pure relief to have told it to Philip,—to the just and gentle Mr. Nelson ; but to be called to account by the agent, and exposed and brow-beaten by the offenders, was a terrifying prospect ; and Josiah suffered so much under it, that his employer felt a deep compassion for him before another week was over.

During that week, all was settled. Philip put

the underground captain in the way of discovering how it was that there was so surprising an approach to equality in the produce of some of the pitches in the mine which had been considered likely to yield in very various proportions. Spetch was desired to keep his distance from Wheel Virgin, and two or three of the worst cheats were made an example of, leaving room for honester men to take their place. Spetch and his wife were forwarded to their own parish. The others remained a burden upon the funds; but it was some improvement in the state of affairs that two or three of the honest who had been paupers now found their proper place in the mine, while it was the worthless who were subjected to the degradation of pauperism.

Josiah was not exposed to be considered as an informer by the society in which he lived. He was not exalted and rewarded as informers often are. His best friends knew that there would be no kindness in making him a tributer, in the place of one of those whom he had caused to be sent away, though he was sufficiently qualified to begin in that line, and might undoubtedly be trusted to do nothing dishonest by which he himself might profit. He had also received such a lesson as guarded him against the carelessness and want of courage by which he had been nearly lost. He was allowed a further trial as a labourer; vigilantly watched, as he knew, and as he desired to be, by Philip, and sufficiently protected against the jealousy of

the miners, till he should have had time to establish himself in their estimation firmly enough to leave no hope of turning him out.

He was watched by Philip; but not as a master. Philip was no longer a tributer. The underground captain declared, when called to account for allowing a conspiracy to exist in his dominions, that his office was too extensive an one for him. There had been two underground captains in the Wheel Virgin during her better days; and when one of them went to South America with the first batch of miners who were chosen from this district, his colleague found himself able, in the reduced state of the works, to undertake the whole underground superintendence; but the affairs of the mine were reviving, and there was more going on in its dark chambers than one pair of eyes could overlook. Nelson was pointed at by general opinion as the fittest man to be second captain, and he became so, at a salary of 80*l.* a year. His wife was afraid that her principal pleasure in the appointment, next to the honour to her husband, arose from the security and regularity of their income, in comparison with what it had been when they had lived by speculation, however enlightened and cautious the speculation might be. Philip's first consideration was of a very different character. He had long been a kind of spiritual superior of these people; and his present office enabled him to use his religious influence more incessantly and more effectually. However dangerous such an accession of power might have

been in most hands, in Philip's, it only served to enhance instead of relaxing his regard for a far higher object than any prosperity of his own.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### A PLEASANT SURVEY.

"I THOUGHT how it would be! I told at the time how it would be!" cried Oddy, as Harry Ianson, who was one of the four administrators of the parish, came to his brick-yard to announce that a small additional rate was laid on, in aid of a neighbouring parish which was in great difficulties.

"You thought how it would be! And how is it?" inquired Harry, smiling.

"That there is no seeing the end of what we have to pay. We had no such burdens as this in my time. When I was overseer, we had no rate that we were never to have the benefit of. As long as there must be rates, say I, let them be for our own people, and not for strangers. There was no such taxing of our parish in my time, to help another parish."

"Because," said Harry, "we then taxed our neighbours to help us. A wide difference, certainly. There is a great contrast to the founding between the time when he is held up as an appeal to the rich, who subscribe to buy him clothes, and the time when, as a London mer-

chant, he calls in the beggar-woman from the steps of his own door, to feed her children at his kitchen hearth. Such a London merchant will hardly wish to become a destitute foundling again, for the sake of receiving charity rather than giving it; but he might just as reasonably do that as we look back to the time we begged of another parish, as another parish is now begging of us."

"If you asked me for the money for our own people, I would not say a word against it," observed Oddy. "But I do think it is very sad to pay my hard-earned money to support the poor of another place."

"Think of the honour, Mr. Oddy. Honour makes us swallow many sorts of hard things; so let us try what it will do in this case. I feel it a great honour that we are looked to as a prosperous parish, able and willing to help our neighbours. We are going to do our best to prevent our neighbours wanting such help again; but, meantime, we may as well make our bow, and look pleased, as a kind-hearted man does when people congratulate him on his power to do what they can only wish."

"Prevent your neighbours wanting help again! You will be clever men if you can do that."

"We have done something of that sort at home, you know. We have got our own affairs into some order; and why should not we show others the way? Suppose we even offer them a partnership?"

"I never heard such a mad thing in my life."

“Never? Was nothing ever hinted to the next parish about taking us into partnership when we could not support ourselves? It is true, the next parish would not hear of it; but it now appears that it had better have taken us as we asked. We don’t mean to take in a beggarly partner who brings no advantages. In the first place, there is reason to believe that the begging parish is not beggarly, but only involved; and, in the next, it can be proved that we each do the other hurt by being separated.”

“In so far as settlement matters are concerned, that is true; but——”

“But that is a very great matter. If, every now and then, we take fright or pick a quarrel, and send back each other’s natives, we do each other a world of harm, and cause a terrible expense for no purpose at all. If our neighbour, who lives by the pilchards, sends us back fishermen who cannot work a mine, and we retort by sending to her miners who cannot fish, who gains? Who does not lose? The mine will stand still, the pilchards will swim by, and those who can, must buy bread for those who cannot, while they are learning a new trade. There is not a child in your daughter’s school who might not laugh at us, and tell us the old proverb—‘A copperer is not a tinner, any more than a tinner is a copperer.’ You remember how nearly Philip Nelson had been sent away,—the best man in the parish! And see what a pretty fellow they have brought back to us in poor Gill. He might be a good fisherman, for aught I know;

but I never should have guessed it by his way of breaking stones on the road."

"You won't find it make much difference,—a union with one parish, in that way. We have men of half-a-dozen parishes here, or had, in my time."

"Half-a-dozen may as well join as two, if all are in the same mind. If we find that a majority of the guardians of the poor wish it, we are quite willing to take steps for having the half-dozen made one in point of settlement. If some are more abounding in rich people, and others in poor people, than the rest, it will not be difficult to agree on the proportions in which each shall contribute to a common fund for purposes of relief. An average of so many years' amount of relief given will do to proceed upon. Or, if each wishes to keep the charge of its own poor, let it be so; it will be a great point to have a common subscription for a workhouse to put these poor into, and an overseer to take care of them, and land, if need be, to employ them upon. It would be worth while, if only to make the mode of assessment the same in a pretty wide district, instead of having nine different plans in ten different parishes. I should like to see the whole line of our north coast,—the whole mining district, seven miles wide, stretching from St. Austel's to the Land's End, made one parish, in respect of all concerns in which they can act most efficiently as one, keeping their separate accounts of matters in which they can act separately without injury to each other."

“ You will never find any set of guardians who will keep up such an union from one twenty years to another. Better never begin than be for ever joining and separating according to the caprice of new guardians.”

“ Then, I think a law which, after all due precaution, makes such a union lasting, would be a great blessing. There could be a clear provision for having re-valuations made from time to time, and for appeals being properly attended to,—provision which would enable the liabilities of each parish to be varied as its circumstances vary, without affecting the union. Such provision being made, it would be the happiest thing for all England if parishes were authorized by law so to combine under a head to which they should all be answerable.”

“ I fancy the bare thought of such a thing would put some of our neighbours in a little bustle about the average of their expenditure that you talked of. There are many that would not like their present expenditure to be taken as the rule of what they are to go on to pay.”

“ Any more than we should two years ago : hey, Mr. Oddy ? Then they had better do as we did ; and the sooner the better. If I had to choose the length of time that should be taken as the basis of our average, I should either take that which has elapsed since the new assessment, or go back at once to the days of the former assessment ; for I am certain that the latter end of an old assessment is the time of all others when the poor are most expensive. I am

satisfied that there can be no true economy in the management of the poor without a frequent valuation of the property that is rated to the poor."

"You will not have the clergyman so warmly on your side there, Mr. Harry, as he was when the valuation was taken."

"Because the value of his tithes is not now falling, but rising. This circumstance will not alter Mr. Palliser's opinion about the matter; for he knows that, whether he pays more or less to the poor in consequence, for certain short periods, it is of more importance to the clergyman than to anybody else that the value of the rateable property should be ascertained. Mr. Palliser has good reason to know how easily a clergyman may be ruined by an unaltered valuation of varying property, especially when one parishioner brings in new families to rent his allotments, free from rate and tithe, and another lays on a labour rate. But you want to be following that load of bricks. Which way are they going?"

Oddy did not want to follow the bricks; he was only following with his eye the beast and man that were conveying them away. He observed,

"'Tis a pretty animal,—that mule,—well-trained and stout as any beast that ever I saw. That lad Josiah had no business to be on the roads in my time, having all the while such a beast as that growing up of his own."

"How long will the mule and the old man be in carrying up bricks enough to build a house?" asked Harry, laughing.

“ Not a house,—not a house ; only a chimney. The lad is sparing no pains about his cottage. He has cleared his ground, stone by stone ; and then reared his walls, also stone by stone. Having a mind for a proper chimney, he comes to me for bricks. I suppose he has got as far as the chimney at last, by his having sent. A weary time he has been about it.”

“ I shall walk up and see it. I have to go up the down, about this rate,” observed Harry.

“ Ah, the rate. Just step in with me, and I will pay you for daughter and self, and then we will go on together ; I promised the lad to give a look to his cottage before it was finished, to make sure that it won't fall in upon his grandfather one night, and bury the old man before his time.”

“ Is daddy going to live with him ? ”

“ Ay, that he is. He is fonder of the lad than he has any reason to be of his own son, that put him upon the parish ; and the lad has a sort of pride in showing that he and his daddy that were put together in a lot upon the parish, can make a very good figure together now, without any thanks to the parish. The old man will find enough to do one way and another. There is his divining rod, never long idle ; and the mule to keep, and half the fetching and carrying of the village to do with it ; besides the garden to dig and the cottage to keep, while Josiah is underground ; and when the weather is tempting, there is his next-door neighbour's baby to carry out into the sun. Oh, the old man will do very well.”

“He could not be better off for a next-door neighbour; which is no light matter to a sociable old person like Daddy Harker.”

Mrs. Home was found looking very grave, and speaking very crossly to her scholars when she spoke at all. Being disposed to take offence at whatever happened, she grumbled sorely about the additional rate for which Harry troubled her.

“I have something to tell you that will please you,” said her father, hoping to restore her to a mood of complacency. “Ledley is come back. I know you like Ledley.”

“As for Ledley being come back, there is not a child in my school that could not have told you as much when they came to afternoon school. No need to tell me your news. I have seen Ledley.”

“I should not have thought you had seen any such happy person as Ledley to-day.”

“He is easily made happy, to be sure. No baby more so. A word from Mrs. Pendreath, and a smile from his master and mistress, seem enough for him, without any regard to the finer refinements of affection.”

“I am sure he loves the face of nature. You should have seen him when he jumped down from the coach,—how he almost seemed to forget the way home from being so busy looking at the view.”

“O yes, plenty of that. The view is always the first object with him. There he is, hanging up his bits of drawings in his little room at the parsonage, saying that he trusts he settles himself

there for life, desiring nothing beyond that little room for a home, and his master and mistress to care for. As if it signified to anybody what he wishes, and whom he cares for! There is great selfishness in Ledley, after all. His master will find himself deceived in him, sooner or later."

Neither her father nor Harry was likely to think the worse of Ledley for all this: but the children might; and the conversation was therefore turned again upon the rate which was paid by Mrs. Home, who could not, however, refrain from saying another word or two about Ledley.

"If either of you see Mr. Ledley," said she to them, "you may tell him to come and take down the drawing he gave me for a keepsake when he went away. He looked mightily pleased about Mrs. Pendreath having had one to keep all this time. I'm sure, if I had understood that another——You may tell him that his drawings will be best in his own keeping; and he may come for that one (nodding to it) as soon as he pleases. I can't have it cumber my wall any longer."

Her father observed that one of the children should carry it after school; and took it down. She would have stopped him, declaring what a hurry he was always in; but the drawing was down in a trice, carefully folded in a sheet of stiff paper, and despatched by the eldest of the scholars. The rest of the children were much to be pitied for being left alone with Mrs. Home; but Harry could stay no longer.

"That must be a fine business of Tre-

morne's," observed Oddy, as they passed the quarry. "Here seem to be more men at work than ever, after all the complaints he made of having his rent raised again this year."

"And after the rise of wages too. You had better own at once, Oddy, that Tremorne made a pretty pocket-full by the parish when we had the labour-rate."

"Oh, I have no more to do with Tremorne's business than you have; so I may own whatever I happen to think. There is no question that he bore a much lighter burden than the lady he paid his rent to."

"There is no longer any doubt about the extreme injustice of the system which nearly ruined us all. Standing on this spot, where we have a view of——"

"Ay, Josiah's cottage comes in very well here, taking off from the loneliness of Nelson's, which always had a dreary look while it stood by itself. Mrs. Nelson seems to like having a neighbour. That is the way I often see her stand now, with her baby in her arms, watching the building, and having always a neighbourly word for the old man."

"And a kind one for me," said Harry, "even when I go only to levy the rate. I do hope there will be no more talk of those people going away."

"They have no such thought themselves; for they are paying a life-rent for that cottage. It is nearly paid off now; and there Philip hopes to end his days; and if cut off by any accident

in the mine, or otherwise, as he says, (always thinking of the end of life,) here his wife and her little one may live after him to remember him. I bade him not think so much now of the end of life, looking so much better as he does. I thought at one time he was going to break up, there was such a cast-down look about him ; but it is my belief now that it was from too much fear of God."

"From too little hope, perhaps ; but that was partly the fault of others. It is not easy for just and tender minds to hope in God so much as they should, when they suffer under hardship from the hands of men. Philip's religion was always the first thing with him ; but see how his very religion has changed its character, without losing its strength, as he has received more justice at the hands of men ! Now that his neighbours make him one of them, he seems to have lost all terror of being despised by God. There is more trust, and less looking for signs. Ah ! I see you wonder how small differences (as you think them) in management can make such great differences in minds ; but you know changes are to be measured by their effects upon minds."

"Well, the mind of this parish does seem to be more wonderfully changed than I could have thought likely."

"Yes ; it may appear to a stranger a small thing that our parish arrangements, from being costly and burdensome, have become easy and equal ; but it is no little matter to us in its consequences. When four or five were unjustly burdened, and

nearly brought to ruin, while forty or fifty were by the same means made careless and encroaching, the ruin to our peace and virtue was worse than the ruin to our prosperity. And now, when we can look round from this spot, and think that from the lady in that white house to the labourer in yonder little cottage, every one bears a just share of the common burden, we may hope that the fair dealing will keep up a kindly feeling among all parties, whatever may be their religion, and wherever may be the parish in which they were born."

"It is plain enough, indeed, that it is not so much what our people are made to pay, as by what rule they are made to pay, that is the important thing."

"It is plain, indeed, that in this as in all social arrangements, if justice be the rule, kindness and peace will be the result. When we expect any other consequence, we may look to see one of our gusty north-westerns come sweeping over yonder waters without stirring them up to chafe against the rocks of the Land's End."

THE END.