

AT WAR WITH SOCIETY

OR

TALES OF THE OUTCASTS



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Title: At War with Society or, Tales of the Outcasts

Author: James McLevy

Release Date: August 19, 2014 [EBook #46623]

Language: English

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AT WAR WITH SOCIETY;

OR,

TALES OF THE OUTCASTS.

BY

JAMES M'LEVY,
(EDINBURGH POLICE DETECTIVE STAFF,
AUTHOR OF "ROMANCES OF CRIME.")

CAMERON AND FERGUSON, PUBLISHERS.

GLASGOW: 88 WEST NILE STREET.

LONDON: 12 AVE MARIA LANE.

GLASGOW:
DUNN AND WRIGHT,
PRINTERS.

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The Ingenuity of Thieves.

INTRODUCTORY.

IT would not be a hopeful sign of the further triumph of the good principle over the evil if the devil's agents could shew us many examples where they have beaten us, and been enabled to slide clean off the scale. Since my first volume was published, I have been twitted with cases where we have been at fault. I don't deny that there are some, and I will give one or two, of which I have something to say. In the meantime, I have consolation, not that I have contributed much to the gratifying result in being able to point to the fact, that, since the year 1849, the Reports of the General Board of Prisons have shewn a gradual and steady decrease of the population of our jails. I am free to confess that this result is only, to a small extent, due to us, and the reason is plain enough. The old rebel has had the advantage of us. We have, until very recently, been acting against him on the principle of those masters and mistresses, who, with a chuckle in their hearts, lay pieces of money in the way of suspected servants to catch them,—something in the Twelvetrees way, only they don't wish their unwary victims "to die on the spot;" nay, having caught them, they only turn them off to rob and steal elsewhere. Yes, in place of our philanthropists meeting the arch-enemy at the beginning, when he is busy with the young hearts, detecting the first throb of good and turning it to a pulse of evil, we have been obliged to wait until the young sinner was ripe and ready for our hardening mould of punishment. There was no Dr Guthrie there—a good way cleverer than the enemy, I suspect, and capable of checkmating him by nipping the canker in the early bud; and then we have been hampered by our legal governors, who have been, and still are, always telling us we must keep a sharp look out for what they call, in their law jargon, an "overt act," the meaning of which, I am informed, is, that we must wait until the rogues are able to do some *clever* thing, sufficient to shew us they have arrived at the age of *discretion*, and become *meritorious* subjects for punishment.

With this advantage over us, it is no great wonder we are sometimes outwitted; nay, the wonder rather is, that we succeed so often as we do, and I think it might be a great consolation to our philanthropists working among the Raggedier ranks, when I tell them, as I have already done, that I don't hold the enemy at so much count as many do. His terrible reputation is due to our own laxity. We let him into the camp, hoof and horns, and then complain that we

can't drive or pull him out, whereas we have the power, if we would only exercise it, of *keeping* him out. To my instinctive way of looking at things in those days of improved tactics in war, it seems something like folly to trust to the strength of the wild boar's tail in dragging him out when we can so easily barricade the hole.

Viewing crime even in its diminished extent, there is another consideration which has often opened my eyes pretty wide. We are always a-being told that the human heart has really some good soil in it—(I don't go with those who think that people inherit evil as they do sometimes six toes)—and that, though the devil has always a large granary of tares, we have an abundance of good seed from Jerusalem. I would just ask what use we have been making of that good seed? Have we not been keeping it *in* the bushel just as we keep the light *under* the bushel? In my beat I see a routh of the tares; then I get a sickle put into my hands, and I cut away just as the gardeners do when they prune in order to make the old branches shoot out with more vigour, and, behold, the twisted saplings, how stiff and rigid they become!

But I suspect I am here getting out of my beat. I set out with stating that I had got thrown in my teeth cases where, by the ingenuity of thieves, we have been defeated. They are not cases of mine, any how. I may take one or two that relate to one of the most successful artists of the tender sex that ever appeared in Edinburgh, viz., the well-known Jean Brash. I knew her very well, but, strange as it may appear, her ladyship always contrived to keep out of my hands; not that she came always scaithless out of the hands of others, any more than that her victims came without damage out of hers, but that she usually, by her adroitness, achieved a miserable success, sufficient to form the foundation of a romantic story. At an early period, she could boast of some attractions, but she could boast more of making these run along with her power of *extraction*; yea, she had three wonderful powers, viz., those of captivating her cullies, retaining them if she chose, and of losing them by capturing their means. Of the last of these she was more proud than of the others, and if she could, in addition, enjoy the triumph of deceiving an astute constable, she got to the top of her pride—a creature or *fiend*, otherwise strangely formed, for if she seduced and robbed by instinct, she strengthened and justified the inborn propensity by a kind of devil's logic, to the effect that, as she had ruined her immortal soul for the sake of man, she was not only entitled to receive from him the common wages of sin, but also to take from him whatever her subtle fingers could enable her to lay hold of by way of compensation. On one occasion, when, as I think, she resided in the Salt Bucket, and when I had occasionally my eye upon her with a look of official love, which

she could return with a leer of rather a different kind from that wherewith she wrought her stratagems, she had sallied out, after night-fall, to try her skill on hearts, gold watches, or little bits of bank paper. Doubtless, no more now than on any other occasion, did she imitate the old sirens of whom I have read somewhere. She did not sing them into her toils, that is, her art was not thrown out any more than when a cat purs at a mouse-hole. Her power could be in reserve, and yet be available, so that a man in place of being a *dupe*, might flatter himself that he was a *duper* seeking for her charms in the shape of shrinking modesty. So probably thought the happy Mr C——, a mercantile traveller in the hard goods line from Birmingham, but not himself a Brummagem article of false glitter,—a sterling man, if one might judge from the value of the money he carried. In her demureness, Jean appears a real jewel, and he would secure the prize, yet not in the way of an “*uncommercial traveller*,” for he could and would purchase, and surely in so modest-looking a creature he would make an excellent bargain. Look you, here is a little consolation for us, as we wander about seeking for the vicious to catch them and punish them into virtue. We see occasionally the vicious prowling, in the shades of night, seeking the vicious to deceive them into further vice, and yet sure to be deceived in turn and brought to ruin, while they are trying to make a capital of pleasure out of a poor wretch’s necessity. So it has always been: voluptuousness gets hysterical over modesty (Jean Brash’s modesty!) and how can we be sorry when we see it choked with the wind-ball of its desire? Then, look ye, is it not a little curious to see vice so conservative of virtue as to become a detective?

Well, Jean is caught by the commercial traveller, how unwittingly the reader may pretty safely guess, and not only caught, but led as a kind of triumph to the Salt Bucket, where resides one of those “decent women” who take pity on errant lovers; probably if Jean had said that the house was her own, he might have doubted of a modesty which could belie itself at home among friends. Then, as they say love has quick wings where there is a shady grove in prospect—not always of sweet myrtle—not seldom of common pine firs, with a good many nettles and thistles growing about the temple—so they were speedily under the auspices of the decent priestess. How long it was before the heart of this lover, which had only been for a little absent from his commercial interests, returned to these so as to make him alive to the conviction that he had been robbed of a hundred-pound Bank of England note, I cannot say, for I was not in this case; but certain it is, that rather quiet part of the town soon echoed to a cry of horror, to the effect that he had been relieved from the anxiety of carrying about with him a bit of paper of that value.

Of all this I have no doubt, because I was perfectly aware that Jean was a woman who could confer the boon of such a relief from anxiety as easily as she could transfer that anxiety to herself; nor could any one who knew her doubt that she could contrive to make the care a very light one. Even the more romantic part of the story which “illustrates” the memory of this remarkable woman, I have no proper right to gainsay—how the commercial traveller rushed down stairs and bawled out at the top of his English voice for a constable—how the constable made his appearance while the traveller kept watch at the door—how they hurried up-stairs to seize when they should discover the money—how they found Jean quite in an easy state of conscious innocence—how she adjured the constable to search the house and her own body, and satisfy himself that the unfortunate man was in error—how, for that purpose, she quietly handed to him a lighted candle placed in a brass candlestick, and well fixed there by a round of paper not to oscillate in the way of unsteady lights—how the constable searched for the missing note with this candle, so fixed by the paper roll at the end thereof, all the while that Jean was muttering to herself, “The fool has taken the wrong end”—how he failed in his search, and how the traveller gave up all hope, if he did not suspect that he had lost his note elsewhere, and therefore resolved to avoid the fearful exposure of committing the woman—and how Jean was at length left quietly in her state of innocence. The reader may guess that Jean at her own time undid the piece of paper from the end of the candle, thus rescuing the “Governor and Company of the Bank of England” from their temporary degradation, and enjoying a quiet chuckle at her successful ingenuity.

Now, I confess I never liked very well to hear this romantic bit of Jean’s history, and simply for this reason, that I was not there to hold the candle.

On another occasion—though I am bound to say I have heard the credit of the adventure ascribed to a young unfortunate of the name of Catherine Brown, who lived in Richmond Street—our Jean was pursuing her *nomade* vocation in Princes Street. The night was dark enough, and the hour late enough, to inspire adventurers with sufficient confidence to flirt a little with the coy damsel, without being detected by curious friends. There are always numbers of these shy and frolicsome fish who are fond of poking their noses into the dangerous meshes, without any intention of entering the seine, where they would be pretty sure to be caught. The regular tramps, such as our heroine, are quite up to these amateurs, hate them heartily, and sometimes make them pay, and very deservedly too, golden guineas for silvern words. I can’t say I have much sympathy for them when they fall into misfortune, and ask our help to get money restored to their pockets, which pockets they voluntarily placed within the range

of curious fingers. Why, if these fingers are delicate enough to be fondled and kissed without recompense, the men shew a bad grace in complaining that the same fingers fondled in their turn a bit of gold or paper supposed to be beyond their reach. Of course we do our duty, but always with a feeling in such cases that the victims did not do theirs, and impose upon us the trouble of rectifying the results of their folly, if not vice. Such fire-ships shew enough of light to enable these gay yachtmen to steer sufficiently aloof. (Were I able to be fanciful myself, I would not need to borrow the words of one of our well-read Lieutenants.) These young men play round the rancid candle-light of impurity, which at once enables them to see reflected in their self-conceit their immunity from danger, and imparts a little heat to their imagination. Rather fine language for me, but I see the sense of it.

With one of these gaudy night-moths our famous heroine had forgathered; and thinking probably that if he did not choose to consider her soft hand sacred from his squeeze, she was not bound to esteem his pocket tabooed against the prying curiosity of her fingers, she made free with the contents thereof. At least the youth thought so; for on the instant he bawled out to the passing bull's-eye that he had been robbed. The constable, who knew Jean—as who didn't—immediately laid hold of her, and as there were no passers-by to complicate the affair, the money would of course be got upon the instant. It was no less than a five-pound note, at least so said the young man; but Jean, whose coolness never forsook her, simply denied the charge.

It was a matter of short work for the constable to search her so far as he could,—an act in which he was helped by the young man. Her pockets were turned out, but with the exception of a scent-bottle, a white handkerchief, and some brown pawn-tickets, nothing was found there. All round the pavement the light of the lantern shewed nothing in the shape of the valuable bit of paper, and there was no sympathiser to whom she could have handed it.

“You must be under a delusion,” said the policeman.

“Impossible!” cried the youth. “There are as many folds in a woman's dress as there are loops and lies in her mind. March her up.”

To all which Jean replied with her ordinary laugh of consummate self-possession, if not impudence. Nor was she at all unwilling to march—rather the contrary. She knew what she was about.

“Come away,” she said, “and we shall see who is right and who is wrong.”

And so away they went. Nor was it long before Jean was examined by one of the female searchers of the Office. No five-pound note was found upon her; and

though the young man raved incessantly about the absolute certainty of the theft, the policeman, and not less the lieutenant on duty, was satisfied that there must have been a mistake,—a conclusion which the redoubted Jean confirmed by a cool declaration, in all likelihood false, that she had seen the young gentleman in the company of not less scrupulous women a very short time before. There was only one thing to be done—to set Jean free.

“And who is to pay me for all this time?” said she, as she turned to the lieutenant a face in which was displayed a mock seriousness, contrasting vividly with the wild, anxious countenance of the youth. “I could have made five pounds in the time in an honest way, so that I am the real loser; and who, I ask again, is to pay me?”

A question to which she no more expected a reply than she did the payment of her lost gains in an honest way. And with head erect, if not indeed with an air of injured innocence, she marched out of the office. Yet nothing would satisfy the young man that he had not been robbed; and he too, when he saw that he had no hope, left with the conviction that he was a greatly injured innocent.

The matter died away, leaving only the impression of some unaccountable mistake or indetectible priggery, though probably the presumption was against the woman, whose genius in this peculiar line of art was known to be able to find her advantage in a mystery through which the most practised eye of official vision could see nothing.

A day or two passed. No more was heard of the young man, who no doubt had made up his mind to the loss of the five pounds; nor did the constable, who was again upon his beat about the same hour, think any more of the mystery, unless perhaps the place brought up a passing thought of wonder how the bit of paper could have disappeared in so very short a time. A woman came running up to him. It was Jean, and she was all of a bustle. Laying hold of the man by the left hand—

“What now,” said the constable, who knew well that something not altogether useless to Jean was coming. “In one of your high jinks?”

“No; I have a secret for you, man.”

“What is it?”

“Oh, you’re such peaching fellows, one can hardly speak with you. Would you like the young sprig’s five-pound note? He can’t afford to lose it, and my conscience is queezy.”

“Ah, ha!” cried the constable, “Jean Brash’s conscience!”

“Aye, man, even Jean Brash’s conscience,” replied she, a little grandly. “A

queer thing maybe, but still a thing. Aye, man, I would tell you where the five-pound note is if you would keep me out of the gleg's claws."

"Well, I will," replied he, getting into official cunning. "Tell me where the note is, and I will do my best for you."

"Ah, I know you won't, and so I can't trust you with an admission which you would use against me; but suppose I were to make a sign, eh? A nod is as good, you know, as——"

"Well, well, give me the nod to lead me to the note."

"And you will say nothing? Well, who's your tailor?" she cried, laughing.

"What has that to do with the note?" responded the man.

"Something that may astonish you," said she, as she still held his arm, and fumbled about the cuff of his coat. "He gives you a deep cuff. Very convenient as a kind of wee pawn."

"Nonsense. Get off. You are trifling."

"Not just," she replied, again laughing and thrusting her nimble fingers, so like instruments of legerdemain, deep into the cuff—"not just. Suppose you were to find the note in here after I am gone, would you just say you got it there, and nothing of me?"

"Perhaps I would."

"Then search your cuff," she cried, swinging his arm to a side, "and you will find it."

And running away, she threw behind her the words: "But be sure and act honourably, and give it to the prig."

The constable was a little confused, but he did not fail to begin to search the cuff, from which Jean, while pretending she had deposited the £5 in the receptacle, had absolutely extracted the spoil,—the identical note which she had placed there at the instant of her seizure on the night it was stolen, and which he had carried about with him for two days, altogether unconscious of the valuable deposit.

The man could swear, as in a rage he searched and found nothing, but he couldn't detect, and I don't think he ever knew the trick played off upon him; for it came out long afterwards when Jean was safe, and in one of her fits of bragging, how she did the authorities.

These are not *my* experiences, and I can give no guarantee of their truth; but, as I have said, I should have liked to be the man who held the candle, supported in the socket by such a valuable bit of paper; and I must add, that I should have

liked also to be the man who wore the coat with the deep cuff.

So much for such talk as goes on amongst us. But I have had enough of experience of Jean to enable me to say that she was the most “organic thief” of my time. So much was her *make* that of a thief, that I doubt whether training in a ragged school would have had much effect upon her. The house she occupied in James’ Square was a “bank of exchange,” regularly fitted up for business. In the corner of a door-panel of every bedroom, there was a small hole neatly closed up with a wooden button, so as to escape all observation. Then the lower panels were made to slide, so that while through the peep she could see when the light was extinguished, she could by the opened panel creep noiselessly in on all fours and take the watch off the side-table, or rifle the pockets of the luckless wight’s dress. She made occasionally great catches, having once “done” £400; but she was at length “done” by the paltry sum of 7s. 6d. I have heard that she is still alive in Australia, and married, perhaps driving, like a pastoral Arcadian, “the yowes to the knowes.”

The Orange Blossom.

HOWEVER assiduously I have plied my vocation, I have never thought that I was doing the good which our masters expect of us in stopping the sliders on the slippery scale of criminal descent. They only commence again, and when they slide off altogether others rise to run the same course. If I have taken credit for a diminution, I suspect that Dr Guthrie has had more to do with it than I. Sometimes I have had qualms from a conviction that I have been hard on many who could scarcely be said to be responsible. I have been, no doubt, often an unwelcome intruder upon merry-makings and jollifications, but then it may be said for me that these merry-makers were merry at the expense of others. Well, "you have stopped marriages where one of the parties was innocent." True, but the innocent party was attracted by the glitter of stolen gold, and why should a resetting bridegroom escape a loss any more than a resetting pawnbroker? A dowried thief in stolen orange blossom may be a pretty object to a loving snob—to me, however, she is nothing else but a thief, and if I am bound to tear her from his arms, I have just the satisfaction that I transfer her to the arms of justice, who will hug her a good deal closer.

In 1842, our office was inundated with complaints of house enterings by false keys. There had been no fewer than sixteen in six weeks, and not a trace could be discovered.

"Why, M'Levy," said the Lieutenant one day to me, "we will lose caste. Aberdeen will mock us, and Berwick hold up the finger at us. What's to be done?"

"There's a difficulty," replied I. "In the first place, I am satisfied there is only one thief; in the second place, there is only one place of deposit; in the third place, I am only one man; and, in the fourth place, I am not an angel. Yet, notwithstanding, I have a hope."

"What is it founded on?"

"This little bit of swatch," replied I, shewing him a paring of print not larger than two crown pieces.

"Why do you place faith in a rag like that?"

"I got it," replied I, "from Mrs ——, the proprietor of a house in Richmond Street, the last one operated on, and Mrs Thick, the broker in the Cowgate, thinks she will be able to match it."

“That promises something.”

“I think I have the sex too,” said I, with an intention to be jocular.

“Man or woman?”

“Woman,” replied I.

“Oh, something peculiarly in the female line,” said he. “I hope not an object in the *greening* way?”

“No; something preparatory to, and going before that. Can’t you guess?”

“No—yes—let me see—orange blossom?”

“Yes, orange blossom,” said I. “The thief wants to be married. She has laid in the dowry from the same house in Richmond Street, and finished off with the bride’s badge.”

Our conversation terminated with a laugh, for, after all, we were scarcely serious, and I repaired to Mrs Thick, a fine specimen of her class, who, rather than pocket a penny from stolen goods, would have surrendered her whole stock, amounting to hundreds of pounds. As I went along I continued my former ruminations on this wonderful succession of robberies. That they were all done by one hand I had, as I have said, little doubt; but, considering the short period of time, the difficulty of watching and accomplishing even one house, the multiplied chances of being seen, the obstructions of locks, the accidents so rife in pledging or disposing by sale, the many inquiries and investigations that had already been made by sharp people, I could not help being filled with admiration at a dexterity so unexampled in my experience. And then, if I was right in my whimsical conjecture as to sex, what a wonderful creature of a woman she must be!

“She is worthy of me anyhow,” I said to myself; and as we illiterate people are fond of a pun, I added, just for my own ear, “I will catch her through *thick* or *thin*.”

Now, don’t be angry at my wit; it is better than you think; for don’t you remember of one of the name of Thin, with the three balls above his door?

And not insensible to the effect of my solitary effort at being clever out of my sphere, I entered the shop of the broker.

“Now, Mrs Thick,” said I, “have you got a match for my swatch?”

“Indeed I think I have,” replied the good woman, although she knew she would in all likelihood be a heavy loser by her honesty. “Here’s the gown,” and, taking the pattern out of my hand, “see, it’s just the thing—aye, just a bit o’ the self-same. Whaur in a’ the warld got ye the swatch? Surely it’s no canny to

meddle wi' you, you're an awfu' man; but, do ye ken, I canna think after a' that that gown was stown."

"I never said it was, Mrs Thick."

"Aye, but it's a sign o' dead hens when the farmer rins after the fox that has loupit the yett."

"And I never said it was not," replied I, for I had reasons to be cautious.

"Weel, to be honest, Mr M'Levy, I really dinna think it was."

"And why?"

"Just because it was brought to me by that industrious creature Lizzy Gorman."

"That's the handsome hawker, as the young chaps call her?" said I.

"Just the same."

"And what makes you have so much faith in Elizabeth?"

"Just because I have kent her for years; and naebody could look into her bonny face, sae simple and sweet, without being sure she's an honest creature. Then she has hawked sae lang through Edinburgh, that had she been dishonest, she would hae been fund oot."

"Well, she does look like an honest girl," said I. "Have you had many articles from her besides the gown?"

"Just a heap," replied she. "But ken ye what, Mr M'Levy?"

"If I knew the what, I could perhaps tell," said I, keeping my friend in humour.

"This is Elizabeth's marriage-day," she whispered in my ear.

"Orange blossom!" muttered I.

"Aye, orange blossom," repeated Mrs Thick; "Lizzy's as far up as even that."

Now I had no wish that Mrs Thick should have heard my muttering, but the answer satisfied me I had muttered to some purpose.

"And who is the happy man?" inquired I; though I would not have given the sprig of orange blossom for the other sprig.

"Just a snab," replied she; "but then Elizabeth has money, and a full house, a' by her ain industry, and she says she'll set him up."

"Well, the affair looks promising," said I, adding, as I meditated a little, "unless the swine runs through it."

"Oh, it's ower near now for the sow; you're no Scotch, and maybe dinna ken the auld rhyme—

‘Lang to woo, and then to marry,
That’s the way to mak’ things miscarry;
But first to marry, and then to woo,
Is the surest way to keep out the sow.’

Aye, the beast seldom comes on the marriage-day to scatter the ribbons and the orange blossom.”

“Not sure,” said I, somewhat absent. “But letting the marriage of this most industrious girl alone, I have a favour to ask of you. Will you take care of this gown, and all the other articles Elizabeth has brought to you?”

“I will,” replied she; “but the Lord kens how I’m to get them a’ collected. There’s a cart-load o’ them; but I hae nae fear they’re a’ honestly come by.”

“I hope so,” said I, as I left the shop, with the intention of returning to the Office for a list of the property stolen from the sixteen houses, and then perhaps to call and see the bonny bride.

And as I went along, I began to gather up the fragments of my prior knowledge of my handsome hawker. She was pretty well known for several peculiarities. Her face was that of a gipsy, with the demureness of the race mixed with a simplicity which they seldom exhibit; and her dress, plain almost to Quakerism, had all that dandyism which extreme care and an excellent taste can bestow on very plain things. Quite an exception to the crowd of town-hawkers, she was far above their baskets and bundles of troggan. We see these every day. Some are enveloped in a mountain of shining articles of tin,—others are surrounded with a whole forest of wicker-work in the shape of baskets and reticules,—others rejoice in a heap of black tin shovels,—many are devoted to kitchens, where they shew their white caps to the servants out of a basket neatly covered with a white towel,—the apple and orange troggars are everywhere, the red-herring female merchants being probably at the foot of the tree. Despising all these, Elizabeth was seldom burdened with more than a neat paper parcel. Even that she was often without, and indeed I had heard it often remarked that no one knew what she hawked. Yet the readiness with which she was admitted at pretty high doors was remarkable, and once in, the secret article, probably drawn from under her gown, was an easy sale—at to her, no doubt, a remunerating price—under the charm of a winning simplicity, aided by the ready tale of the interesting orphan. A little consideration of these things soon brought me to the conclusion that it was only by such an adept, thoroughly acquainted with the inside of so many houses, by means of a daring eye and a quick ear, that all these sixteen entries in six weeks could have been effected. Nor would it be too much to say that the orange blossom was not accidental, if it was an object which she

had known to be in the house where a marriage was on the *tapis*, and of which she had obtained the knowledge by a prior visit.

I had now got thoroughly interested in my pretty hawker. Her movement on the scale was now upwards. It is seldom that thieves slide up to Hymen's bower; and if I had had no other motive than simply to see the young woman who could perform such miracles, I would have gone twenty miles to see her in her marriage dress, orange blossom, and all. I soon got my list completed; indeed, I was now somewhat in a hurry. The apathy with which the Lieutenant had charged me was changed into enthusiasm. Strange perversity of the human heart! I felt a jealousy of the snab. He was unworthy of such perfection. The bride must be mine at all hazards, even if I should be obliged to renounce my beauty to the superior claims of the Colonial Secretary.

Having got my list, I made again for the Cowgate, where, as I passed the stair-foot leading to the room of the intended, I saw the beginnings of the crowd which was to honour this match between the son of Crispin and the daughter surely of that famous goddess who got her skeleton keys from Vulcan for a kiss. I would pay due attention to the crowd by and by, and gratify it perhaps more than by the raree-show it was gaping to see. It was Mrs Thick I was now after; and having again found her at her old post, I went over with her as quickly as I could the long list, and became quite satisfied that her estimate of a cart-load was not much below the mark.

"Now, you are upon your honour," said I to her. "You must be careful to retain all those articles for an hour or so, for I am sorry to inform you I must take them from you."

"And can it be possible!" she exclaimed, no doubt with reference to the guilt of her industrious protégé; and then relaxing into a kind of smile, "Surely, surely you're no to act the animal we were speaking of. The bride's dressed, the bridegroom is up, the minister is waited for, and the crowd is at the door. Poor Lizzy, poor Lizzy, could ever I have thought this of you!"

"Well, I admit that I intend to be at the marriage anyhow," said I. "They have not had the grace to invite me; but I am often obliged to overlook slights from my friends."

And leaving my honest broker in the very height of her wonder—if not with uplifted hands and open mouth—I made my way to the house of rejoicing, shaded as all such are with that quiet decorum, if not solemnity, which the black coat and white cravat have such a power of casting over leaping hearts and winged hopes. The crowd had by this time increased; and among the rest was my assistant waiting for me—though ostensibly there to overawe the noisy

assemblage. The Irish boys and girls were predominant, shouting their cries, among which “The snab and the hawker, hurra,” would not sound as an honour up-stairs. When I say Irish boys and girls, I mean to include adults of sixty, grim and shrivelled enough in all save the heart, which is ever as young and green as an urchin’s. Then who does not feel an interest in the evergreen of marriage, albeit its red berries are often full of bitterness and death? The young look forward to it, and the old back upon it—the one with a laugh, the other with a sigh; but the interest is ever the same. Nay, I’m not sure if the sigh has not a little hope in it, even to that last dripping of the sands, when even all other “pleasure has ceased to please.” Excuse me, it is not often I have to sermonise on marriage, except those between the law and vice, where the yoke is not a pleasant one, and yet perhaps less unpleasant than many of those beginning with love on the one side, and affection on the other. And now I am the detective again.

“Are the constables ready?” I whispered to my assistant.

“Yes; they’re in the stair-foot beyond the meal-shop on the other side.”

“Then keep your post, and have an eye to the window.”

“For *ha’pennies*?” said he, with a laugh.

“I’m just afraid I may reduce the *happiness*,” replied I, not to be outdone in Irish wit on a marriage occasion, however bad at it.

And pushing my way among the noisy crowd, whose cry was now “M’Levy!” “He’s to run awa’ wi’ the bride!” “The snab has stown his varnished boots!” “The bride is to sleep in a police cell!” and so forth, I mounted the stair till I came to the marriage-hall. Uninvited as I was, I made “no gobs,” as they say, at entering, but, opening the door, stood there among the best of them. A more mysterious guest perhaps never appeared at a marriage before since the time of the famous visitor at Jedburgh, where the king danced; but I had no attention to bestow on expressions of wonder. The scene was of a character to be interesting enough to any one. To me the chief object of attention was the head of the bride, where the orange blossom ought to be; and there to be sure it was, set off, as it ought to have been, with green myrtle. With this I was so much occupied, that I cannot say it was just then that I scanned Elizabeth’s dress—a fine lavender glacé silk, adorned with as many knots as would have bound all the lovers in the room in silken bands; collar and sleeve of lace, of what kind goes beyond my knowledge; grey boots, necklace, and armlets; white kid gloves, with no doubt a good many rings under them. These notices came rather afterwards, my practical eye ranging meanwhile—the party being dead silent as yet—round the room, where, according to my recollection of my list, I saw a perfect heaping up of all manner of things collected from the sixteen opened houses, which the

pretty bride had so industriously entered.

My survey was the result of a few rapid glances, and I recurred to the parties. The amazement was just at its height, yet strange to say the only one who stood there unmoved, and with no greater indication of internal disturbance than a cast-down eye, overshadowed by its long lashes, was Elizabeth Gorman. That she understood the object of my visit, I had no doubt; nor was I surprised that a creature of her nerve, capable of what she had done, should stand before me in the midst of all her friends, and in the presence of her intended husband, as immovable as a lump of white marble—no additional paleness, no quiver of the lip, no hairbrained glances of fear.

“And who are you?” at last cried the souter *futur*; “you are not invited.”

“No; I have taken the liberty to come uninvited,” replied I, as I threw my eye over the body of the young snab arrayed in absolute perfection, from the glossy cravat to the shining boots, so spruce and smart that the taste of Elizabeth must have been at the work of preparation. Nor was he without some right, if one might judge of the number of houses laid under contribution for a dowry which was to be his, and by the help of which he was to become a master.

Whereupon there arose a perfect Babel of voices—“No right;” “M‘Levy has no right here;” “Turn him out.” To all this I paid little attention; I was more curious about a movement on the part of Elizabeth, whose right hand was apparently fumbling about her pocket. A pocket in a bride’s dress!—ay, just so. Elizabeth Gorman was a bride of a peculiar kind; she had a *pocket* even as a part of her bridal apparel, and there was more there than a cambric handkerchief.

“I will help you to get out your napkin, Elizabeth,” said I.

And putting my hand into the sacred deposit, I pulled out two check-keys.

With these two keys, she had opened (I speak in anticipation) the whole sixteen houses. I managed this movement in such a manner that I believe no one could know what I abstracted except Elizabeth herself, who seemed to care no more for the discovery than she had as yet done for any part of the ceremony.

“And the orange blossom,” said I, “I have a fancy for this too,” I said, as I, very gently I hope, took off the wreath, and, in spite of the necessary crumpling of so expressive an emblem of bliss, put it in my pocket.

The hubbub was now general, and Crispin thinking that his honour was touched, waxed magniloquent. He even put himself into a fighting attitude, and sparred away with all the valour of a gentleman called upon to protect injured innocence. Nor Dowsabell, nor Dulcinea, nor any other heroine of romance, had ever so formidable a champion; but then I did not choose to take up the snab’s

gage. I contented myself with stepping between one or two of the guests to the window, gave two or three knocks, and then took up my station by the side of Elizabeth. The door opened, and in came my assistant.

“I choose to claim this young woman for my bride,” I said, with a little of an inward chuckle. “I will dispose of her property; meanwhile, all of you leave the room. Clear-out, officer,” I added, as they seemed to loiter and murmur.

And so to be sure, my assistant, to make short work of emptying the room, hurried them off, the last loiterer being the snab, whose look at Elizabeth carried as much of what is called sentiment as might have touched even her, who, however, received the appeal with the same cold indifference she had exhibited all through the strange scene. I do not say she did not feel. It is hardly possible to suppose that a young woman dressed for marriage, and in the hands of the police, with banishment before and shame behind, could be unmoved; but the mind of these creatures is so peculiarly formed that they make none of nature’s signs, and are utterly beyond our knowledge. That something goes on within, deep and far away from even conjecture, we cannot doubt; but it is something that never has been known, and never will be, because they themselves have no words and no symbols to tell what it is. When thus left alone with her, it might have been expected that she would give me some token that she was *human*, but no; there she stood in all her finery, unmoved and immoveable, her gipsy face calm, if not placid, her eye steady, and without uttering a single word. “And now, Elizabeth,” I said, “I daresay you know the reason of this intrusion; you are accused of having entered no fewer than sixteen dwelling-houses, and stealing therefrom many valuables, and I must apprehend you.”

“Very well.”

“Have you any more keys than those I have got?”

“No more.”

“Were these all you used?”

“You can find that out; I confess nothing.”

“Well, then, make yourself ready to go with me; get your shawl and bonnet.”

And without further sign of being even touched with any feeling of remorse or shame, she proceeded calmly to put on these articles of dress.

“I am ready.”

“Too serious,” thought I, as I looked to a side-table and saw the wine and the cake. I wanted to give things a more cheerful look.

Was ever bride taken away without the “stirrup-cup,” even a glass of her own wine?

But no, it wouldn't do. Elizabeth would neither take nor give, and so I, too, went without my glass.

"Keep the house," said I to my assistant, "till I return. I will post the constables at the foot of the stairs."

And, taking Elizabeth by the arm, I sallied forth amidst a noise that roused the whole Cowgate; and no wonder, perhaps such a scene was never witnessed there before, certainly not since. Mrs Thick's hands were uplifted as we passed; nor was the wonder less among the other neighbours, who looked upon Elizabeth as a pattern of industry and strict behaviour.

After depositing my bride I got arrangements made for clearing the house of the stolen property. Every thing was removed except the table, chairs, and frame of the bed, and pages would not contain a catalogue of the fruits of this young woman's industry. But the recovery from Mrs Thick was a different process. I was up till four in the morning getting out and identifying the numerous articles of all kinds stored away in her premises.

By and by, my bride was tried before the High Court; and here I may be allowed a remark on the apparent calosity of people of her stamp. I have often noticed that these dumb, impassable victims are more ready at the end to give way than your loquacious asserters of innocence. I take this peculiarity for a proof that they bleed inwardly, and that while we are angry with them for being what we call unnatural, they are paying the forfeit in another shape. This extraordinary girl, after all her silence and apparent indifference, pled guilty to ten different cases of house-entering, and they were all effected by the two keys I took out of her pocket at the scene of the contemplated marriage. Fourteen years' transportation was her punishment, and she heard the sentence without a sigh or a tear.

I need scarcely add, that this was the only thief I ever discovered through the means of orange blossom.

The Blue-Bells of Scotland.

THERE are apparently two reasons that influence some of our Edinburgh gentry in locking up their houses and ticketing a window with directions about keys when they go to the country. The first is, that they save the wages of a woman to take charge of the house; and the second, that they may tell their less lucky neighbours that they are able to go to the country and enjoy themselves. No doubt they trust to the watchfulness of a policeman, forgetting that the man has no more than two eyes and two legs, with too often a small portion of brains, which he uses in silent meditation—a kind of “night thoughts,” not always about housebreakers and thieves. I have heard of some of the latter making fun out of these inviting locked-up mansions. “Bill, there’s a ticket in the window about keys, but it’s too far off to be read, and besides, you know, *we can’t read.*” “No, and so we’ll use a key of our own; we can’t help them things.”

I don’t suppose that Mr Jackson, of Coates Crescent, entertained any such notions when, in June 1843, he locked up his house on the occasion of a short absence of some five or six days; but certain it is, that when he returned he found all outside precisely as he had left it—blinds down, shutters close, doors locked. All right, he thought, as he applied the key and opened the door; but this confidence lasted no longer than a few minutes, when he discovered that his top-coats which hung in the lobby were gone. Now alarmed, he hurried through the house, and wherever he went he found almost every lock of press, cabinet, and drawer, either picked by skeleton keys or wrenched off, wood and all—the splinters of the torn mahogany lying on the carpets. All right! yes, outside. If he had been cool enough he might have thought of the good man’s cheese of three stones, laid upon the shelf for the christening, and when taken down (all right outside) weighed only the avoirdupois of the skin, the inside having been enjoyed by artists scarcely more velvet-footed; and yet the parallel would not have been true, for the thieves here had been most fastidious gentry—even refined, for, in place of carrying off most valuable articles of furniture, they had been contented with only the fine bits of jewellery, gold, and precious stones, such as they could easily carry away, and easily dispose of.

Finding his elegant lockfast pieces of furniture thus torn up, Mr Jackson had no patience to make inquiry into the extent of the depredations before coming to the Office and reporting the state in which he had found his house. When I saw him he was wroth, not so much at what might turn out to have been stolen as at

the reckless destruction; but the truth was, as I told him, that there was no *unnecessary* breakage. The thieves behaved to steal, and they behaved to get at what they wanted to steal. Few people understand the regular housebreaker. In almost all cases the clay is moulded, in infancy, moistened with the sap of stolen candy or fruit, and the glare of angry eyes only tends to harden it. We always forget that the thief-shape is the *natural* one, for can it be denied that we are all born thieves? I know at least that I was, and I suspect you were no better. If you are not a thief now, it's because you were by good monitors twisted and torn out of that devil's form; and how much pains were taken to get you into another, so that it is only at best a second nature with you to be honest. In short, the thief is a more natural being than you are, although you think him a monster. Nor is it any wonder he's perfect, for your laws and habits have only wrought as a direct help of the character he got from the mother of us all, and probably his own mother in particular. Any obstruction he meets with is, therefore, something that ought to give way, simply because it shouldn't be there; for how can you prove to him that an act of parliament has greater authority than the instinct with which he was born. No doubt he won't argue with you. If you say you have a right to lock up, he won't say that he has a right to unlock down, but he'll do it, and not only without compunction, but with the same feeling of right that the tiger has when he seizes on an intruder upon the landmarks of his jungle and tears him to pieces.

On proceeding to Coates Crescent, I ascertained that the thieves had obtained entrance by opening the outer main-door with keys or pick-locks, and all the rest was easy. The scene inside was just what Mr Jackson had described it—there wasn't a lock to an *escritoir* or drawer that was not punched off. Every secret place intended for holding valuables had been searched; and it soon appeared that these *artistes* had been very assiduous, if not a long time at the work. It would not be easy for me to enumerate the booty—valuable gold rings, earrings with precious stones, brooches of fine material and workmanship, silver ornaments of price, pieces of plate, and articles of foreign bijouterie. They had wound up with things they stood in need of for personal wear—top-coats, boots, and stockings; and, to crown all, as many bottles of fine wine as would suffice to make a jolly bout when they reached their home. I have not mentioned a small musical box, because by bringing it in as I now do at the end, I want to lay some stress upon it, to the effect of getting it to play a tune.

I soon saw that I had a difficult case in hand, and I told Mr Jackson as much. The thieves were of the regular mould. I had no personal traces to trust to, and the articles taken away were of so meltable or transferable a nature that it might not be easy to trace them. My best chance lay in the articles of dress, for, as I

have already hinted, thieves deriving their right from nature have all a corresponding ambition to be gentlemen. There's something curious here. Those who work their way up by honest industry seldom think of strutting about in fine clothes. Social feelings have taken the savage out of 'em. It is the natural-born gentleman who despises work that adorns our promenades and ball-rooms. 'Tis because they have a diploma from nature; and so the thieves who work by natural instinct come slap up to them and claim an equality. Certain it is, anyhow, I never knew a regular thief who didn't think he was a gentleman, and as for getting him to forego a nobby coat from a pin, he would almost be hanged first. I have found this my cue pretty often.

I had, therefore, some hope from the coats, but while getting a description of them and the other articles I felt a kind of curiosity about the peculiarities of the musical box.

"A small thing," said Mr Jackson, "some six inches long and three broad."

"Too like the others of its kind," said I; and giving way to a whim at the moment, "What tunes does it play?"

"Why, I can hardly tell," replied he, "for it belongs rather to the females. But I think I recollect that 'The Blue-Bells of Scotland' is among them."

"Perhaps," said I, keeping up the humour of the thing, "I may thereby get an answer to the question, 'Where, tell me where, does my highland laddie dwell?'"

Mr Jackson smiled even in the midst of the wreck of his house.

"I fear," he said, "that unless you have some other clue than the tune, you won't get me back my property."

"I have done more by less than a tune," said I, not very serious, but without giving up my hope, which I have never done in any case till it gave up me.

So with my list completed, and a promise to the gentleman that independently of the joke about the box I would do my best to get hold of the robbers, as well as the property, I left him. I felt that it was not a job to be taken lightly, or rather, I should say, that I considered my character somewhat at stake, insomuch as the gentleman seemed to place faith in my name. There is an amount of routine in all inquiries of this kind. The brokers, the 'big uncles,' (the large pawns,) and the 'half uncles,' (the wee pawns,) were all to be gone through, and they were with that dodging assiduity so necessary to the success of our calling. No trace in these places, and as for seeing one of my natural gentlemen in a grand blue beaver top-coat, I could encounter no such figure. I not only could not find where my highland laddie dwelt, but I did not even know my lover. Nor did I

succeed any better with those who are fond of rings, for that the jewellery had found its way among the Fancies I had little doubt. How many very soft hands I took hold of in a laughing way, to know whether they were jewelled with my cornelians or torquoises, I can't tell; but then their confidence as yet wanted the ripening of time, and I must wait upon a power that has no pity for detectives any more than for lovers.

And I did wait, yet not so long as that the tune of "The Blue-Bells of Scotland" had passed away, scared though it was by the hoarse screams and discords of crime and misery. One evening I was on the watch-saunter, still the old dodging way by which I have earned more than ever I did by sudden jerks of enthusiasm. I turned down Blackfriars' Wynd, and proceeded till I came to the shop of Mr Henry Devlin, who kept in that quarter a tavern, which, without reproach to the landlord, was haunted by those gentlemen who owe so much to nature. Now, I pray you, don't think I am a miracle-monger. I make the statement deliberately, and defy your suspicions when I say, that just as I came to the door of the tavern, which was open, and by the door of which I could see into a small room off the bar, my attention was arrested by a low and delicate sound. I placed my head by the edge of the open door and listened. The sound was that of a musical box. The tune was so low and indistinct that I held my breath, as if thereby I could increase the watchfulness of my ear. "It is! it is!" I muttered. Yes, it was "The Blue-Bells of Scotland." The charmed instrument ceased; and so enamoured had I been for the few seconds, that I found myself standing in the attitude of a statue for minutes after the cause of my enchantment had renounced its power.

With a knowledge of what you here anticipate, I claim the liberty of a pause, to enable me to remark, that though utterly unfit to touch questions of so ticklish a nature, I have had reason to think, in my blunt way, that in nine cases out of ten there is something mysterious in the way of Providence towards the discovery of crime. Just run up the history of almost any detective you please, and you will come to the semblance of a trace so very minute that you may view it either as a natural or a mysterious thing, just according to your temperament and your point of view. As a philosopher, and a little hardened against the supernatural, you may treat my credulity as you think proper. I don't complain, provided you admit that I am entitled to my weakness; but bearing in mind at the same time, that there are always working powers which make a considerable fool of our reasoning. Take it as you may, and going no further than the musical box, explain to me how I should have that night gone down Blackfriars' Wynd, and come to Henry Devlin's door just as "The Blue-Bells of Scotland" was being

played by that little bit of machinery. You may go on with your thoughts as I proceed to tell you, that recovering myself from my surprise I entered the house. I did not stop at the bar where Mrs Devlin was, but proceeded direct into the room into which I could see from the door, and there, amidst empty tankards, I found the little instrument which had so entranced me, mute and tuneless, just as if it had been conscious that it had done some duty imposed upon it, and left the issue to the Power that watches over the fortunes of that ungrateful creature, man.

Taking up the monitor, which on the instant became dead to me,

“How came this here?” I said to the landlady, who seemed to be watching my movements.

“Indeed, I can hardly tell, Mr M‘Levy,” replied she, “unless it was left by the twa callants wha were in drinking, and gaed out just before you cam in. Did you no meet them?”

“No.”

“Then they maun hae gaen towards the Cowgate as you cam by the High Street.”

I paused an instant as an inconsistency occurred to me.

“But they couldn’t have forgotten a thing that was making sounds at the very moment they left?”

“Aye, but they did though,” replied the woman. “The thing had been kept playin’ a’ the time they were drinking, and was playin’ when they paid their score, and the sound being drowned in the clatter o’ the payment, they had just forgotten it even as I did. It plays twa or three tunes,” she added, “and among the lave ‘The Blue-Bells of Scotland,’ a tune I aye liked, for ye ken I’m Scotch.”

“And I like it too,” replied I, “though I’m Irish; but do you know the lads?”

“Weel—I do, and I dinna. Ane o’ them has been here afore, and if you were to mention his name, I think I could tell you if it was the right ane.”

“Shields,” said I.

“The very name,” said she, “and if I kenned whaur he lived I would send the box to him.”

“I will save you that trouble, Mrs Devlin,” said I, as I put it in my pocket.

“I never took you for a thief, Mr M‘Levy,” said she, in a half humorous way. “I aye took ye for a thief catcher.”

“And it’s just to catch the thief I take the box,” said I. “You can speak to the men if I bring them here?”

“Brawly.”

And so I left the tavern. I had got my trace, and knew where to go for my men, and I had, moreover, a well-grounded suspicion not only as regarded him whose name I had mentioned, but also his companion. I sent immediately for two constables, and having procured these, and been joined by my assistant, I proceeded to Brodie’s Close in the Cowgate. Arriving at the foot of a stair, I planted there my constables, and mounted till I came to a door familiar to me on prior occasions. I gave my quiet knock,—a signal so regular, that, as I have sometimes heard, it was known as “M’Levy’s warning.” Whether known as such now, or not, I cannot say, but it was quickly enough responded to by no less a personage than the famous Lucky Shields herself. The moment she saw me she recoiled, but only for an instant, and then tried to detain me—the ordinary sign that I should be in. Without saying a word I pushed her back, and making my way forward, got at once into the middle of one of those scenes of which the quiet normal people of the world have no more idea than they have of what is going on in the molten regions of the middle of the earth, on the surface of which they are plucking roses. A large room, where the grandees of a former time drank their claret to the tune of “Lewie Gordon;” all about the sides a number of beds—one or two rattled up of pine stumps—another with black carved legs, which had supported fair dames long since passed away, alongside another with no more pretensions to decayed grandeur than could be put forth by a sack of chaff and a horsecloth. Close to that a ragged arm-chair, with a bundle of hay rolled up in an old napkin, to serve when there was an additional lodger. A number of chairs, marrowless, broken, and rickety; a white table in the midst of all, covered with glasses and tankards, all replete with the ring of drinking echoes, and shining in the haze of tobacco smoke, illuminated by bright gas.

My ears were more bewildered than my eyes; for the room, with its strange furniture, was familiar enough to me; but I had some difficulty for a minute or two in distinguishing the living articles. Round the fir table sat my hero of the box, Patrick Shields; alongside of him, Henry Preger,—so true an associate of Shields, as to render it impossible for me to doubt his participation in the affair at Coates Crescent; and along with these Daniel O’Hara, a gentleman with a peculiar turn of thought, which induced him to believe that a watch in another man’s pocket was out of its proper place. The two first were still fuming with the effects of Mrs Devlin’s whisky, and O’Hara seemed to be great, as master of the new-brewed potation, whisky-punch, which he had been handing round to the young women. I don’t want to paint vividly, in my slap-dash way, where picturesqueness is only to be effected at the expense of the decencies of life, and

you don't want pictures of vice. Then, what boots it to describe such women. Their variety is only a combination of traces which are as uniform as the features of sensuality. Yes, these young women, who were quite familiar to me—Agnes Marshall, Jessie Ronald, Elizabeth Livingstone, Hannah Martin, Julia Shields—were simply representatives of thousands bearing the same marks,—one, a demure but cunning catcher of hearts and purses; another, a fair and comely living temple, with a Dagon of vice stuck up in it; another, never sober except when in a police cell, and never silent except when asleep, and scarcely then, for I have heard the cry of her wild spirit as it floated in drunken dreams; and another, the best resetter in the city, from whom a century of years in prison would not have extorted a Brummagem ring of the value of a glass of whisky. If I force so much of a picture upon you, it is because, as a part of society, you deserve to know what your laws and usages produce.

It was not for a little time after I entered that the confusion of tongues ceased. Their spirits had received such an impetus from the effects of the spirituous, that the speed could not be stopped; and even when the noise was hushed, it was only after the muttering of oaths. Meanwhile, a glance told me I had got into the very heart of the reset-box of Mr Jackson's fine jewellery. Finger and ear-rings glittered in the gas-light, and the expensive coats, at the top of the fashion, made Shields and Preger look like gentlemen who had called in from Princes Street to see the jewelled beauties. I have always had my own way of dealing with such gentry. I took out my musical box, and pulling the string, set it agoing. I have heard of music that drew stones—mine drew bricks. Shields and Preger fixed their eyes wildly upon me; and the women, who knew nothing of the meaning of M'Levy's music, first shot out into a yell of laughter, and then, rising, began, in the madness of their drunkenness, to dance like so many furies, keeping time, so far as they could, to the tune of the instrument. I could account for this insensibility to danger by no other way than by supposing that they had not previously seen the box, and did not see the consequences that were likely to result from my visit.

After the hubbub ceased, I addressed my man in the first instance.

"Patrick," said I, "I am come to return your box."

"It's not mine," replied the youth; "I have nothing to do with it."

"It's mine anyhow," cried the unwary mother, who all this time was looking through the smoke like a tigress. "The spaking thing is mine anyhow, for didn't me own Julia get it from a raal gintleman to learn her to sing, and isn't what's hers mine?"

And how much more of this Irish howl I might have heard, I can't say, if the

son had not shot a look into her which brought her to a sense of her imprudence.

“And it’s not my box afther all, ye vagabond,” she cried, in trying to retreat from her error; “for wasn’t mine an ivory one, and didn’t it play raal Irish tunes? Come here, Julia; is that your box?”

“No,” said Julia.

“And wasn’t yours raal ivory?”

“Yes,” replied the girl.

“Now, didn’t I tell you, you murtherin’ thief, it wasn’t my box. Away wid you, and never shew your ugly face here again among dacent people.”

The ordinary gabble of all such interviews. I gave a nod to my assistant, and in a few minutes the constables were at my back.

“Well,” said I, addressing the men, “you can carry the top-coats on your backs to the office; but as for you, ladies, there are certain finger and ear ornaments about you which, for fear you lose them, I must take.”

These few simple words quieted the turmoil in an instant. I have often produced the same effect by a quiet exercise of authority. The boisterousness of vice, with no confidence to support it, runs back and oppresses the heart, which has no channel for it in the right direction; the channel has been long dried and seared.

“Search them,” said I.

A process which, as regards women, we generally leave to our female searchers, but which I was obliged to have recourse to here in a superficial way to guard valuables, so easily secreted or cast away, and a process which requires promptness even to the instant; for on such an occasion, the cunning of women is developed with a subtlety transcending all belief. The hair, the hollow of the cheek, under the tongue, in the ear, up the nostrils, even the stomach being often resorted to as the receptacles of small but valuable articles. We contrived all four to dart upon the creatures at once, each seizing his prey. The suddenness of the onset took them by surprise, and in the course of a few minutes, we had collected into a shining heap nearly the whole of Mr Jackson’s most valuable jewels.

We then marched the whole nine up to the Police-Office, I carrying the magic box, which, if I had been vainglorious, I would have set agoing as an appropriate accompaniment to our march up the High Street.

They were all tried on the 25th July 1843; Preger got fourteen years, and Shields ten. The women got off on the admission that they got the jewellery from Shields and Preger. I remember that, after the trial, Mr Jackson addressed me something in these terms:—

“Mr M’Levy, I owe the recovery of my property to you. I will retain my jewels, but as for the articles of apparel, I am afraid that were I to wear them I might myself become a thief; so you may dispose of them, and take the proceeds, with my thanks. The musical box I will keep as a useful secret informer; so that in the event of my house being robbed again, it may have a chance, through its melody, of recovering my property.”

The Whiskers.

IT may be naturally supposed that we detectives are not much given to sadness. It is, I suspect, a weakness connected with me, a tendency to meditate on the vanity of human wishes; and I should be free from the frailty, inasmuch as there has been less vanity in my wishes to apprehend rogues than in the case of most other of the artistes of my order. Yet am I not altogether free from the weakness. We have a natural wish to see our friends happy around us, and this desire is the source of my little frailty; for when I find my ingenious friends off my beat, and away elsewhere, I immediately conclude they are being happy at the expense of others, and I am not there to sympathise; nor does it affect this tendency much that I am perfectly aware that my sympathy rather destroys their happiness.

I had, about April 1854, lost sight for a time of the well-known Dan Gillies. He had had my sympathies more than once, and immediately took to melancholy; but somehow or another he recovered his gaiety,—a sure enough sign that he again stood in need of my condolence. I had been told that in kindness he and his true-hearted Bess M'Diarmid had gone to the grazing on turnips, (watches,) and that I had small chance of seeing him for a time. Well, here was an occasion for a return of my fit, for wasn't Dan happy somewhere, and I not there to see. I don't say I was thinking in that particular direction on that 5th day of April when I was walking along Princes Street, for indeed I was looking for another natural-born gentleman among those who, considering they have better claims to promenade that famous street, pretend to despise those who, I have said, are nearer to natural rights than they are; but indulging in that habit of side-looking, which I fear I have borrowed from my friends, who persist in an effort to avoid a straight, honest look at me, I descried a well-known face under a fine glossy silk hat, and above a black and white dappled cravat. A glance satisfied me that the rest of the dress was in such excellent harmony that he might, two minutes before, have come out of the Club, where plush and hair-powder stands at the door. It was Dan. The grazing must have been rich to give him so smooth and velvety a coat; and to shew that he had not despised his fare, he had a yellow "shaw" stretching between the middle of his fine vest to the pocket. When a grand personage, who despises the toil which makes us all brethren, meets one of my humble, laborious order, he makes a swerve to a side, even though the wind is in another direction, to avoid the blasting infection of common humanity, and Dan was here true to his class; but as I do not discard the duties any more than the rights of nature, I overlooked the insult, and swerved in

the same direction, not being confident enough, nevertheless, to infect with my touch the hand of a Blue-Vein, if not a Honeycomb.

“Why, Dan,” said I, as I faced him, and somewhat interrupted his passage, “what a fine pair of whiskers you’ve got since I saw you. The turnips must have been reared on the real Peruvian.”

“What the d——I have you to do with my whiskers?”

“One who has been the means of shaving your head,” replied I, “may surely make amends by rejoicing in the growth of your fine hair elsewhere.”

“None of your gibes. Be off. I owe no man anything.”

“No, Dan, but every man, you know, owes you, if you can make him pay. Don’t you know what’s up?”

“No, and don’t care.”

“There’s a grand ship-launch at Leith to-day.”

“D——n your ship-launch!” said the Honeycomb; and pushing me aside, Dan strutted away under the indignation of the shame of my presence.

I could not help looking after him, and recollecting the remark of Lord Chesterfield on the South-Sea Islander who sat at table in the company of lords. Looking at his back, you could perceive no difference between him and a high-bred aristocrat. But the aristocrats don’t mind those thin distinctions.

Having some much more important business in hand that day, all recollection of Dan and his whiskers passed out of my mind. I remember I had to meet a French lackey who could point out to me a London brewer’s clerk committed to my care. The offender had run away from his employer, taking with him not only the flesh which had got so lusty upon the stout, but also a couple of thousand pounds which he ought to have deposited in a bank; nor was this even the entire amount of his depredations, for he had also contrived to abstract the brewer’s wife, described by my Frenchman as a “great succulent maman of forty years,” and not far from that number of stones avoirdupois. With such game in prospect, it was not likely I should trouble myself with Dan Gillies, nor did I care more for the Leith launch. The constables there could look to that, though I was not the less aware that if Dan got among the crowd there would be pockets rendered lighter, without more of a “purchase” than might be applied by a thief’s fingers.

Notwithstanding of the brightness of my prospects in the morning—for I had even pictured to myself the English clerk with the “succulent maman” hanging on his arm, and together promenading Princes Street—my hopes died away as the day advanced. I had got, moreover, weary of the clatter of the lackey, and was, in short, knocked up. It might be about four o’clock, I think, when I

resolved upon returning by the way of the Office, where I had some report to make before going home to dinner. I proceeded slowly along Waverley Bridge, turned past the corner of Princes Street gardens, and advanced by the back of the Bank of Scotland. I was in reality at the time looking for none of my friends. I had had enough of looking, and felt inclined rather to give my eyes a rest by directing them to the ground, after the manner of melancholy musers. As I was thus listlessly making my way, I was roused by a rapid step, and I had scarcely time to look up when I encountered my young Honeycomb of the morning. I was at first confused, and no great wonder, for there was Dan Gillies without a single hair upon his face. The moment he saw me he wanted to bolt, but the apparition prompted me on the instant to cross him, and hold him for a moment at bay.

“Dan, Dan,” said I, with really as much unfeigned surprise as humour, “what has become of your whiskers, man?”

A fiery eye, and the terrible answer which sends a man to that place where one might suppose that eye had been lighted, so full of fury was it.

“Why, it’s only a fair question,” said I, again keeping my temper. “I might even wish to know the man who could do so clean a thing.”

“What have you to do with my barber?”

“Why, now you are getting reasonable,” said I; “your question is easily answered; I might want him, say on a Sunday morning, to do to me what he has done to you.”

Again dispatched to the place of four letters with an oath which must have been forged there by some writhing soul, I could stay him no longer, for making a rush past me, Dan Gillies was off in the direction of the Flesh-market Close, up which I saw him turn.

His oaths still rung in my ear. I have often thought of the wonderful aptitude of the grown-up Raggediers at swearing; they begin early, if they do not lisp, in defiances of God, and you will hear the oaths ringing amidst the clink of their halfpennies as they play pitch-and-toss. Their little manhood is scarcely clothed in buckram, when they would look upon themselves as simpletons if they do not vindicate their independence by daring both man and Heaven. You may say they don’t understand the terms they use. Perhaps few swearers do; but in these urchins the oaths are the sparks of the steel of their souls, and there is not one of them unprepared to shew by their cruelty that their terrible words are true feelings. It may appear whimsical in me, but I have often thought that if this firmness of character—for it is really a mental constitution—were directed and trained by education and religion in the track of duty, it would develop itself as

an energy fitted for great and good things. A man like me has no voice in the Privy Council; but *literature*, as I have heard said, is a big whispering-gallery, whereby the humblest of minds may communicate with the highest. Let it be that my whisper is laughed at, as everything is grinned at or laughed at which is said for the hopefulness of our wynd reprobates; but I have learned by experience, that while the greatest vices spring from the dregs of society, the Conglomerates, as they are called in that book (which describes them so well,) “The Castes of Edinburgh,” so the greatest virtues sometimes spring from the same source. How much of the vice they are *forced* to retain, and how much of the virtue they are compelled to lose, is one of the whispers which ought to reach the ears of the great.

At the time Dan left me, I was not in this grand way of thinking. Nay, to be very plain, I was laughing in my sleeve; because, in the first place, a detective is not a Methodist preacher; and in the second place, because I have a right to my fun as well as others; and in the third place, because I came to the conclusion that Dan Gillies had some reason for shaving his whiskers which ought to interest me. In short, I had no doubt that Dan and his “wife” had been at the ship-launch.

With the laugh, I suppose, still hanging about my lips as a comfortable solace after my ineffectual hunt after the brewer’s clerk and the jolly maman, I entered the Office, where the first information I got was, that a lady had been robbed of her purse at Leith, and that a young wench was in hands there as having been an accomplice along with a swell of a pickpocket who had escaped.

“I was thinking as much,” said I, with a revival of my laugh; “I know the man.”

And so I might well say, for I had now got to the secret of the shaved whiskers.

“What mean you?” said the lieutenant.

“Why, just that if you want the man, I will bring him to you. I will give you the reason of my confidence at another time.”

“To be sure we want him,” was the rather sharp reply of my superior.

“Then I will fetch him,” said I.

And so I went direct to Brown’s Close, where I knew the copartnership of Gillies and M’Diarmid formerly carried on business, both in the domestic and trading way. Domestic! what a strange word as applied to these creatures—charm, as it is, to conjure up almost all the associations which are contained in the whole round of human happiness! Yes, I say domestic; happiness is a thing

of accommodation. These beings will go forth in the morning in the spring of hope, and after threading dangers which are nothing less than wonderful, jinking the throw of the loop of the line which grazes their very shoulders, and turning and doubling in a thousand directions to escape justice, they meet at nightfall to *enjoy* the happiness of a home. The beefsteak, as it fries, gives out the ordinary sound, the plunk of the drawn cork is heard, and they narrate their hairbreadth escapes, their dangers, and their triumphs. They laugh, they sleep, but their enjoyment terminates with my knock at the door. The solitary inmate is wondering at the absence of the female without whom the word “domestic” becomes something like a mockery. It is needless to deny him affections; he has them, and she has them, as the tiger and the tigress have them. They don’t complain like other folk, because they don’t bark or growl at Providence; but the iron screw is in the heart. I have read its pangs in the very repression of its expression.

I had been so quick in my movements that I went right in upon my man just as he had entered, no doubt after the cautious doublings consequent upon our prior interview. The salutation given me was a growl of the wrath which had been seething in the Pappin’s digester of his heart.

“What right have you to hound me in this way?” he cried, as he closed his fist and then ground his teeth.

“Why, Dan,” said I, calmly, “I’m still curious about the whiskers.”

“Whiskers again,” he roared.

“Aye, just the whiskers,” said I. “I have told you I am curious about them, and I want to know why you parted with what you seemed so proud of?”

“Gibe on; you’ll make nothing of me,” he cried again. “I defy you.”

“Well, but I cannot give up the whiskers in that easy way,” said I, “because I have an impression that if the lady in Leith had not lost her purse, your whiskers would still have clothed your cheeks.”

From which cheeks the colour fled in an instant. Even to the hardest of criminals the pinch of a fact is like the effect of a screw turned upon the heart. It is only we who can observe the changes of their expression. Dan knew, in short, that he was caught; and I have before remarked that the regular thieves can go through the business of a detection in a regular way.

“Well,” he said, as he felt the closing noose, and with even a kind of grim smile, “I might as well have kept my hair.”

“Never mind,” said I, “it will have time to grow in the jail. Come along. The cuffs?”

“Oh no, I think you have no occasion. Them things are only for the irregulars, you know. But do you think you’ll mend Daniel Gillies by the jail?”

“No,” said I, “I don’t expect it.”

“Then why do you intend to send me there?”

“Why,” replied I, in something like sympathy for one who I knew to be of those who are trained to vice before they have the choice of good or evil laid before them, “just because it is my trade.”

And, strange as it may seem, I observed a tear start into his red eye.

“Your trade,” said he, as he rubbed the cuff of his coat over his face, “your trade; and have you a better right to follow it than I have to pursue mine? You didn’t learn yours from your father and mother, did you?”

“No, Dan, but I know you did.”

“Yes, and the more’s the pity,” replied he, as he got even to an hysterical blubber. “I have had thoughts on the subject. Even when last in the Calton I could not sleep. Something inside told me I was wronged, but not by God—by man. I was trained by fiends who made money by what they taught me, and I have been pursued by fiends all my life. When was a good lesson ever given me, or a kindly word ever said to me, except by a preacher in the jail with a Bible in his hand? Suppose I had listened to him, and when I got out had taken that book into my hand, and had gone to the High Street and bawled out, ‘Put me to a trade, employ me, and give me wages.’ Who would have listened to me? A few pence from one, and the word ‘hypocrite’ from another, and then left to my old shifts, or starve. Take me up, but you’ll never mend me by punishment.”

I always knew Dan to be a clever fellow, but I was not prepared for this burst. Yet I knew in my heart it was true. “Well,” said I, “Dan, I pity you. I have often thought that if that old villain David, and that old Jezebel Meg, who were your parents, had not corrupted you, you had heart and sense to be a good boy.”

“Ay, and it has often wrung my heart,” he replied, “when I have seen others who were born near me, though only in Blackfriars’ Wynd, respectable and happy, and I a criminal in misery by the chance of birth; but all this is of no use now. Then where’s Bess, poor wretch?”

“She’s in Leith jail.”

“Right,” cried he, as he blubbered again. “I sent her there. She was a playmate of mine, and I led her on in the path into which I was led. She might have been as good as the best of them.”

And the poor fellow, throwing himself on a chair, cried bitterly.

I have encountered more than one of these scenes. They have only pained me, and seldom been of any service to the victims themselves. Were a thousand such cases sent up to the Privy Council, I doubt if their obduracy in endowing ragged and industrial schools would be in the slightest degree modified.

I believe little more passed. I had my duty to perform, and Dan was not disobedient. That same evening he was sent to Leith. He was afterwards tried. He was identified by the lady and a boy who knew him, and sentenced to twelve months. Bess got off on the plea of not proven. I lost all trace of them, but have no hopes that either the one or the other was mended by the detection through the whiskers. The hair would grow again not more naturally than would spring up the old roots of evil planted by those who should have engrafted better shoots on the stock of nature.

The White Coffin.

IF the Conglomerates of our old town are troubled with many miseries, as the consequences of their privations and vices, it is certain the whole squalid theatre they play their strange parts in, is the scene of more incidents, often humorous, nay romantic—if there can be a romance of low life—than can be found in the quiet saloons of the higher grades in the new town. The observation indeed is almost so trite, that I need not mention that while in the one case you have nature overlaid with the art of concealment, the slave of decorum, in the other you have the old mother, free, fresh, and frisky—her true characters, rapid movements, quick thoughts, intertwined plots, the jerks of passion, the humorous and the serious, the comedy and the melodrama of the tale of life—an idiot's one, if you please, even in the grave ranks of the highest.

In February 1837, as I was on my saunter with my faithful Mulholland among the haunts of the old town, we observed our old friends Andrew Ireland, John Templeton, and David Toppen, doubling the mouth of one of the closes leading to Paul's Work. These industrious gentry are never idle; as they carry their tools along with them, they can work anywhere; and, like the authors, a species of vagabonds who live on their wits, and steal one from another, they need no stock in trade. It was clear to me that we were unobserved, and proceeding down another close, I expected to meet them probably about their scene of action. I may mention that I was somewhat quickened in my movements by some recollections that Ireland had cost me a deal of trouble—the more by token that he was called “the Climber,” as being the best hand at a scramble, when cats would shudder, in all the city, for which he had refused for some time to give me even the pledge of his body. We got down the close and round the corner, just in the nick of time to see the tail of Andrew's coat disappearing from the top of a pretty high dyke. The two others followed the example of the Climber, and when they had disappeared, we placed ourselves at the side of the wall to receive them on their descent. The cackling of fowls soon told us the nature of their work, and the gluggering of choking craigs was a clear indication that the robbers were acting on the old rule that “the dead tell no tales.”

“Sure of the Climber this time,” I said to my assistant. “I will seize Andrew and Templeton, and lay you hold of Toppen.”

And the words were scarcely out of my mouth, when we received gratefully

our friends in our arms. The dead hens were flung away, and darting at the throats of my two charges, I secured them on the instant. Mulholland lost his hold, but so pleased was I at my capture, especially of Andrew, that I could not resist a few words in my old way.

“I was afraid you would fall and break your neck, Andrew,” said I.

“Thank you for the warm reception,” replied the cool rogue, as he recovered breath after the short tussle.

“No apology,” said I. “I have told you by a hundred looks that I wanted you.”

“And sold for a hen at last,” he added, with an oath.

“And not allowed to eat it,” said I. “What a glorious supper you and the old woman would have had!”

The taunt was at least due to his oath.

“Pick up the hens, Mulholland,” said I, “and let us march, we will have a laugh in the High Street.”

And proceeding with my man in each hand till I came to the head of the close, I gave one of them in charge of a constable, retaining the other. Mulholland with the hens brought up the rear, and I believe we cut a good figure in our march, if I could judge from the shouts of the urchins—tickled with a kind of walking anecdote, that carried its meaning so clearly in the face of it, for it is seldom that the booty makes its appearance in these processions.

On arriving at the Office, my charges were locked up. Toppen was caught the same evening; and this part of my story of the metamorphosis being so far prelusive, I may just say that my hen-stealers were forthwith tried by the Sheriff and a jury. Each got the price of his hen even at a higher rate than the present price of a fashionable cockerel—Ireland getting nine months, Templeton six, and Toppen four. But the Climber vindicated his great reputation in a manner that entitled him to still greater fame. Whether it was that the jailer was not made aware of his abilities, or that he was placed in a cell which it was held to be impossible for any creature without claws on all the four members to get out of, I cannot say; but true it is that, to the utter amazement of every one connected with the jail, Andrew Ireland got out by the skylight, and finding his way over ridges and down descents that might have defied an Orkney eagle-hunter, descended at the north back of the Canongate, and got clear off.

Once more “done” by my agile friend, my pride was up, and I must have him by hook or by crook. I knew he was one of those enchanted beings whose love to the old town prevents them from leaving it. It has such a charm for them that they will stick to it at all hazards, even when, day by day, and night by night,

they are hounded through closes and alleys like wild beasts, and have, as it were, nowhere to lay their heads. I have known them sleep on the tops of houses, and in crannies of old buildings, half-starved and half-clothed, in all weathers, summer or winter, rather than seek rest by leaving the scenes of their wild infancy. And all this they will do in the almost dead certainty that ultimately they will be seized. I was thus satisfied that Andrew was about the town; and even when, after the lapse of months, I could get no trace of him, I still retained my conviction that he was in hiding.

That conviction was destined to receive a grotesque and grim verification. I was one day at the top of Leith Wynd. A number of people were looking at the slow march of some poor wretch's funeral, the coffin borne by some ragged Irishmen, a few others going behind. As I stood looking at the solemn affair—more solemn and impressive to right minds than the plumed pageant that leaves the mansion with the inverted shield, and goes to the vault where are conserved, with the care of sacred relics, the remains of proud ancestors—a poor woman, who seemed to have been among the mourners, came up to me.

“And do you see your work, now?” quoth she, in a true Irish accent. “Do you know who is in that white coffin there, wid the bit black cloth over it?”

“No,” said I.

“And you don't know the darling you murdered for stealing a hen at Paul's Work?”

“You don't mean to say,” replied I, “that that's the funeral of your son, Mrs Ireland?”

“Ay, and, by my soul, I do, and murdered by you. He never lifted up his head agin, but pined and dwined like a heart-broken cratur as he was; and now he's there going as fast as the boys can carry him to his grave.”

“Well,” said I, “I am sorry for it.”

“The devil a bit of you, you vagabond! It's all sham and blarney, and a burning shame to you, to boot.”

“Peace, Janet,” said I; “he's perhaps happier now than he was here stealing and drinking. There are no sky-lights in the Canongate graves, and he'll not climb out to do any more evil.”

“Sky-lights!” cried Janet; “ay, but there is, and Andrew Ireland will climb out and get to heaven, while you, you varmint, will be breaking firewood in h—to roast their honours the judges who condemned my innocent darling.”

“Quiet, Janet.”

“Well, thin, to roast yourself; will that please ye?”

“Yes, yes,” said I.

And fearing that the woman’s passions, inflamed by her grief, might reach the height of a howl, I moved away, while she, muttering words of wrath, proceeded after the white coffin. Nor can I say I was altogether comfortable as I proceeded to the Office, for there is something in the wild moving yet miserable lives of these Arabs of the wynds when wound up by death that is really touching. Nay, it is scarcely possible to avoid the thought that they are not free agents, if they do not claim from our sympathy the character of victims. In truth I was getting muffish, if I did not soliloquise a bit about other climbers whose feet rested on the backs of such poor wretches, and who, by means not very different, get into high places, where they join the fashionable cry about philanthropy—yes, a philanthropy that helps the devil, by allowing him to brain the objects they attempt to benefit.

But a police-office soon takes the softness out of a man. I had scarcely entered when I got notice of a robbery, committed on the prior night at the workshop of Messrs Robb and Whittens, working silversmiths in Thistle Street. On repairing to the spot, I ascertained that the robber had made off with a number of silver articles, sugar-tongs, spoons, and other valuables; among the rest a number of silver screws. I particularly notice these, because they served my purpose in quite another way than that for which they were originally intended. But as to the manner of the robbery, I could get no satisfactory information beyond the fact that a suspicion attached to two chimney-sweeps, who had been passing in the morning, and had been employed to sweep the vents of the workshop; nor was my disappointment lessened by finding that the sweeps were utterly unknown to the parties connected with the shop. They could not even tell whether they came from the new town or the old. Then as to identification, even had I been angel enough to bring so unrecognisable a creature before them, who ever heard of any distinctive features in a chimney-sweep, if he has not a hump on his back or wants a nose on his face! Even I, who have seen through all manner of disguises, am often at fault with them until I almost rub noses with them—a process in which I would catch a “devilish sight” more than I wanted.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, I did not altogether despair, insomuch as I at least became pretty well satisfied that it really was the gentlemen in black who had done the deed. So wherever there was smoke to be cured and vents swept, I considered it my duty to call and try if I could find, not the features of my men, but some trace of the tongs and screws; for in many cases where I have had right to search, I have got my pipe lighted at a fire, the light of which has shewn me

what I wanted. Yet all wouldn't do; nor was I a whit more lucky among the brokers and pawn-shops. Nay, although I *screwed* my ingenuity to the last turn, could I trace anything of the stolen silver screws. It was no go, as the lovers of slang say; and if it had not been that I was born never to know the meaning of "Give it up," I would have renounced the pursuit of men who are beyond the landmarks of society.

Not altogether without a result, however, these vain searches. I was impressed with a curiosity about chimney-sweeps, and I never eyed one without a wish to know something about him. They had formerly interested me very little; for, to do them justice, though they have means of entering houses seldom in the power of others, and which none but fiery lovers ever think of, they have seldom qualified themselves for my attentions. They have no likings for the whitewashing processes of jails. At the same time, however, as cleanliness is next to godliness, they seldom appear in church; the grace would not pay the soap.

With this affection for the tribe still hanging about me, I was one day, a considerable period after the robbery, going along the Pleasance, in an expedition connected with the house called the Castle of Clouts, where I expected to find some remnants not left by the builder of that famous pile. I was not looking for sweeps, and yet my pipe was not out. I had been blowing some puffs, when, on turning round, I saw two of my black gentlemen standing smoking loungingly, with their backs to the wall. "Ah, some of the bright creatures of my fancy," thought I; "yea, those aerial beings who for months have been hovering over me in my dreams, yet altogether without wings." My first act was to put that same pipe out, my next to watch their movements. They were very busy talking to each other; but what interested me most was the curiosity with which they were contemplating some articles which one of them was shewing to the other,—nay, there seemed to be a silvery look about the things, which was the more apparent that they were a contrast to the hands that held them.

So straightway my pipe, which I had extinguished, required a light, and these curers of smoke could even produce that which they professed to banish. In a moment I was standing before them.

"Well, lads," said I, "can you give me a light?"

One of them recoiled a little as he caught my eye. He seemed to know me, though I am free to confess I did not know him.

"To be sure," said the other.

And striking a match upon the wall he handed me a light, whereupon I began to puff away; and as smoking is a social act, I found myself irresistibly attracted by my friend, who in my first going up appeared to be so shy.

“Do you know where the Castle of Clouts is?” said I, as I peered and peered into the dark face of him who tried to avoid my gaze.

But I was still at fault. His features were familiar to me, but the soot still came between me and my identification. At length I got my clue.

“Andrew Ireland,” said I, “when did you come out of the Canongate churchyard? Was there a skylight in the top of the coffin?”

“Andrew Stewart is my name,” replied the black ghost.

“And when did you turn sweep, Andrew?”

“When seven years old,” said he; “but I tell you my name is Stewart, and be d——d to you.”

“Well, I don’t apprehend names,” said I, “only bodies. Then I’m not sure if you are not a spirit, for Janet shewed me your coffin on its way to the Canongate.”

“Perhaps it was Andrew Ireland’s coffin you saw,” said he. “It wasn’t mine, anyhow.”

“Oh, I see,” said I, “it would be Andrew Stewart’s, and I have committed a mistake. No matter; I want to know what you have in your right coat-pocket.”

And at the same instant I held up my hand. My assistant was presently at my side. I saw by the fire of his eye—something like a chimney on fire—that he was bent on resistance, and instantly taking him by the neckcloth with my right hand, I was proceeding to plunge my left into his pocket, when he seized me with his wonted ferocity, and for his pains got himself laid on his back.

“Now, Andrew,” said I, as he lay grinning at me so like another black gentleman when angry, “as sure as you are your mother’s darling, I will take you up and throw you again if you are not peaceable, and behave yourself like a gentleman.”

And getting my assistant to hold him, I took from his pocket three silver screws. It was all up with my ghost, who almost instantly became as gentle as these creatures, even the real white kind, generally are. He got up, and we proceeded to the Office. Nor did all the parts of this remarkable case end here, for, as we passed along St Mary’s Wynd, whom should we meet but Janet Ireland. The moment she saw us, she appeared stupified.

“He is risen again, Janet,” said I, in a kind of whisper, “they forgot to fasten

the coffin with the silver screws.”

“And the more shame yours, you thaif of a thousand,” she cried, “to steal the darling boy of a poor widow. Dead! isn’t he worse than dead when in the hands of the biggest scoundrel that ever walked the airth?”

And what, in addition to this ingenuous turn which Janet gave to the story of the white coffin, Janet said or roared, I cannot tell, for we hurried away to avoid a gathering crowd.

I will never forget the look of the Superintendent when I told him that the man before him was the dead and buried Andrew Ireland, the stealer of the hens, the climber through the skylight of the jail, and the robber of the silversmiths’ shop. What puzzled him most was, how, with the conviction on my mind that the lad was dead and buried, I could have recognised him through the soot. He looked at him again and again, nor could he say that, with the minutest investigation, he could say that he recognised the well-known thief who had cost us so much trouble.

Andrew was tried for the escape from prison as well as for the robbery; and that the judges did not think he was the short-lived person described by Janet, appears from the judgment, which condemned him to fourteen years’ transportation.

The Sea Captain.

I DOUBT whether the good philanthropical people are even yet quite up to all the advantages of ragged schools. The salvation of society from a host of harpies is not the main chance; neither is it that the poor wretches are sold into the slavery of vice and misery before they know right from wrong. There's something more. I have a suspicion that society loses often what might become its sharpest and most intelligent members in these half-starved youngsters, whose first putting out of the hand is the beginning of a battle with the world. I'm not to try to account for the fact, but I am pretty well satisfied, from all I have seen, that the children of these poor half-starved people are something more apt than the sons of your gentlemen. You who are learned may try your hand at the paradox, and make as much of it as you do of the other riddles of human life. Here is a plea for the John Poundses and Dr Guthries, of which they could make something. Every ragged urchin they lay hold of to make him learn from books has been at a school of another kind, where he has got his energies sharpened on a different whetstone from that found within a school, and then the school does its duty in directing these energies.

Just fancy what some of our card-sharpers would have been if their cleverness had been directed towards honest and lawful undertakings. I have known some of these gentlemen so adroit at the great problem of ways and means that they might have shone as Chancellors of the Exchequer. It is not their fault that we find them out. Their great drawback is, that they begin to be cunning and adroit before they know the world. All this close cunning defeats itself. The young rogues put me often in mind of moles. They work in dark holes, but they are always coming near the surface, where they hitch up friable hillocks to let air in, and so are caught. Nay, they sometimes hitch themselves out into the mid-day sun of justice. I have at this moment two or three of these misdirected geniuses in my eye whom I have traced from early childhood—ay, that period when the Raggedier officers should have laid hold of them.

In April 1854, an honest joiner in Banff of the name of Donald M'Beath, had taken it into his head that he would do well to go to England, where his talents would be appreciated. In short, Donald had working within him the instinct of that little insect so familiar to the Highlanders, the tendency of which is to go south—probably because it knows in some inscrutable way that Englishmen have thick blood. Then he had friends in Newcastle who had gone before him,

and found out that the yellow blood corpuscles of the social body flowed there more plentifully than in Banff. Were I to be more fanciful, I would say that Donald M'Beath had the second sight—for money. He loved it so well that he had stomach for “ta hail Pank of England,” and would “maype return in ta grand coach and ta grey horses.” Nor had this love been as yet without fruits, for he had by Highland penury saved no less a sum than seven pounds, all stowed away in a sealskin spleuchan, besides seven more which he had laid out on a capital silver watch—convinced that no Highland shentleman bearing a royal name, as he did, could pass muster in England without this commodity.

The Highlanders were never at any time in the habit of getting lighter or leaner by moving from one place to another, if they were not generally a good deal heavier at the end of their journey than at the beginning. So true to the genius of his race, he laid his plans so that, in progressing south, he would lay contributions on his “friends” all the way, in order that, if it “could pe possible,” he might keep the seven pounds all entire—some extra shillings being provided for the voyage in the *Britannia* from Leith to Newcastle. How many Highland cousins suffered during this transport of the valuable person of the King's clansman till he got to Leith, I never had any means of knowing. We cannot be far wrong, however, in supposing that he shook them all heartily by the hand; and no pedigree of the M'Farlans from Parlan downwards, was ever courted with more industry than that of the M'Beaths, if it was possible to bring within the tree any collateral branch with M'Beath blood in his veins, meal in his giral, and a bed fit for a Highlander. Then the shake of the hand, and the “Oigh, oigh” of true happiness, were the gratitude which is paid beforehand—the only kind that Donald knew anything of; or any other body I suspect—at least if I can judge from what I have received from so many to whom I have given lodgings, meat, and free passages.

Arrived at Leith, the first thing Donald did was to get out the little bit of snuff-coloured paper which contained the names of the cousins, and where, among the rest, was that of an old woman in the Kirkgate who was a descendant of the sister of Donald's grandmother, a Macnab,—as unconscious of being related to the clan of the murderous king as any one could be, before such a flood of light was cast upon her history as Donald was well able to shed. He soon found her out; and though Janet Macnab could make nothing of the pedigree, she could count feelings of humanity; and what was more, she had a supper and a bed to save an infraction upon the said seven pounds.

Next morning, after having partaken of a Highland breakfast from poor Janet, which could only be calculated by the professions of eternal friendship uttered

by a Gael, Donald went forth to see the craft which in some cheap berth was to transport him to the land of gold; and, to be sure, it was not long till he saw the vessel lying alongside of the quay. No doubt she was to be honoured in her freight. It was not every day the *Britannia* carried a M'Beath with seven pounds in his pocket, a seven-pound watch in his fob, and a chest of tools, which was to cut his way to fortune. Then if it were just possible that the captain had ever been in Banff, or had in his veins a drop of Celtic blood—he would ascertain that by and by, he might even be a M'Beath or a M'Nab.

Much, however, as he expected from the clanship of the captain of the *Britannia*, who was not then to be seen, he had sense enough to know that that officer could not abate his passage-money. Nay, he knew that he must take out his ticket at the office on the shore, and thither he accordingly hied to make a bargain. Unfortunately these tickets are not liable to be affected by Highland priggings; but the loose shillings to which I have alluded allowed him still to retain untouched the seven pounds. Yea, that seven pounds seemed to have a charmed life, the charm being only to be broken by some such wonder as the march of some wood or forest from one part of the kingdom to the other, or by the man who should try to take it having been from the belly of a shark “untimely ript.”

It wanted still some considerable time until the *Britannia* sailed, and Donald thought that he might as well get his chest of tools and bag of clothes put on board. He accordingly hied away to Mrs M'Nab's, and having returned his thanks for her kindness, if he did not promise her a part of his fortune “when it should be made,” he got the packets on his broad shoulders, and proceeded to the vessel. He was more lucky this time. A seaman, very probably the captain, was busy walking the deck.

“Hallo, tare!” cried Donald to the seaman, “you'll pe ta captain?”

“Yes, all right,” replied the other; “and you'll be a passenger for Newcastle; what have you got there?”

“My tool-chest and clothes,” replied Donald; “fery valuable, cost seven pounds ten shillings.”

“Heave them along the gunwale there,” said the seaman, “they can be stowed away afterwards; but you're too soon, we wont heave off for an hour.”

“Ower sune is easy mended,” replied the Gael.

“And sometimes,” in a jolly way, said the other, “we have time for a dram.”

“Ay, and inclination maype too,” cried Donald, quite happy.

“Come away, then, our lockers are shut, so we'll have it up the way, where I

know they keep the real peat-reek, and I'll pay."

And Donald, leaving his luggage, but carrying with him a notion that the captain of the *Britannia* deserved to be one of her Majesty's Admirals of the Blue, followed his guide until they entered the house of the publican, whose name I do not at present recollect. Nor was this notion in any way modified even when they were seated at the same table with three very respectable-looking men, apparently engaged in the harmless pastime of playing at cards. Nay, the notion was evidently shared by the three strangers, who, although they had clearly never seen the captain of the *Britannia* before, offered him, with a generosity wonderful to Donald, a share of their liquor. On his side, the generosity was equalled by his insisting that they, whom he declared he had never seen before, should take a part of his. Never was there such generous unanimity among strangers; and even Donald was included in the new-born friendship. Then the harmless play went on. There were only three cards used, two diamonds and one clubs; and the game was so simple that the Gael understood it in a moment, for it consisted in a little shuffling, and if one drew the clubs, he was the winner of the stakes. The generous captain laid down a stake of a pound; one of the players laid down another; then the cards were shuffled in so obvious a manner that a child might have seen where the clubs lay; and so to be sure the captain saw what a child might have seen, drew the slip, and pocketed the two pounds. This was repeated, until the captain pocketed six pounds; and Donald seeing fortune beckoning on, tabled one of the seven with the charmed unity. None of these men had been cut out of the belly of a shark, and so Donald M'Beath's seven was made eight.

"Play on," whispered the captain, "while I go to look after your luggage."

And so to be sure the Highlander did. He staked pound after pound, gained once in thrice, got furious, and staked on and on till the seven was nil.

Then rose the Highlander's revenge; the watch was tabled against seven pounds, and went at a sweep.

"And now, py Cot, to croon a', ta *Pritannia* will be gone," he cried, as he rushed out in agony.

Frantic as he was, he could yet find his way to the part of the pier where he expected to see the vessel with the noble captain on board. The steamer was gone; and as he stood transfixed in despair, a man came up to him.

"Was it you who carried some luggage on board the *Britannia* about an hour ago?"

"Ay, just me."

“Well, then, I saw a man dressed in seaman’s clothes carry it away. He seemed to make for Edinburgh, likely by the Easter Road.”

“And whaur is ta Easter Road?” cried the Gael, as he turned round to run in some direction, though in what he knew not.

At length, after many inquiries, he got into the said road, and hurrying along at the top of his speed, he expected every moment to see the captain. He questioned every one he met, got no trace, and began to lose hope with breath; for, long ere this, he had seen the full scope of his folly, and suspected that the captain was one of the cardsharppers. Fairly worn out,—more the consequence of the excited play of his lungs and galloping blood than the effect of his chase,—he slackened his pace when he came to the Canongate. There he was—a ruined man, not a penny left, the hopes of a fortune blasted, even his tool-chest, with which he might have cut his way anywhere, gone,—a terrible condition, no doubt, not to be even conceived properly by those who have not experienced the shock of sudden and total ruin. No sight had any interest for him, no face any beauty or ugliness, except as it carried any feature like what he recollected of his cruel and heartless companions. Nor was he free from self-impeachment, blaming his love of money as well as the blindness of his credulity. While in this humour, and making his way by inquiry to the Police-office, he met right in the face, and seemed to spring up three inches as he detected the features of one of his spoilers. In an instant, his hand clutched, with the tension of a tiger’s muscle, the gasping throat of the villain. The Highland blood was boiling, and you might have seen the red glare of his eye, as if all his revenge for what he considered to be the ruin of a life had been concentrated in that one terrible glance. The sharper, strong, and with all the recklessness of a tribe of the most desperate kind, was only as a sapling in his grasp.

“My money and my watch, you tam villain!”

Words which, accompanied by the contortion of Gaelic gesticulation, only brought about him a crowd, among whom two constables made their appearance. The sharper was transferred to their hands, glad enough to be relieved of his more furious antagonist, and all the three made for the Office.

It was at this part of the strange drama I came into play. The moment I saw the Highlander enter with his man, I suspected the nature of the complaint, for I knew he was from the country, and the sharper, David Wallace, was one of my most respected *protégés* in the card and thimblerrigging line; but I required the information given me by the Highlander to make me understand all the dexterity of the trick which the pseudo-captain of the *Britannia* had practised. The club, I knew, consisted of four, David Wallace, Richard Kyles, John Dewar, and John

Sweeny. It was regularly organised, each man having attached to him his gillet of a helpmate, ready to secrete or carry the watches and other property won by their lords at this most unequal game. I have always considered those daylight sharpers, who, without instruments other than three cards or three thimbles and a pea, contrive to levy extensive contributions on society, as men worthy to have been drawn into the ranks of honest citizens, where their talents could not have failed to elevate them into wealth. Even the manipulation of these simple instruments is more wonderful than the tricks of a conjurer. Fix your eyes as you may, be suspicious even to certainty that the player is cheating you, I will defy you to detect the moment when, by the light if not elegant touch of the finger, your pea has been slipped from the right thimble to the wrong, or the right card to the wrong—yea, to the end, you could swear that no deception has been or could be practised upon you; and even when your watch is forfeited you could hardly think but that your misfortune lay on some defect in your power of penetration. And so it does. You are cheated—nay, *fairly cheated*. You can't expect from such men that they should undertake not to deceive you. If they had no art, you would ruin them in five minutes, for all you would have to do (and you insist on the unfair privilege) is to watch the thimble under which your fortune lies and snatch it. There is, therefore, no pity due to the victims of these men's deceptions, and this we can say with a thorough condemnation of the men themselves.

As soon as I understood the transaction, it was my duty to detect the right thimble, and I had no fear of deception. I sent Wallace, under charge of a constable, to the Leith Office, and told M'Beath that I would have the three others there in the course of a couple of hours. I had no doubt that Dewar, the cleverest of them, had personated the captain, and that he had rejoined his associates to share the booty. I knew their haunt, a public-house in Bristo Street, and, taking Riley with me, I went direct to the place. My luck was nothing less than wonderful. Just as I entered I met my three men coming out of a room, and holding out my arms—

“Stop, gentlemen,” said I; “I have got something to say to you.”

But I didn't need to say it. They understood me as well as I did them.

“Captain Dewar of the *Britannia*,” said I, looking to Dewar.

“At your service,” replied the rogue, with a spice of humour, at which, in the very midst of their choking wrath, they could not help leering.

Well, the old process. “Search,” said I; “I want seven pounds and a watch.”

And calling in my assistant, I began my search. No resistance. They were too

well up to their calling.

I found the watch on Wallace. No more. The pounds had been given to the fancies.

I kept my word by having them all three at Leith within a couple of hours, safely lodged in prison. They were afterwards tried by the Leith magistrates, aided by an assessor, and sentenced to sixty days each, with sixty more if they did not give up the money and luggage. The sentence seemed judicious, and in one sense it was; but the worthy bailies did not consider that they were offering a premium on the seductive and depredating energies of the trulls, who (long after the seven pounds was spent) in order to get their birds out of the cage, set about their arts and redeemed them from bondage.

The Cobbler's Knife.

YOU will have perceived that among my mysteries I have never had anything to do with dreams or dream-mongers. My dreams have been all of that peep-o'-day kind when a man is "wide awake" as they say, and "up to a thing or two." Not to say that I disbelieve in dreams when they have a streak of sunlight in them, as all veritable ones have. Nor is the strange case I am about to relate free from the suspicion that the dream which preceded a terrible act, was just a daylight feeling reflected from some dark corner of the brain.

In 1835, I met one morning, as I was going to commence the duties of the day, William Wright, shoemaker in Fountain Close. He had been drinking the evening before, for his eyes were red and swollen, and he had the twittering about the tumified top of the cheeks, which shews that the inflammation is getting vent. There was some wildness in his look, and, as it afterwards appeared, something in his talk with a deeper meaning than I could comprehend.

"You have had more than enough last night, William," said I.

"Why, yes," replied he, "James and I had a bout, and I am off work for an hour or two till my hand steadies."

"Better for you and your wife if your hand was always steady," said I, as I made a movement to walk on.

"Do you believe in dreams?"

"Some," replied I, meaning the streaked ones I have alluded to. "Why do you put that question?"

"Because," replied he, "I am quite disturbed this morning by one I had last night. I thought that James Imrie stabbed me with the knife I cut my leather with."

"But James hasn't done it yet, has he?"

"No, but I awoke as angry at him as if he had; and though I have come out to get a mouthful of fresh air, I can't get quit of my wrath."

"Angry at a dream," said I, as I looked into William's scowling face. "I thought we had all quite enough to be angry at, without having recourse to dreams."

"Ay, but I can't help it," said he again; "I have been trying to shake it off, but it won't do."

"It will fly off with the whisky fever, William," said I. "James and you are

old friends, and you mustn't allow a dream to break your friendship."

"Wouldn't like that either," was the reply. "He's a good-natured creature, and I like him; but I can't get quit of his visage as he stuck the knife into me. It has haunted me all the morning."

"So that you would reverse the dream, and make it true by *contraries*, as the old ladies do, when they can't get things to fit—by sticking the knife into *him*?"

"No, I wouldn't feel it in my heart to stab the best friend I have," said he; and looking wistfully into my face with his bloodshot eyes, he added, "But maybe a glass with James will wear it off."

"Yes, of pure spring water from the Fountain well there," said I.

"I never was very fond of water," said he, with a kind of grim smile, "nor is it very fond of me. One can't talk over it."

"Your old political twists, William," said I, as I recollected a curious theory he sported everywhere, and was rather mad upon.

"Oh, but I don't hate James for opposing me in that. I rather like him the better for it. We get fun out of it."

"The more reason," said I, "for you to give up your ill-natured fancy. Stab you!—why, man, James Imrie is so inoffensive a creature, that, though a fleshier's runner, he wouldn't flap a fly that blows his beef, unless it were a very tempting bluebottle."

"I believe it," said he, looking a little more calm; "and I will try to forget the face. I will be better after my breakfast."

So I left William to his morning meal, suspecting that there would be a dram before it, thinking too of the strange fancy that had taken possession of him, but never dreaming that anything would come of it. It was sometime afterwards that the thread of the story again recurred to my mind, and what I have now to relate was derived from a conversation I had with Wright himself at a time when he was likely to speak the truth. I cannot answer for every word of the conversation I am to report, but I have little doubt that the substance comes as near the thing as other recitals of the same kind, recorded a considerable time after they have occurred.

It appeared that James Imrie, according to his old habit, and without knowing anything of William's dream, had left his house in Skinner's Close, and gone to his friend's, for the purpose of having a crack and a spark. William, who was at the time busy with a job of cobbling which he had promised to finish that night, received his friend with all his usual warmth, but, what was strange enough, without saying a word of his dream. James sat at a little side-table near William's

stool, and some whisky was produced, according to their old fashion; for the shoemaker, like other political cobblers, liked nothing better than to spin his politics and take his dram while he was plying his awl and rosin-end. So scarcely had the first glass been swallowed, when William got upon his hobby—"The five acres and the thousand pounds" doctrine as he used to call it, and which the reader will understand as the conversation progresses. Poor James was no great adept at the sublime mystery that, like Fourier's, was to regenerate the world, and make every snob and flesher's runner as happy as the denizens of Paradise; and therefore, with his tardy thoughts and slow Scotch pronunciation, was no match for his book-read and voluble antagonist; but he was a good "butt," and that was all probably that Wright cared for—his sole ambition being to speak and to be heard speaking by any one, however unable to understand the extent of his learning.

"There now," began William, "I have been reading in the *Scotsman* to-day that the Duke of Buccleuch has a thousand a-day. Good Lord! just think, if all the land possessed by this one man, made of clay no finer than the potter's, and maybe not so well turned, was divided into ploughgates, how many poor people would be lairds, and rendered happy."

"But if we were a' lairds," drawled James, "wha wad mak' the shoon and rin wi' the beef?"

"They would make their own shoes out of their own leather, and rear their own beef," was the triumphant reply. "Then, people say I'm for French equality. I'm not. The idiots don't understand the 'five acres and thousand pounds' doctrine. No man should have more than that quantity of land, or that sum of money. The overplus should be taken from him and divided."

"It looks weel," replied James, with a good-natured smile; "but how would it work? It puts me in mind o' Laird Gilmour's plan wi' his snuff. 'Let every prudent man ken,' said he, 'that there's twa hundred pinches in half an ounce; and let him keep count as he taks every pinch, and his nose will never cheat him, and he'll never cheat his nose.' I've tried it, but I aye lost count."

"Nonsense, man! You're just like the rest, trying to crack a joke at the expense of a grand scheme for benefiting our species. You forget that under our present idiotic system a poor man cannot often get his half ounce to divide into pinches, whereas under the 'five acres and thousand pounds' doctrine you could rear your own tobacco, dry it, make Taddy of it, and then snuff it, without the necessity of your arithmetic."

"And mak' our ain whisky tae," rejoined James, "and get a' drunk?"

“No,” responded the theorist. “We might certainly distil our own whisky, but not get all drunk. Drunkenness is the consequence of our present system, where poverty makes misery, and misery flies to the bottle, and where bloated wealth produces epicures, who disdain whisky, but wallow in wine from morning to night.”

“And yet they’re no ill chields, thae grand folk, after a’,” said James. “Mony a shilling I get when my basket’s emptied. It comes a’ round. If they get, they gie; and they’re no unmindfu’ o’ the puir.”

“I’m poor,” cried the cobbler; “do they mind me? No. They grind me down to a farthing, and are ready to say, when I support the rights of labour, ‘Well, labour then, and be paid; and when you can’t work, you have the workhouse between you and starvation.’ And yet I have a soul as noble as theirs.”

“And nobler,” said James, with his quiet humour; “for you would mak’ a paradise o’ the world, and every ane o’ us an angel, without wings; but we wouldna’ need wings, for wha would think o’ fleeing out o’ paradise?”

“Your old mockery, James,” said Wright, a little touched. “The great problem of the happiness of mankind is not a subject for ridicule.”

“It’s yoursel’ that’s making the fun,” rejoined his friend. “I was only using your ain words. But could we no speak about something else than the ‘five acres and thousand pounds’ doctrine? I never could comprehend it.”

“And never can,” was the tart reply. “You haven’t capacity. It requires deep thought to solve the problem of human happiness, and you needn’t try; but you might listen to instruction.”

“I have listened lang aneugh,” said the other, alike ruffled in his turn, “and it comes aye to the same knotted thrum. Ye canna mak a gude job o’t by slicing aff the lords and the puir. Ye might as weel try to fancy a sheep wi’ nae mair body than a king’s-hood and some trollops, without head or trotters.” And James laughed good-naturedly.

“Gibes again,” retorted Wright, as (according to his account to me) the vision of the dream came before him, and the anger which had accompanied it flared upon his heart.

But he wrestled with it, occasionally looking at his friend, whom he really loved, yet still fancying that the face of that friend, however illuminated with the good humour probably inspired by the whisky, might or would assume the demoniac expression it carried when he dreamed that he had stabbed him to the heart. It signified little that James was smiling,—the other expression would return when the smile left. It was embodied in the muscles. It appeared as a

phantasm, and the strength of a morbid imagination gave it form and expression.

“Yes, the old gibes.”

“No,” replied James; “I canna jibe wi’ an auld freend. But to end a’ this just never speak mair o’ the new paradise.”

“Worse and worse!” cried Wright. “You despise a subject that ought to interest all people. What are you who laugh at the idea of being made a proprietor of the rights of man—a poor wretch, who makes a shilling a-day by carrying beef, and licks the hand that gives you a penny, which by the rights of nature belongs to you; for is it not robbed from you by your masters, who have made a forceful division of property, and then you scoff at the man who would right you. I say, man, you’re a born idiot.”

A word this that changed James’s face into as much of ill-nature as the poor fellow’s naturally good and simple heart would permit. Wright at that moment looked at him. He saw, as he thought, the very countenance of the stabber, and his heart burned again, his eye flashed, and he instinctively grasped the knife in his hand. The fit lasted for a moment and went off, and the conversation was renewed at a point where I break off my narrative, to resume it when Wright gave me the parting words.

All this time I was in my own house. It would be, I think, about nine o’clock when I left to go up the High Street. I saw a number of people collected at the mouth of the Fountain Close, and heard dreadful cries of murder from the high windows of a house a little way down the entry. I was not thinking of Wright, and pushing the people aside, I was beginning to make my way down, when up the close comes running a man in his shirt-sleeves. I caught him in an instant in my arms, while the people were crying wildly, the women screaming, “Take care of the knife!”

And to be sure the knife was in his hand, *all bloody*.

“Wright!” cried I, as I wrenched the weapon from him.

“Ay, Wright,” replied he; “I have murdered James,” and then drawing a deep sigh he added, in choking accents, “Oh, that dream!”

Holding him tight I got him from amongst the crowd for indeed at the time I thought him mad. In leading him up I began to recollect the story he had told me before. I wished to speak, but when I turned to him I beheld such a wild distortion of features that I shrunk from increasing his agony. I heard him groaning, every groan getting into the articulation, “My friend,” “My best friend,” “Surely I am mad,” “Take care of me, M’Levy—I’m a maniac.” I didn’t think so now, yet I was upon my guard; and, as he was a strong man, I got a

constable to take him by the other arm.

On arriving at the Office, which we did in the midst of a dense crowd, among whom the word “murder” sped from mouth to mouth, making open lips and wide staring eyes, I led him in. The moment he entered, he flung himself on a seat, and covering his eyes with his hands sent forth gurgling sounds, as if his chest were convulsed—rolling meanwhile from side to side, striking his head on the back of the seat, and still the words, “James, James, my old friend—O God! what is this I have brought upon me?”

“Is Imrie dead?” said I, watching him narrowly.

“Dead!” he cried, with a kind of wild satire, even light as a madman’s laugh; “up to the heft in his bowels.”

“Was it connected with the dream, William?” I said again; “why, it was James should have stabbed you.”

“The dream,” he ejaculated, as if his spirit had retired back into his heart; “the dream—ay, the dream. It was that—it was that.”

“How could that be?” I said again, for I was in a difficulty.

“His face, the very face he had when, in my dream, he plunged my own knife in me, has haunted me ever since. I told you that morning it was with me. I could not get rid of it, and when I saw him to-night sitting by me, I observed the same scowl. I thought he was going to seize my knife and stab me. I thought I would prevent him by being before him, and plunged the knife into his body.”

“Terrible delusion,” said I. “Imrie, as I told you, couldn’t have hurt a fly.”

“Too late, too late,” he groaned. “I know it now, and, what is worst of all, I’m not mad; I feel I am not, and I must be hanged. Nothing else will satisfy my mind—I have said it. If not, I will destroy myself—lend me my knife.”

“No, no,” said I, “no murders here; but perhaps James is not dead—he may recover.”

“Why do you say that?” he cried, as he slipt off the chair, and took me by the knees; “who knows that? has any one seen him to tell you? I would give the world and my existence to know that he has got one remnant of life in him;” and then he added, as his head fell upon his chest, “Alas! it is impossible. I took too good care of that. It would have done for one of his master’s oxen.”

“Imrie’s not dead,” said a constable, as he came forward; “they’ve taken him to the Infirmary.”

I have seen a criminal with his whole soul in his ear as the jury took their seats, and seen his eye after the transference of his spirit from the one organ to

the other, as he heard the words "Not guilty." So appeared Wright. He rose up, and again seating himself, while his eye was still fixed on the bearer of good news, he held up his hands in an attitude of prayer, and kept muttering words which I could not hear.

On leading him to the cell, where he was in solitude to be left for the night, I could not help thinking, as I have done on other occasions, that the first night is the true period of torture to such a one as Wright, with remorse in his heart. I suspect we cannot picture those agonies of the spirit except by some comparisons with our experiences of pain; but as pain changes its character with every pang, as it responds to the ever-coming and varying thoughts, our efforts are simply ineffectual. We give a shudder, and fly to some other thought for relief. To a sufferer such as Wright, we can picture only one alternative—the total renunciation of the spirit to God; and how wonderfully the constitution of the mind is suited to this, the deepest remorse finding the readiest way where we would think it might be reversed. It is impossible to rid one's-self of the conviction from this strange fact alone, that Christianity, which harmonises with this instinct, so to call it, comes from the God of the instinct. It seemed to me that Wright would, in the ensuing night, find the solace he seemed to yearn for. He had already got some hope; and becoming calm, I sat down beside him for a short time, for I had known him as a decent, hard-working fellow, incapable, except under some frenzy, of committing murder. I got from him the conversation with Imrie, which I have given partly, I doubt not, in that incorrect way, as to the set form of words, inseparable from such narratives.

"When I called James an idiot," he continued, "I saw the expression, as I thought, coming over his face, and I had the feeling I had in my dream, but I soon saw the old smile there again, and was soon reconciled.

" 'Weel, maybe I am an idiot,' said James, 'for I've been aye dangling my bonnet in the presence o' customers, when maybe if I had clapt it on my head wi' a gude thud o' my hand, and said, 'I'm as gude as you,' and forced my way i' the world, I wouldna, this day, be ca'd Jamie Imrie, the flesher's porter.'

“And the good soul smiled again, so we took another glass of the whisky,—a good thing when it works in a good heart, but a fearful one when it rouses the latent corruption of a bad one. I fear it wrought so with me, for although we were old friends, I got still moodier, thinking more and more of my dream, while James became more humorous.

“ ‘But, Willie, my dear Willie,’ he said, ‘idiot as I may be, I doot if I would ha’e been better under your system, for I would ha’e been a daft laird o’ five acres, and gi’en awa’ my snuff and my whisky, and maybe my turnips, to my freends, and got in debt and been a bankrupt proprietor; so, just to be plain wi’ you, and I’ve thought o’ tellin’ ye this afore nou, I would recommend you to gi’e up this new-fangled nonsense o’ yours, or rather, I should say, auld-fangled, for you’ve been at it since ever I mind. Naebody seems to understand it, and here’s a bit o’ a secret,’ lowering his voice, ‘the folks lauch at ye when you’re walking on the street, and say, “There’s the political cobbler that’s to cobble up society.”’

“ ‘Laugh at me!’ I cried, in my roused wrath, yet I had borne ten times more from my old friend; ‘laugh at me, you villain!’

“Then James’s face grew dark—I watched it, it was the very face of my dream. The drink deceived me, no doubt, but I was certain of what I saw. I observed him move, as if he wanted the knife. Oh, terrible delusion! I believe the good soul had no such intention; but I was carried away by some mysterious agency. I thought I was called upon to defend myself against murder; I grasped the knife, and in an instant plunged it into his belly, and as I drew out the weapon, the blood gushed forth like a well. ‘Oh, Willie!’ he cried, and fell at my feet.

“I immediately roared for help, and in ran my wife, followed by neighbours. With the knife in my hand, I rushed out, and fell into your arms. Now, can you read this story, and tell me the meaning of it? I have already said I am not mad; but why was I led by a dream to stab my friend? Is there any meaning in my conduct as directed by Providence?”

“I just fear, William,” said I, “from what I observed in you that morning when you told me your dream, that you had been drinking too much whisky, which, fevering and distempering your mind, produced not only the dream, but the subsequent notion that poor James was intent upon killing you. You will now see the consequence of drink. One may trace the effects of it for a time, but when, after a certain period, it begins to work changes in the tormented and worried brain, no man can calculate the results, or the crimes to which it may lead.”

“I believe you are right,” replied he; “and if James would just recover, he would be dearer to me than ever, and whisky no longer a deceitful friend; but, ah! I fear. And then how am I to pass this night in a dark cell, with no one near me, and the vision of that bleeding body before my eyes aye, and those words sounding in my ear, which torture and wring my heart more than a thousand oaths—those simple words, ‘Oh, Willie!’ ”

“You must trust where trust can find a bottom,” said I; “perhaps Imrie may live and recover.”

“God grant!” groaned the prisoner.

And with a sorrowful heart, I turned the key in the lock.

Next day, it was ascertained that Imrie had passed a night of extreme suffering, and then died. This information I conveyed to Wright. It was needless to try modes of breaking it to him. His fear made him leap at it as one under frenzy will leap down a precipice. I had no nerve for what I have no doubt followed, and hurried out just as he had thrown himself on his hard bed, and I heard his cries ringing behind the door as I again closed it.

Wright was brought to trial on a charge of wilful murder, with a minor charge of culpable homicide. It was a stretch to choose the latter; but the men were known to be friends, and as no one witnessed the catastrophe, the milder construction was put upon an act which, after all, I suspect was simply one of temporary madness. I doubt if all the strange particulars were ever known. Wright was sentenced to fourteen years’ penal servitude. I have often thought of this case, but never diverged from the theory I mentioned to Wright himself. It does not affect my opinion of dreams. The two friends had been in the habit of getting into tilts, the result of their drinking. The dream was only an impression caused by some angry look forced out of the simple victim. The fever of the brain gave it consistency, and deepened it, and under the apprehension that he himself was to be stabbed, he stabbed his friend. This is the only dream-case in my book; and I’m not sorry for it, otherwise I might have glided into the supernatural, as others have done who have had more education than I, and are better able to separate the world of dreams from the stern world of realities.

The Cock and Trumpet.

THERE are certain duties we perform of which we are scarcely aware, and which consist in a species of strolling supervision among houses, which, though not devoted to resetting, are often yet receptacles of stolen goods, through a means of the residence there of women of the lowest stratum of vice and profligacy. Though we have no charge against the house at the time, and no suspicion that it contains stolen property, we claim the privilege of going through it on the ostensible pretence that we have in view a particular object of recovery. I have generally, I think, been fonder of these *pleasant* strolls than my brethren, perhaps for the reason that on some occasions I have been fortunate in what may be called chance waifs. Among these there was at the period I allude to, a well-known house, known as the Cock and Trumpet, for the reason that a bantam was represented on the sign as blowing the clarion of war in the shape of a huge French horn—significant no doubt of the crowing of the Gallic cockerel. It was a favourite of mine—the more by token that I had several times brought off rather wonderful things. On one occasion I issued triumphantly with a Dunlop cheese weighing thirty pounds, on another with a dozen of Italian sausages, and on another with two live geese.

It was a feature of the portly landlady that she never knew (not she) that such things were in the house. “Some of thae rattling deevils o’ hizzies had done it. The glaikit limmers, will they no be content wi’ their ain game, but maun turn common thieves?” Then her surprise was just as like the real astonishment as veritable wonder itself. “And got ye that in *my* house, Mr M’Levy? Whaur in a’ the earth did it come frae? and wha brought it to the Cock and Trumpet? I wish I kent the gillet.”

But the sound of *her* trumpet was changed one morning after she had taken to herself a certain Mr Alexander Dewar to be lord of her, her establishment, and the crowing bantam. Sandy, who was himself a great thief, had thus risen in the sliding scale. It is not often that thieves rise to be the head of an establishment with a dozen of beds, though without even a fir table by way of ordinary; but so true is the title of my book, that Sandy’s slide upwards was just the cause of a return downwards with accelerated velocity.

One morning I happened to be earlier on my rounds than usual, and though houses like the Cock and Trumpet do their business during night, and are therefore late openers, I found the door open.

Something more than ordinary, I said to myself. The bantam must have been roused by some cock that has seen the morning's light sooner than it reaches the deep recesses of that wynd.

And going straight in, and passing through a room of sleeping beauties reposing blissfully amidst a chorus of snorts, I came to the bed-room of the new master himself. The mistress was enjoying in bed the repose due to her midnight and morning labours, snoring as deep as a woman of her size and suction could do, and beside her, in a chair, sat Sandy himself plucking lustily at fowls. He had finished nine hens, and was busy with the last of nine ducks. No wonder that the bantam had crown so early.

"What a fine show of poultry, Sandy, man," said I. "Where got you so many hens and ducks?"

"A man has surely a right to what comes into his ain trap," replied the rogue, as unmoved as one of the dead hens. "They flew in at the window."

And he proceeded with his operation of plucking.

My voice had in the meantime awakened his helpmate.

"Whaur can the hens hae come frae?" snorted the jolly woman. "Some o' the hizzies, nae doot."

"No, mistress," said I; "they flew in at the window."

"Weel, maybe they did."

"Just in the way the Bologna sausages did," said I.

"Na, it was the jade Bess Brown did that job, but I'm an innocent woman. Was I no sleeping when ye cam in? Does a sleeping woman catch hens in her sleep as she does flees in her mooth?"

"Well," said I, turning to Sandy, "you're the man."

"The Lord's will be dune," said the wife, in a tone quite at variance with her old system of asserting her innocence, (Sandy, her "husband," being bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh). "If Sandy has disgraced the house I made him master o', ay, and a gentleman to boot, he maun just dree the dregs."

Nor was I much surprised at this turn, for I had heard that she was losing conceit of Sandy, and had been repenting that she had raised him to the rank of a gentleman as well as lord of the Cock and Trumpet. Here was a good opportunity for getting quit of him, and the shrewd Jezebel saw her advantage.

"Now, Sandy," said I again to the cool rogue, still occupied with his work, and who had now arrived at the head feathers of the last duck, which head feathers (though generally left by poultry pluckers) I observed he had carefully

taken from every victim: “lay down the duck and get a pillow-slip.”

“Here’s ane,” cried his wife on the instant, as she began to undo the strings of her head cushion, ay, even that which had been frequently pressed by the head of her lord. “There,” she added, as she threw the article out of the bed.

“Put these feathers into that bag,” said I; “every feather, and I’ll wait till I see the last put in.”

“Ye’ll find that a kittle job, Mr M’Levy. A fleeing feather’s no easily caught.”

“Weel,” said Sandy, as he threw a wrathful glance at the mistress of his affection, now about to be lost to him, a loss of fifteen stones of solid beef—“I’ll do your bidding,” and then relaxing into a chuckle—“but will you tell me hoo the devil ony judge or jury can tell, after a’ these feathers are mixed, which belongs to a duke, and which to a hen, and which to ae duke, and no to anither, and which to ae hen, and no to its neighbour; and then after a’ that, to whom the hens or the dukes belang? Ye see there’s no a head feather left.”

I saw in a moment that the cunning rogue had caught me, and that I might be in for an official scrape. But I had gone too far to recede, and I had got out of as great a difficulty before. “Put in the feathers quick,” said I.

“The lasses will help him,” cried the landlady, still bent on favouring the apprehension of Sandy; and quickly a husky voice sounded through the house, reaching, as it was intended, the hall of the sleeping beauties—“Kate Semple, Jessie Lumsdaine, Flora Macdonald.”

And straightway came rushing from their beds two or three of her “children,” as she used to call them. I need not describe the condition they were in, nor their swollen, sleepless eyes, their dishevelled hair, and their wondering looks, as they found their dreams probably changed from a place where there was roasting to a place of plucking.

“Help Sandy to put thae feathers in that pillow-slip, for the deil ane o’ them will remain to tak’ away the credit o’ my house.”

And thereupon the girls began the work, sprawling on their hands and knees, and putting in handful by handful as Sandy held open the mouth of the slip. The job was a difficult one, and the scene sufficiently picturesque to occupy my attention, diverted as it sometimes was by my anticipated difficulty in identifying the corpses; nor was it without a brush that they could accomplish the entire clearance I insisted on. Even the flying feathers I urged my nymphs to secure, an operation which they undertook with agility, screaming and laughing in the midst of their work with all that wild levity and recklessness for which

their tribe is remarkable.

“Here,” cried Mrs Dewar, “there’s some on my bed.” And commencing to pick them up, “Nae man shall say that a stown feather was left in my house.”

A degree of refinement in this honest woman’s purity which produced a smile from me, in spite of the difficulties of a case of evidence which promised me some trouble. Nor were my fears unreasonable. Our honour is at stake in such matters, and then we require to keep in view that while little good may result from punishing so determined and hardened a rogue as Sandy Dewar, the evil consequences of an acquittal are serious. It emboldens the culprit himself, and affords a triumph to the whole fraternity.

“And now, Sandy,” said I, when there was scarcely a feather to be seen, “you’ll bind all the legs of the corpses together.”

A command which was obeyed slowly and reluctantly.

“Throw them over your back,” continued I, “and the bag will go over all.”

Having got my man laden with his dead spoil, “And now we’ll march to the Office,” said I.

“And fareweel, Sandy,” cried a voice from the bed; “we’ll maybe never see ane anither again. May the Lord prosper ye and mend ye!”

And finding matters in this favourable state, as I conceived, I bent my head over the lump of innocence:—

“Now, Mrs Dewar,” whispered I, “just tell me how Sandy came by the ducks and hens.”

“Aweel,” said she in return, disappointing my hopes of an admission, “I’ll say naething against my lawfu’ husband. If the dukes and hens didna flee in at the window, it’s now dead certain they’ll no flee oot at the door.”

These were the last words of the sonsy landlady, and I marched Sandy, with his burden, through an admiring crowd to the Office, where, having locked him up, I began to examine the dead bodies. The heads, as I have said, had been all taken care of, not a feather left upon one of them. Every corpse was so provokingly like another, that I could see no way of proving that they belonged to any one; and if, as was likely, Sandy had not been observed by any person about the place, I had no evidence to rest on but the equivocal words of Mrs Dewar, which pointed out no proprietor. I was in difficulty, but my difficulty was a stimulant as well; and there in the Office I sat, I know not how long, making my *post mortem* examination with all the assiduity of a doctor. My honour was concerned. The bantam would crow if my hens were not identified; but oh the inestimable virtue of perseverance! Were I to recount what this power has

yielded me, I would read a lesson to the sluggard better than any imparted by Solomon. I had made my discoveries, and was the more satisfied with the result, as, during all the time I had been engaged in the examination of my eighteen dead bodies, I had become the theme of much good-humoured laughter among my compeers, joined in by the Superintendent and Lieutenant themselves.

A short time afterwards, there came in a charge from Mr Beaton, Hope Park, Meadows, to the effect that nine ducks had been stolen from his premises on the previous night; and after the lapse of another hour, a second charge, involving the nine hens, came from Mr Renton of Hope Park End. To these places I repaired, and saw the servants, who could, of course, have had no difficulty about the identity of their favourites, fed and tended by them every morning, and relieved by them of the succulent treasure they dropt so industriously for the morning's meal, provided the feathers remained, but they all laughed at the idea of knowing their lamented favourites with bare bodies. As to the thief, no one could say that he was seen, or even heard. Sandy had done his work well. I then got the lasses to dress themselves, and accompany me to the Office, where we soon arrived; the bodies were all lying in the state in which I left them. The sight to the girls was nothing less than striking. They held up their hands, and really looked pitiful, for no doubt they had had an affection for the creatures; and the strongest of us, I suspect, have some feelings thus lowly, but not the less sympathetically directed, which even the savoury morsel of a fed favourite cannot altogether dissipate. My pig is a better pig than yours; but I'd rather eat yours, if you will eat mine.

So the girls turned over and over the bodies, examining them with all the minuteness in their power. Jenny declared it impossible, and Helen was in despair; Peggy thought she observed something, and Barbara declared it to be nothing. I watched them with some amusement, nor less the men in the Office. They stood around us laughing heartily at the remarks of the investigators, running up a joke to a climax, and then pursuing another, not always at the sole expense of the lasses, who could retort cleverly, impeaching their mockers as utterly unable to distinguish a male from a female fowl. At the long run, a happy thought struck Jenny.

“But where's the ‘pensioner?’ ” cried she.

“Ay, the ‘pensioner,’ ” responded her neighbour Nelly.

“Had he a spliced leg?” inquired I.

“Yes,” replied the first, “a dog broke it, and Nelly and I bound it up with two thin pieces of wood and a string.”

“Ay, and he got aye the best handful of barley,” rejoined Nelly; “but the leg of the ‘pensioner’ was cured a month ago, and the bandage removed.”

“Is that the ‘pensioner?’ ” said I, as I shewed the leg of one which I had observed in the forenoon as having on it the appearance of a healed-up sore.

“Ay, just the creature,” they both exclaimed. “It was the right leg, and you’ll see yet the marks of the string.”

The discovery was followed by the merriment of the men, who asserted that some one or other of the girls must have had a pensioner for a lover, with the designation of whom the drake had been honoured; but the girls indignantly denied the charge, declaring that they could not fancy a man pensioner, however much they might love a drake one.

“Besides,” added Jenny, cleverly, “he was our pensioner, not the Queen’s.”

“So much for the ducks,” said I; “and now for the hens and cocks; was there no pensioner among them?”

“No,” cried Barbara, “but there was the ‘corporal.’ ”

“Any mark beyond the coat?” inquired I.

“Ay,” cried Peggy, “he was stone-blind in the right eye; he lost his sight in a battle with Mr Grant’s cock, and never recovered his eyesight again. When toying with his wives, he turned aye round to the left side.”

“Yes,” struck in Betty; “before his misfortune, he was the king of a’ the cocks in the Meadows.”

“Is that the blind ‘corporal?’ ” said I.

“The very creature,” cried Barbara, as she examined the white orb of the animal which I had detected in the morning; “but oh,” she added, “I am vexed to see him in that condition!”

And really I thought I could see some little humidity about the blue eye of the good-natured girl.

“That’s the lass for a man,” thought I. “Give me a qualm of pity in a woman even for a bird, and I tell you you may make sure of a good wife.”

I once knew—permit me to go off the scene a little—a young woman who lived in Great King Street. She was a great belle, and admired for a kind of beauty not uncommon among our servants. A gentleman in town, whose name I could mention, saw her one day, as she was carrying home some books from the library in Dundas Street. He was smitten—followed her—spoke to her—and entertained the idea of making her his wife, whereby she would have become a lady. Time passed; and, in the meantime, he was informed that the pretty

Margaret one night, when in the bed-room flat of the house, pitched the cat, which had offended her in her cleanly notions, out of the window. It was a bitter cold night, and the frost was intense. In the morning the cat was found spiked on the railing, and frozen stiff. This was enough for our lover, and he forsook her. She afterwards fell, became a street-walker, and died neglected and uncared for in the Infirmary. I suspect the little pearl in Barbara's eye for the blind corporal was worth all the beauty in the face and person of the once admired but forsaken Margaret.

My story of the ducks and hens concludes with this investigation; for though the scene was renewed before the Sheriff, it was not so rich as that which took place among ourselves. Sandy got sixty days' imprisonment for the ducks, and six months for the hens, as a kind of second offence; and Luckie Dewar could afford a few tears (common to certain amphibious animals on the banks of the Nile) over the misfortunes of Sandy Dewar, who had thus fallen from being master of the Cock and Trumpet to being the occupant of a prison. Such is the ascending and descending scale of profligate life.

The Widow's Last Shilling.

Do you know any one within the circle of your experience who is utterly renounced to himself—what is called a money-grub or hunks, eternally yearning for money, so as to deserve the address of Burns: “Fie upon you, coward man, that you should be the slave o’t?” If there’s any tear about that man’s eye, depend upon’t it’s only a thinnish rheum; and as for anything like a response in the ear to the cry of pity, the drum will as soon crack at the singing of a psalm. Such a character is the result of an accumulation of *hardnesses*, increasing in intensity with his advancing years. We don’t wonder so much at the hunks as hate him. But in regard to the brick-moulded thief, who seldom comes within the range of ordinary observation, you are apt to think that he is not so hard-hearted after all. You give him some credit for generosity,—nay, when he is picking your pocket, you lay to his charge more necessity than will. Yet there never was a harder-hearted wretch than a regular thief. He is as destitute of pity as of honesty, and will steal as readily the shilling from under the poorhouse pensioner’s pillow as the ring from the finger of my lady. Even after “feeding time” he is still rapacious, and if he ever gives away, it is from recklessness, never from benevolence.

I have had many cases that go to prove these remarks, and one occurs to me worthy of recital, from the personal proximity into which I was brought to the condition of the hearts of the actors.

In the eddies at the bottoms of stairs leading to pawn-shops, a detective has often a chance for promising rises to his phantom minnow. In 1845, somewhere in August, I chanced to be coming up the stair leading from the Market to Milne Square. Just as I was arriving at the passage out, two women were coming down from the Equitable Loan Company’s Office; and as they were engaged in conversation, I stood a few steps down where I couldn’t be seen, and heard what they were saying to each other. The voices were those of a young brisk wench and an aged woman, with that kind of wail in her speech which sometimes comes to be a bad habit, but which at least shews that the heart is not so easy as it might be.

“I got five shillings on a plaid worth five pounds,” said the younger. “What did he give you on the blankets?”

“No less than I sought,” replied the elder, “ten shillings. It will just pay my landlord, and leave a shilling over; but it’s a sore heart to me to pawn, for I never

was used to it; yet better pawn than be poinded.”

“And who will poind you?”

“My landlord for the rent, woman; ay, a rich man with thousands, who feeds his servants on roast-beef and pudding till they are ready to burst, and yet takes the two or three shillings of rent of me which I need for porridge; and it’s not that these great people like their servants, only they like to get the name of their house being a good meat-house; and the fat limmers are as saucy to them, after all, as ever.”

“But where have you put your ten shillings?” said the other. “Take care you don’t lose it. Is it in your pocket?”

“Ay, all safe enough, along with the ticket. If I lose them, I lose all; and I may just as weel be coffined at once, and be done wi’t. Ye’re a young creature, and don’t know the miseries o’ the old.”

“And don’t want for a while,” said the other; “but where do you live?”

“In Lady Lawson’s Wynd,” was the reply.

“And how do you go home?”

“By Hunter Square and the Bridge,” said the simple woman; “for I’ve to go to Nicolson Square, where the factor lives, to pay him the nine shillings; but I doubt if he will ever get more, for now, with my blankets in the pawn, and nothing to redeem them, what is to cover me in the cold nights of winter?”

“What you can get, woman,” said the other, harshly, as I thought, at least without the feeling due to age and poverty; “just as I do, what we all do—the world to the winner.”

And what heartless creature can this young woman be? thought I, as, making a long neck, I looked round the side of the stair. My five times convicted Mary Anne Stewart, one of the nimblest pickpockets of the city, and for whom I was then looking as connected with a stolen plaid.

“Easy to say that,” continued the old woman, “when you’ve health and youth on your side; but don’t be too confident. I was once a winner when I won my poor husband; but what was there for me to win when I lost him who was the winner of my bread, and was left to fight the battle of life with nothing but my ten fingers? You’ve both to win and to lose yet, my lass; and may the Lord be kinder to you than He has been to me!”

“Best to look to one’s-self and one’s own pocket,” was the consistent reply of the winner, Mary Anne.

And to the pockets of others, said I to myself, the graceless baggage.

“And you never look to Heaven, lass?” again said the woman.

“Never got anything from that quarter yet,” was the reply, in the same strain. “Will Heaven enable you to take that pawn-ticket out of your pouch and get your blankets back?”

“Ay, and maybe mair,” said the woman; “but though Providence may look sour on me, there’s the Lord of providence, lass, mind that; and He can smile on you even when you’re suffering, for He knows He can take you out of it. And what church go ye to with these notions in your head?”

“No one,” was the saucy answer; “there’s no kail in the kirks;” then with a laugh, “The ministers eat all the shewbread.”

And what more of this kind of talk which I have reported, perhaps in a form different from what took place, but retaining the general sentiments of both, I cannot say, for they moved off. I saw them still at it in the midst of the square, and till they came to the end of the close opposite Hunter Square, where they parted. Meanwhile I went down the steps by the Bridge, and making a circle round, I saw the woman making for Hunter Square, where there was a crowd round an Italian with a puggy—general holding a levee—a more sensible animal than its master. Then keeping my eye on Mary Anne, I saw her join William Walker and James M’Guire, two of my very best friends, as ready to do me a service now as they had done before on more occasions than one. They did not seem at the moment to be in so playful a mood as the Italian’s puggy; and I did not look for much sport till I got my expectations sharpened by their movement after Mrs Kerr (that was the name, I think) towards the two mountebanks, who had removed to the south of the Tron.

I then wheeled round the north-east corner of the church, and keeping my eye on my trio, I placed myself in a stair-foot on the east side of the South Bridge, from which I could see both sets of performers, as well as those performed upon. Mrs Kerr, who, in Lady Lawson’s Wynd, had no opportunity of seeing monkeys from her garret window, seemed to have forgotten the sorrows of her rent-day and the pawn-shop, and was gaping, as all sight-seers do, at the evolutions of pug, one of whose best feats, general as he was, was to extract his master’s pocket handkerchief from the one pocket of his cotton velvet coat and put it in the other, and then came the laugh, in which, I presume, the widow of the sorrowful face joined, when the Italian sought for the article in the wrong pocket. Mrs Kerr did not take the lesson, though the Italian, as a kind of philanthropist, might have had the credit of putting his crowd upon their guard. The simple woman, from whose mind all her sorrows seemed, for the moment, banished, enjoyed this trick wonderfully, for I could see the careworn face

lighted up with the very extreme of satisfaction. Mary Anne was now at her back, apparently gaping too, and behind her stood Walker and M'Guire, as interested in pug's pocket-picking as if the trick had been one new to them, and worthy of being learned.

Now I fairly admit that, while I expected something, I was utterly unprepared for an attack on Mary Anne's part on her poor old friend of the entry; for however harsh her words were to the old woman, I still thought she had some qualms of pity excited in her by that sorrowful wail which had struck my own ears as something touching and heart-stirring. I had been simply false to my experience, while Mary Anne remained true to her heartless craft. Yes, I saw the young hopeless extract from Mrs Kerr's pocket something, doubtless the ten shillings, and hand it to M'Guire, whereupon they all three hurried away down the High Street.

My energy was roused in a moment, sharpened by the cruelty of this most heartless robbery. My course was, to myself, clear, though not, perhaps, what you might imagine. I have always had a horror of being seen rushing along the street, like Justice under hysterics flying after a victim. It's not decorous, and, besides, it does no good. The red-hand is a good catch, but I have often enough known a startled thief drop a valuable which never could be recovered, and I have found my account better balanced by knowing my man, and catching him with the booty, when he thinks all safe. In this case, I allowed the three to pass me, nor did I lay hands on them. I first hurried up to Mrs Kerr, and touching her on the shoulder,

"Is your ten shillings safe in your pocket?" said I.

"My ten shillings!" said she, nervously; "surely it is, but how do you know I had ten shillings in my pocket?"

"Never mind that, search quick."

"The Lord help me!" she exclaimed, as she fumbled in her empty pocket; "it's gone, with the pawn-ticket. I'm ruined, sir; it's all I have in the world, and how am I to meet the factor? I'm ruined, ruined!"

And she burst into tears, sobbing in the midst of the crowd.

"Get as fast as you can to the Police-Office," said I, "and I'll bring to you the pickpockets, and maybe your money. You know one of them."

"Who could be so cruel?" she inquired.

"The young woman you blabbed to in the pawnbroker's stair," said I.

"Oh, the Lord forgive her," said she, "for I told her the whole story of my grief."

“Which you should have kept to yourself,” said I. “Away to the Office, and wait for me.”

And having seen her off I proceeded down the High Street, in the direction taken by the thieves. That confidence I have so often felt, and perhaps somewhat vaingloriously expressed, I can account for in no other way than viewing it as a result of my knowledge of thieves and their haunts, joined to the impression of so many successes. On this occasion I was so sure, that I believed I walked as if I had been going to dinner, without being quickened by a very sharp appetite; but I did not feel the less desire to get hold of those who had so unknowingly to themselves roused sympathies in my breast, made sluggish, no doubt, by the hardening influences of official routine. Mary Anne was so well known about the High Street, that she couldn't pass without the observation of the loungers in that crowded resort of the poor. A few passing hints, like dots in a line, led me along till I came to Toddrick's Wynd, at the head of which I paused, and casting a glance down with my advantage of a good eye for a long wynd, I saw one of those little clots of human beings, generally so interesting to me, in proportion as they shew an interest among themselves. I was quicker now, and rushing forward, I came upon the three I wanted, all busy in the glorious ceremony of division, that is, giving every one *his own*, with the exception of the proprietor. The very sums were in their hands, with the unction inseparable from the acquisition of money.

“Five shillings to Mary Anne, and half-a-crown to each of you,” said I, “is fair. I will settle it for you, since you seem to disagree. The pawn-ticket for the blankets is for my trouble.”

There is seldom any hurry-skurry among these gentry, for they know the worst, and are made up to it.

“Come, give me the money.”

And so they did, the whole ten shillings, and the ticket to boot.

“No kail in the police cell to night, Mary Anne,” said I, “any more than in the church, where the ministers eat all the shewbread.”

Mary Anne looked into my face, and burst out into a laugh,—such is the seared and hardened temperament of thieves; and it is as well that the punishment-mongers should know this, that they may endeavour to devise some other and more effectual mode of reclamation.

“So you had no pity for the poor old woman?”

“The whining hag had more money than I had,” was the reply.

“You mean more than the five shillings you got for the stolen plaid?” said I.

“Who said it was stolen?”

“The lady in Gilmour Place you stole it from,” said I. “I have been looking for you to settle that small matter for three days.”

A streak of new light thus thrown upon an old subject, which qualified Mary Anne’s fun, and silenced her.

At this moment my assistant came up, and we took the three to the Office, where I brought the young thief to face with Mrs Kerr. The look of relief which played over the grief-worn features of the woman when she saw her four half-crowns and pawn-ticket, can only be understood by those who are, or have been poor, and who know the narrow margin on the verge of which flit the few and desultory illumined figures of their happiness. It did not last long, for it was to give place to the old melancholy; but I believe the feelings with which she looked on the face of the hardened creature to whom she had poured out the simple history of her sorrows, would never pass away.

“I didn’t think, for all I have heard of the wickedness of human creatures,” she said, as she kept her eyes on Mary Anne, who did not seem to feel her situation more than as quite a natural one, “that it was in the heart of a woman to rob one, who might be her mother, of all she had in the world.”

“ ’Twill learn you to look at monkeys again,” replied Mary Anne, with a laugh, which gave so ludicrous a turn to the pathetic, that the Lieutenant himself could scarcely resist it.

She might have profited by the monkey, thought I, for it offered her a lesson which she did not take to heart.

And thus this act of the strange drama ended. The next was the retributive one—the issue or conclusion being proportioned, not to the amount taken, but to the enormity of the hardened depravity which it revealed. The three were tried before the High Court. Mary Anne, as the principal performer, getting ten years’ transportation, and Walker and M’Guire seven years each. So that, had Mary Anne’s mind not been closed against every good impression, she would have admitted that, if she had never previously obtained anything from that Power she so irreverently maligned, she had at length received a share of the stern and severe reward it invariably bestows upon the vicious and the guilty.

The Child-Strippers.

How different are the estimates people form of mankind! Some say that the world is just very much as you take it—the old notion that truth is just as you think it. If you wear a rough glove, you may think all those you shake hands with are rough in the palms; and if you wear a soft one, so in the other way; and no doubt if you grin in a glass, you will get a grin in return—if you smile, you will be repaid with a smile. All very well this in the clever way; but I've a notion that there are depths of depravity not to be gauged in this short plumb way, just as there are heights of perfection not to be got at by our own estimates of ourselves. As for the general “top-to-toe rottenness” so congenial to some religious sects, why there's a little truth there too—at least I would look sharp at a man who could turn his eye in and about his own heart, and just say, with a nice smirk, “Well, I am glad to find that man is an angel after all.” It is as well for me anyhow that I am not given to making a kaleidoscope of my heart, turning up only varieties of beauty, without considering that a few hard pebbles form the elements of the fine display, otherwise how could I have had any belief in the existence of such beings as Kate Lang and Nell Duff. I would as readily have believed in M. Chaillo's account of the Gorillas; only these optimist gentry do admit, with a smile of satisfaction, that a hungry tiger is not to be trusted with a live infant—no more is Kate Lang, say I.

The practice of child-stripping, which is not so common now, is one of those depths of depravity to which I have alluded. It is not that there is so much cruelty done. It forms a fine subject for very tender people who wail about the poor innocents left shivering in their shirts. But there is more fancy than fact here; they don't shiver long in a crowded city; nay, the stripping is sometimes productive of good, in so much as the neighbours contrive to get the victim pretty well supplied with even better clothes than those stolen. There is more sympathy due to the case which happens sometimes where a heartless thief makes off with the clothes, shirt and all, of a bather, about the solitary parts of Granton; for here the situation of the victim is really terrible. To run after the thief is nearly out of the question as regards success, even if he could make up his mind to a chase in his very *natural* condition; nor is his remaining remedy much better—a walk so unlike that of Adam through Paradise to the nearest house, a mile off, where he must knock at a door, drive away the opener with a scream, bolt like a robber into a bed-room, and get a walk home in a suit of clothes in which his friends cannot recognise him. Our feelings depend often

upon such strange turns of thought, that a case of this latter kind, so replete with even agony, can scarcely be told without something like a smile working among the gravely-disposed muscles of the face of the hearer; while that of the child, almost always left its *skin* linen, is viewed with indignation and pity. I cannot explain this difference; but it is not difficult to see how, independently of the rather exaggerated notions we entertain of the condition of the victim, the crime of child-stripping should be visited with the execration it generally meets.

In 1838, and thereabouts, this offence of child-stripping increased to an extent which roused the fears of mothers. The deprecators were of course women. My only doubts were, whether there were more than one; for, as I have taken occasion to remark, all such peculiar and out of the way offences are generally the work of some one ingenious artiste; and if more are concerned, they are only parties to a league in which the inventor is the leader. I confess I was more inclined to believe in the single performer, but I was destined in this instance to find myself wrong. I was at least determined to get at the bottom of the mystery, and it wasn't long until I was gratified. In the month of May of the year mentioned, the cases had accumulated, and as yet my inquiries had been unsuccessful. In the new town the cases had been limited to the narrow streets, and latterly they had increased about the foot of the Canongate. In that quarter, accordingly, I found it necessary to be, though not very expedient to be seen, and I soon got upon my proper scent. One day I observed coming from the Watergate three or four women, all of the lowest section of Conglomerates—not altogether a perfectly applicable name here, in so much as my “clear grits” were not rounded by healthy washings, but sharpened by the abrasion of vice and misery. They were busy tying up a bundle, and after indulging in many stealthy looks to the right and left, they made forward up the Canongate. I might safely have stopped them and made inquiry into the contents of their bundle, but I had something else in view, and was content with noting them, all known to me as they were—cast-off Fancies, not genteel enough for being leagued with respectable thieves, and yet below the summer heat of love—trulls or trollops—trojanmongers during day, and troglodytes during night.

I have said I had hopes, and accordingly I had scarcely lost sight of them when I encountered, a little on this side of the Abbey strand, a small Cupid of a fellow standing in the middle of the street, (he had crept from a stair foot,) having a little bit of a shirt on him coming down to his knees, and crying lustily with beslobbered face.

That's my robbed traveller, said I to myself, as I made up to the young sufferer who had so early fallen among thieves.

And just at the same time as the wondering women of the Watergate were pouring in to see the interesting personage, up comes the mother, who (as I afterwards learned) having sent out Johnny for a loaf of bread, and finding he didn't return, issued forth to seek for him. One may guess her astonishment at meeting him within so short a time, probably not ten minutes, in a state approaching to nudity, but the guess would hardly come up to the real thing. The notion of his having been robbed and stripped didn't occur to her, and her amazement did not abate until I told her the truth, whereupon the women—like so many hens whose chickens had been seized by a hawk—broke into a scream of execration which excited the wit of an Irishman, "Have the vagabonds taken the watch from the gintleman? Why didn't they take the shirt too, and make a naked shaim ov it?" And having taken the name of the mother, I made after my strippers.

Nor was it long until I got them again within my vision. It seemed to be a feasting-day with the ogresses. They met and parted, every one looking out for some little Red Ridinghood, who was doubtless unconscious of the tender mercies of the she-wolves. The league consisted of five, all of whom had been through my hands for thefts and robberies—Catharine Lang, Helen Duff, Mary Joice, Margaret Joice, and Robina Finnie. If you have ever been among the wynds, you can form an idea of these hags; if you haven't, you must excuse me—squalor-painting is at best a mud-daub. Amongst all, mark this strange feature—that though some of them had been mothers, the mother was here inverted, the natural feelings turned upside down; the innocent creatures for whom some stray sympathy might have been expected, changed into objects of rapine and cruelty for the sake of a few rags. I soon not only marked their movements, but saw that an opportunity waited them—for where in the old town will you not find clots of children? and are not these, when engaged in play, artless and confiding? Who, however degraded, will harm them? Nay, if there is any creature secure from the drunkard, the libertine, or the thief, it is the merry playmates of the pavement, whose gambols bring back to the seared heart of the vicious the happiness and innocence they have so long been strangers to. Yes, all true, though a little poetical; but I suspect there is a depth even *below* vice.

The wolves' eyes were, as I could see, on the merry Red Ridinghoods; and as their number was five, I beckoned to a constable to get one or two of his brethren and watch in the neighbouring close-mouths. As for myself, I betook me to a stair-foot at the top of New Street, where, besides the advantage of a look-out, I had the chance, according to my calculation, of being on the very spot of the expected operation, for there were but few convenient places about.

The women were so intent upon their victims, that they seemed to have forgotten that while they were supervising they might themselves be supervised. Nor was it long before I began to see that my expectations would be realised. Lang had almost immediately the best dressed of the gamblers in her *motherly* hand, and the bit of sugar-candy was working its charm; so true it is that there is awaiting every one a bait at the end of the standing line, stretched out in the waters of life, about which we are always swimming and flapping our tails, passing and repassing without ever dreaming of the hook. Ay, there are big fish intent upon large enterprises among the deeper places, who will snap at the dead worm even in the midst of living gold-fish. And is it not a pleasure sometimes to see them caught by the garbage when one can net the angler as well as the angled? My moral applies not to the gudgeons, but the pikes.

Yes, I was right, Lang, with the girl in her hand, and followed by Duff and one of the Joices, made right for my entry. I stepped up the stair a few paces to be out of the way. I wanted for ardent reasons that the operation should be as complete as possible, for the cancer had become too deep for any good from mere skin-cutting. The moment they got the confiding soul in, who no doubt thought herself in hands far more kindly than her mother's, the sugar-candy of temptation was changed for the aloes of force. The three, stimulated by the fear of some one coming in upon them, either from below or above, flew at her like hawks pouncing upon a gowdie. Did ever before the fingers of ogresses go with such rapidity to strip the clothes that they might gobble up the body? The little mouth, still stuffed with the sweet bait, was taken care of by a rough hand. The plucking was the work of an instant—bonnet, pinny, napkin, frock, petticoats, boots and stockings.

“It’s a good shurt, Kate.”

“Worth a shilling, Nell.”

“Off wid it,” cried Joice.

The little chemise is whirled over the head, and the minum “nude” is left roaring alone—a chance living lay figure, which would have charmed even Lord Haddo, if he had a palette and brush, with its exquisite natural tints.

If I had had time to wait and see, I might have observed a bit of child life also worthy of a Paton or a Faed; for just as I was hurrying down, in came rushing the playmates, all with wondering eyes to see Phemy (I ascertained her name afterwards) standing naked within a few minutes after she had left their play. Do you think they would ever forget that sight all their born days? But I had another sight in view more interesting to me—even one in wolf-life, with some difference in expression and tints—the grandmamas with the canines and long

claws, so formidable to the Ridings. Nor was I disappointed. I had set my trap so well that I had no need of the candy-bait. The instant the constables had seen what was going on, they had laid hold of the other Joice and Robina Finnie, and the three who had been engaged, having seen their dear sisters in custody, turned down New Street, up which they had gone a few steps, and were seized by me and another constable from behind. Meanwhile the cries of the little nude, mixed with those of her tiny sisterhood, brought a crowd, who, instantly ascertaining the cause of all the uproar, showered their indignation on the culprits with a severity that excluded even Irish humour. Nay, so furious were the hen-mothers, that unless we had taken good care of our sparrow-hawks, there would that day have been more stript than Phemy and her brother-victim of the Watergate; nor would I have answered for discolorations or broken bones. But care was also taken of the tender chicken, who, rolled up in a shawl, became in the midst of the crowd a little heroine, honoured with more endearing epithets and sympathetic condolences than would perhaps ever fall to her portion again.

At the top of the street we collected our prisoners, and marched them gallantly up the Canongate and High Street. One likes to possess the favour of the female part of the people, and this day I got as much of the incense of hero-worship as if I had stopped a massacre of the innocents. I am not sure if some males, too, much given to baby-love, did not glugger with reddened gills in anger at the spoilers of their wives' darlings; all which was no doubt heightened by the impression then in the public mind, produced by the repeated accounts of the instances of this nefarious traffic. The prisoners had even during the previous part of that day committed four strippings of the same kind besides those I had witnessed.

It was not long till I ascertained that I had been wrong in my original conjecture, and that the whole of these thefts had been perpetrated by a gang. During their confinement, and when we expected that they would hold out in their denial of guilt, it was quite a scene to witness the identifications. The witnesses were, of course, the little victims themselves, on whose minds the features of the women had been so indelibly impressed, especially where, like the case of Phemy, "the shurt was a good un," that they not only knew them, but screamed with terror the moment they were brought before them. And to the women, no doubt, they were of that kind of terrible infants so well described by the French, the more by reason, perhaps, that among that people the children have more strange things to see than in our decent country. From searches we got the evidence of the little wardrobes themselves, chiefly through pawns, shewing the immense extent of their assiduous labours. Nor had it been an unprofitable

traffic to them; many of the dresses were taken from well-dressed youngsters in the new town, and you have only to buy those things to know what money it costs to rig out a little man or woman in our day, when the children are taught pride and a love of finery with the supping of porridge. But, after all, it came out that we didn't need these evidences. The vagabonds broke down in the end under the accumulation of proof, and admitted to I do not know how many strippings. They each got eighteen months' imprisonment, and the community was relieved from the cold-blooded and unfeeling practice of child-stripping for a long period afterwards.

The Tobacco-Glutton.

IT is almost a peculiarity of the thief that he is in his furtive appetite omnivorous. Everything that can be reduced to the chyle of money is acceptable to him. While others have predilections, he has absolutely none. It is not that he is always, however, or even often in need, and therefore glad to seize whatever comes in his way. I have known instances where he was by no means driven to his calling by necessity, and yet not only was the passion to appropriate strong in him, but he was at same time regardless of the kind of prey. Yes; it would seem as if his passion sprang out of an inverted view of property, so that the word “yours” incited him to change its meaning. As a certain valorous bird becomes ready for war the moment a brother of the same species is placed opposite to him on the barn-floor, so the regularly-trained “appropriator” gluggers and burns to be at a “possessor,” as representing in his person some actual commodity. As a consequence of this strange feeling I have found, however unlikely it may appear, that thieves have really nothing of the common sense of property—that is, love to it—after they obtain it. Unless for the supply of a want, they often treat what they have stolen as if they not only did not care for it, but absolutely wished it out of their possession,—not from fear of being detected by its presence, but for some *loathing* not easily accounted for. I have a case, however, of a real predilective *artiste*, the more curious that it stands in my books almost alone.

The way in which I became acquainted with Peter Sutherland was singular enough. I was, in April 1837, walking in the Meadows, where I have more than once met wandering staggers whom I could turn to account of my knowledge of mankind. I came up to a young man very busy sending from a black pipe large clouds of tobacco smoke. Always on the alert to add to my number of profiles, I felt some curiosity about this lover of the weed, and going up to him, I made my very usual request for a light.

“By all means,” said he, as he drew out his matchbox (and matches were then dear, sometime after Jones’s monopoly) and struck for me what I wanted; “and I can fill your pipe too,” said he, “for I like a smoker.”

“Very well,” said I, as I handed him my pipe, which was not out of the need of a supply; “I like a smoke, though I cannot very well tell why.”

“Why, just because, like me, you like it,” said he laughing; “it makes one comfortable. I deny the half of the rhyme—

‘Tobacco and tobacco reek,
It maks me weel when I’m sick;
Tobacco and tobacco reek,
When I’m weel it maks me sick.’

It never makes me sick,—I smoke at all times, sick or well, night or day, in or out, working or idle.”

“You carry it farther than I do,” said I, “or, I rather think, than any body I ever knew. I cannot touch the pipe when I’m unwell.”

“I never found myself in that way yet,” replied he. “I believe if death could take a cutty within those grinning teeth of his, I would smoke a pipe with him.”

“But it must cost you much money,” said I, as I glanced at his seedy coat and squabashed hat.

“Oh, I can keep it off the price of my dinner,” was the reply.

“But does it not dry your throat and make you yearn for ale?”

“Never a bit; though water, I admit, is a bad smoking drink. I take the ale when I can get it, and if you’ll stand a pot, this minute I’m ready. If I can’t get it, I stick to the tobacco.”

“And if you can’t get the tobacco,” said I, with more meaning perhaps than he wotted, “what do you do?”

“That never happened yet,” replied he, with a chuckle, “and it never will.”

“You wouldn’t steal it, would you?”—a question much in my way.

“I hope not,” said he; “but if I did, ’twould only be the starved wretch taking a roll out of the baker’s basket, and you know that’s not punishable. My roll is just of another kind.”

“You’d better not try the experiment.”

“Never fear,” said he; “I intend always to smoke my own twist, and have a bit to give to a friend in need.”

And under the influence of this generous sentiment, he sent forth a cloud worthy of Jove’s breath to send it away into thin air, and leaving me, he struck off in the direction of the links, probably to see the golfers. As I looked after him, there he was blowing away in the distance, and apparently not less happy than King Coil, albeit that king was of a nation that loved another weed. I have known great smokers, but never found that the passion, like that of opium, goes on without a term. It has a conservative way about it, I think, and cures its own excess by producing a reaction in the stomach somehow. I have noticed, too, that the greatest smokers give up at some period of their lives, almost always—at

least much oftener than the moderate-cloud compellers.

But be all that as it may, it is certain that I looked upon my friend as a kind of tobacco-glutton, only a curiosity not in my way, nor did I expect that he would ever be so. I say not, being unaware that I have learned my readers a bad habit in looking for some ingenious connexion where none as yet exists—just as if I were a weaver of a cunning web, where the red thread is taken up where it suits me. By no means so, I may say; but will I thereby prevent you throwing your detective vision before my narrative, when I begin to tell you that some considerable time after this interview with my tobacco-fancier, I got information of a robbery of a grocer's shop at Ratho, from which a great many articles were taken, among the rest several rolls of tobacco, besides a number of ounces? Just the man, you will say, and so said I, as I went over the description of the thief as given to the grocer by some neighbours who saw him hanging about the shop. I recollected my friend perfectly; but in order to abate your wonder at such coincidences, please to remember that I was in the habit of going up to every lounge I met, and that I have so retentive a remembrance of faces, that I have a hundred times picked out my man from impressions derived from these casual encounters. I had never seen my tobacco-lover before nor after, and knew no more where to go for him, than where to look for another such jolly smoker out of Holland.

One night (just the old way) I was walking, with Mulholland behind me, down towards the west end of West Crosscauseway. My object at the time, I recollect, was to observe what was going on about Flinn's house in that quarter; and I frankly confess, that so little hope had I of ever seeing my old friend of the Meadow Walk, that I was thinking nothing about him; nor when I saw a lounging-like fellow—it was in the gloaming—standing at the turn of the street speaking to a woman, had I the slightest suspicion that he was one on whom I had any claims for attention; and perhaps if there is to be a miracle in the matter, by hook or crook, it consisted in this, that with a view to get a nearer look of him to see whether he belonged to Flinn's, I again went up to ask, what I did not want, a light. My first glance satisfied me that I had my tobacco-fancier before me; but I was perfectly satisfied he had no recollection of his friend of the Meadow Walk, and with this confidence I could enjoy a little fun. He took my pipe quite frankly.

“Why, there's nothing in it,” said he, with the old generosity, “I will fill it for you, for I don't like to see a smoker with his pipe not only out, but empty.”

And taking out a pretty large piece of tobacco, he twisted off a bit, took out a knife, and bidding me hold my hand, he cut it into shreds, filled my pipe, and

lighted it.

“You seem to have plenty of tobacco,” said I.

“Oh yes,” said he; “and since you seem to be smoked out, I’ll give you a quid for supper.”

And to be sure he was not slack in giving me at least a quarter of an ounce.

“Capital stuff,” said I, as I blew away; “where do you get it?”

“Special shops,” said he; “I won’t have your small green-shop article.”

I admit to have been a little cruel in this case, for I felt an inclination to play with my old friend, and straightway gave him the end of the thread he had drawn in the Meadows. By and by he got on in the old strain in praise of the object of his passion.

“It makes me comfortable,” and so forth, reverting again to the rhyme, to the half of which he again demurred, and which I really rejoiced to hear, nor can help repeating—

“Tobacco and tobacco reek,
It maks me weel when I’m sick;
Tobacco and tobacco reek,
When I’m weel it maks me sick.”

Restraining my laughter, and recurring again to the subject of the shop where such excellent stuff was to be got,

“In Edinburgh?” said I.

“No,” said he, grandly, “there’s no such thing in Edinburgh. It’s made by a special manufacturer, who uses the best young leaf from Virginia, and who wouldn’t put a piece of common continental stuff in—no an’ it were to make his fortune. Ah, he likes a good smoke himself, and that’s the reason, as I take it.”

“It’s so wonderfully good stuff,” said I, preparing for my last whiff, “that if I knew where to send for half a pound, I would be at the expense of the carriage. I see no reason why you should keep it a secret; such a manufacturer deserves encouragement. Come, is it at Leith, where so much of the real thing is smuggled?”

“Never uses smuggled tobacco,” said he, as he looked to the woman with complacent smile, as if, according to my thought, he wanted to appear big in her presence—a little simple even I myself in this thought, as you will see immediately. “I find no use,” he added, “in blowing in the Queen’s face.”

“Ratho?” said I.

And the word was no sooner out, than the girl went off like a flash, proving

thereby that she was an accomplice, and he at the same instant; and, before I could seize him, he made up the Potterrow like a Cherokee Indian throwing away his calumet of peace in escaping from war. I made instantly after him, quickened by the conviction of my folly in uttering the charmed *word* without using at the same time my *hand*. Being supple in those days, and, though I say it, a first-rate runner, sufficient to have coped with Lapsley himself—whom I had afterwards something to do with, though not in the running line—I made up with my man in the entry leading from the Potterrow to Nicolson Square, where, collaring him, I brought him to a stand. He became quite peaceful, and as I walked him to the Office, I let him up to our old acquaintanceship—the recollection of the part he took in which, so like the conversation into which I had so playfully led him, made him bite his lip for his stupidity.

“I fear you will now know,” said I, “whether your case of the starved wretch and the roll is applicable to your *roll*. I put you on your guard at the time, and you see what you have made of it.”

“Tobacco!” said the poor fellow with a groan, which went to my heart like so many other groans necessitated to be shut out. “I began to smoke when a mere child. I imitated my father. The passion grew upon me by degrees, till I came to spend more money on’t than I did upon meal. I was never happy unless I was steeped in the beloved lethargy, and always miserable when I could not get it. It has been to me what drink is to so many. I would have pawned my coat for a pipeful; ay, and I *have* pawned for it. Surely this is God’s work following the devil’s.”

And letting his head drop upon his breast, he groaned again deeper than before.

“Yes,” said I, “you have been upon the sliding scale. You began with a *whiff*, and you will end with a *blast* that will carry you to Botany Bay.”

“Yes, yes,” he responded, “I now see that a very small gratification may be fed up into a passion, and that passion to a crime, and then the burst.” And after some time he added, “But maybe the judges may have pity on me, when they know how I was pushed on from less to more.”

“Then they would pity all that come before them,” said I; “all crimes have small beginnings and big endings.”

And so I took him to the Office, where I proceeded to search him, and here is something curious: He wore a kind of bonnet—a Gilmerton bonnet, because it is usually worn by the carters of that village. The article has often a hoop in it, to keep it light on the head; and concealed in the case of the hoop there were a

number of plies of the stolen twist. Nor was this all. On pulling up the legs of his trousers, there were discovered three or four ply on each leg, serving the purpose of garters. Then within his neckcloth there were so many plies, that he might have been said to have had a tobacco neckerchief. You might have called him a tobacco idol, fitted for being set up to be worshipped by the votaries of the leaf.

No doubt he admitted afterwards that he had stolen from the shop the other articles amissing, but he asserted that it was the desire to possess the tobacco that urged him to the robbery, and that once being in he had laid hold of whatever came to his hand. I cannot help remarking, that my poor tobacco-fancier paid dear for his quid, in giving for it seven long years of servitude in Botany Bay. I have sometimes wondered whether, when there, he ever took a pipe into his mouth. Not unlikely.

The Thieves' Wedding.

I HAVE already alluded to the subject of the flinty-heartedness of the fraternity among whom I have so long laboured, and I may illustrate the same feature by another case, which is calculated as well to shew a peculiarity somewhat better known—the elasticity of their enjoyments, if the rant and roar of their mirth can go by a name expressive of a heartfelt affection.

Is there any reason in the world why thieves should not marry one with another? or rather, were we to bear in mind the words of the priest, importing the necessity of faith and confidence in each other, might we not rather expect that these celebrations should occur oftener than they do? The nature of the connexion might, indeed, suggest an addition to the formula, to the effect that they should be made to promise not “to peach” on each other; and as for the words, “Whom God hath joined together let no man separate,” these might be dispensed with, to save the judges and such as I from breaking a law of the Bible. The “duty,” “obedience,” and “affection” might remain as approved by experience. But however decorous these unions, (and pearls, you know, have been called unions, as well they might,) it is certain that we see very few of them. When they occur, they are very genuine, in so much as the contracting parties *know each other*,—a peculiarity almost entirely confined to their case; but, as I have said, they occur very seldom. They seem to have a sort of instinct that they are liable to changes of *dwelling* as well as changes of *country*, and hence their notion that it is better for both males and females to join their fortunes and affections in that loose and easy way, which enables them to snap the silken bands when it is necessary to assume the iron fetters.

So much of prosy prelude to that gay scene which occurred in Bailie's Court, head of the Cowgate, in January 1855, when Richard Webb and Catharine Bryce were, amidst the strains of the Tam Lucas of the feast, made man and wife. That they knew each other was beyond doubt, for had not the gay Catharine been twice condemned for shop-lifting, and Richard carried the honours of as many convictions for the minor crime of theft? Yes, it would be well for our Beatrices and Birons if they knew beforehand tempers so well developed. When did you ever hear of thieves disgracing themselves by going to the divorce courts? They are contented with the justiciary, or even the sheriff. They despise, too, restorations of tocher; and as for the one turning witness against the other's frailties, you never hear of it.

This celebration, when I heard of it, appeared to me curious. I don't say ludicrous, because marriage is an august ceremony, originated in Paradise, and so very often ending there. And why should not M'Levy be among his children, to whose happiness he had devoted so many years of his life, of toil and danger? I know that you will say, Why should he not be there? And to be sure there he was. I got indeed no invitation, any more than I did when the handsome hawker was to have been joined, by a "closing thread" well birsed, to the disappointed snab. When people are insulted in this way, they get over it by calling it an oversight—yet they don't put the parties right by going as I did, and shewing that degree of magnanimity which consists in heaping coals of fire on the head.

As Bailie's Court, in the Cowgate, does not often respond to the strains of a marriage fiddle, there behoved to be a crowd, and it behoved that crowd to be witty at the expense of the happy pair; for when were not the poor, who form such crowds, envious? When I arrived, I found them all in that kind of uproar—hurraing at every new comer—which characterises scenes of this nature; and my appearance quickened the humour into such bursts as "M'Levy is to join them with handcuffs," "Let up the priest," "Where is your white cravat," and the like—jokes which were really not happy, in so much as the nuptial knot had already been tied, and the sacred restraints of the guests were loosened to the extent of the freedom of dancing. On going up stairs, I found that all my suspicions of affront at not being invited were mocked by an open door for all comers, whence issued just such sounds of fiddle, feet, and fun, as one might expect. On my entry, there awaited me an honour which I believe would not have been awarded to the Lord Justice-Clerk; for my very appearance stopt the merrymakers when in full spring, just as if they were overawed by the appearance of a winged messenger. And no wonder, for I saw there many for whom I had procured lodgings, supplied with food, and even sent on an excursion to the sunny climes of the south; but no man has a right to enforce more gratitude than what is due to him, and I was vexed at throwing a cloud over so happy a scene.

"Go on, my lads and lasses," said I. "You know you belong to me, but this night you shall have your liberty."

"Give him a dram," cried the bride.

And straightway, to be sure, I got my glass of whisky; but not content with that gift, they pulled me into the middle of a reel, where I am not sure if I did not actually dance,—nay, I won't answer for it that I was not whirled round by some very passable arms, not only for good colour, but for softness.

I remained only for a short time. I had gratified my curiosity, and I wished to save them from the embarrassment of a presence in many ways suggestive of

associations. I had not been disappointed; but I am sure that when I appeared again to the crowd without having Webb or Catharine with me, or at least some of the guests, they were disappointed—so envious, I am sorry to say, is that common nature of ours, and so impatient of the joys of others. Another thing gave a kind of satisfaction. I saw no chance for this celebration being disgraced by pocket-picking—an occurrence so common in crowds—for here truly there were no pockets to pick, that is, no pockets with anything in them, beyond a quid of tobacco and a pipe, or at most a few pence. You will see how this fond hope was destined to be disappointed.

Having joined my assistant, who waited for me at the foot of the stair, we went along to the Cowgate on the look-out; and having finished our survey, we turned to retrace our steps by the scene of the marriage. It was a frosty night, I remember, with thick snow, heaps of which were thrown up on the sides of the cart-ruts. As we were thus proceeding, I heard coming up the rapid steps of a runner; and who should this be but Bill Orr, one of my own. He stumbled against a heap of snow, and fell at my feet.

“What’s all the hurry, Bill?” said I, as he was getting up.

But Bill clearly did not like the question, far less did he like the anticipation of being laid hold of, for he was up in an instant and off, much quicker than a wind-driven snow-flake.

“Where’s the pursuer?” said I to my assistant; “Bill Orr is not the man to run at that rate to get out of the snow.”

The pertinancy of the question was no more apparent to me, than to you, or any one who notices the common actions of mankind, which display a proportion in their vivacity corresponding to the degrees of impulse; nor did the notion leave me that something was wrong with my old friend, and I was accordingly on the outlook. On coming again to Bailie’s Court I was attracted by some noises, not at all like the fun I had witnessed before in that quarter; and on going forward, ascertained, from the lamentations of an old poors’-house pensioner—a very old woman, who in spite of her age and poverty had been attracted in that cold night by the festivity of the marriage—that she had been robbed; yes, a poors’-house pensioner robbed of the sum of four pennies and one halfpenny. Ludicrous enough; ay, but pitiful enough too, when you remember that that fourpence-halfpenny would keep, and was intended to keep, that very *poor* pauper a day out of the very few she would see on this side of the grave. Don’t wonder, therefore, at a grief which was intense, if it did not amount to as strong an agony as those shrivelled nerves could bear without snapping. I had here my sympathies; and if anything could add to my disturbance, it was that in

spite of my hopes this auspicious wedding was disgraced.

“Be easy, my good woman,” said I; “I will get both your fourpence-halfpenny and the heartless rogue that took it.”

“God bless you, Mr M‘Levy; ye’ve saved mony a ane’s property, and ye’re sent here this night to save mine.”

And had she no right to think fourpence-halfpenny entitled to be designated *property*? It was at least her all; and when all is lost, it is, I suspect, of little importance whether it be a thousand pounds or a penny. Nor was she less miserable than one would be at the loss of a fortune,—only the *tear* was not there, perhaps because an out-door pensioner does not get nourishment with sap enough in it to produce that peculiar evidence (which is said to be limited to our species) of human grief.

And now there was another contrast between what was going on up-stairs and that which was enacted below. There, merriment was the produce of thieving; here, the offspring of the same parent was sorrow.

“Wait there, my good woman,” said I, “till I bring you your property and the thief.”

And upon the instant there arose a cry of, “Hurra for M‘Levy,” which I received with becoming modesty.

So away I went back the road I had come; nor did I diverge till I came to the house of Mrs M‘Lachlan, who sold beer and whisky to be *consumed* and to *consume* on the premises, where, in a room, surrounded by some of his own tribe, who should have been at the marriage, I discovered Bill Orr, with his own stoup before him, in all the confidence of security, and in all the joy of his fourpence-halfpenny.

“What was your hurry, Bill, when you fell?” said I. “You haven’t told me that yet.”

“Perhaps to get to this jug of ale in a cold night,” replied the rogue.

“No,” said I; “you wanted away from the poor old pensioner whom you robbed of fourpence-halfpenny.”

Bill was choked with the truth.

“Mrs M‘Lachlan,” continued I, “has Bill paid for his stoup?”

“Ay, I never trust till the ale’s drunk,” replied she; “for sometimes it taks awa’ the memory, and they get confused, and say they paid afore.”

“A penny the stoup?”

“Ay.”

“And therefore I expect there’s threepence-halfpenny in your pocket, Bill. Turn it out.” But he wouldn’t, and I was obliged to extract it.

“And now, Mrs M’Lachlan,” said I, “though stolen money cannot be reclaimed, when I tell you that our friend Bill here stole it from the pocket of an old woman-pensioner, you’ll not refuse to repay it.”

“No, though it were a shilling,” replied she, as she put down the penny.

“Now there is one I shall make happy,” said I, as I put the money in my pocket, and taking Bill by the coat I carried him off, without even permitting him to finish his pot, the remaining contents of which would be a halfpenny to Mrs M’Lachlan for her penny.

So pulling Bill along—I might safely have allowed him to walk between me and my assistant, but I felt some yearning to hold him tight—I took my “pearl of Orr’s Island” to Bailie’s Court, where there waited for me my poor pensioner, as well as the crowd, who no doubt wanted to see whether I would fulfil my promise. The moment they saw Bill in my hands they raised three cheers, more grateful to me than the *eclat* of having recovered a thousand pounds. There stood the woman, and before her Bill, the personification of lusty youth preying on shrivelled old age; but Bill was as unmoved as a stone, and I thought of making him feel a little, if that were possible. I knew I had no right to give up the money, but I was inclined to make an exception, were it for nothing else than to save the credit of the thieves’ wedding.

“Now,” said I, “Bill, you will give this money to the woman to whom it belongs.”

And the rogue, finding it useless to disobey, took the money and handed it to the woman, in the midst of another shout. I never received so many blessings from a sufferer all my life as I did from this poor pensioner; and the feelings of the crowd, depraved as many of them no doubt were, shewed that there was something at the bottom of the most callous spirits that responds to justice. But I was not satisfied, for I made him declare to his victim that he was sorry he had robbed her,—an admission due to the fear he entertained of being torn by the angry people. Nor was even this all, for I sent up to the wedding-party for a dram to the sufferer, whereby I still maintained the *honour* of the marriage, and had the satisfaction to see the old woman’s eye lighted up as bright as that of the bride.

And having gone through all these manœuvres, which afforded me no little satisfaction, and perhaps more to the crowd, I again took hold of Bill, and dragged him as roughly to the Office as was compatible with my obligation not

to punish a man before sentence.

Sometime after, Bill was tried by the High Court. He was an old offender, and this had its weight with the judge; but it was easily to be seen that the peculiar circumstances of the case had more than their usual weight. The judge became quite eloquent, and no doubt he had a good subject to handle, but a very impenetrable object to impress. Bill was as unmoved as ever; I am not sure if he did not laugh,—another example of what I have so often stated, that the hardihood of these creatures is not modified by punishment, nay, even transportation. Yet I have no doubt that if this young fellow's heart had been handled softly when it was capable of being mollified, he might have been of some use to his kind, if not a credit to himself. We have sometimes reason to doubt the effect of training even among the children of respectable people, but I suspect such a result arises from their being otherwise spoiled. The parents let out at the one end the web woven by the schoolmaster at the other, and thus education loses the character of its efficacy. With the "Raggediers" in an industrial school, no such spoiling would be permitted. The good tendency would be all in one way; and the devil would not, through the parents, be permitted to pull in the opposite direction. What though Bill Orr got a *year* for every *penny*, and one to boot for the odd halfpenny! He would be the same Bill Orr at the end as he was that night of the thieves' wedding.

So much for another phase of the "sliding scale," exhibiting, as it does, the facility with which the thief can *descend* even to the zero of criminality, as exemplified in this pitiful robbery,—the very minimum point, I may say, in the whole scale of theftuous depravity.

The Pleasure-Party.

No kind of literature can be more detrimental to morals than that of which we have had some melancholy examples from the London press, where the colours that belong to romance are thrown over pictures of crime otherwise revolting. Nor is much required for this kind of writing,—a touch of fate calling for sympathy, or a dash of cleverness extorting admiration, will suffice. Shave the fellow's head, and put a canvas jacket on him, and you have your hero as he ought to be. See M'Pherson with the fiddle out of his hands, and think of his beating the rump of a poor widow's cow which he had stolen, and was to feed on half raw, like a savage, as he was, and what comes of Burns' immortal song? Catch nature painting up those things with any other colours than those of blood and mud. And yet I have been a little weak sometimes in this way myself, when I have found boldness joined to dexterity. One needs an effort to get quit of rather natural feelings in contemplating some four youths, male and female, well endowed in person and intellect, and with so much of that extraneous elegance derived from the tailor and a well-practised imitation of the great, set down to plan an invasion of a foreign country, strange to them in language and manners, and with no other weapons for spoil than their boldness and their wits. A little attention enables us to disabuse ourselves, by pointing out that the boldness is impudence, and the invention deceit, and we come pleasantly back to the huckaback—the rig and furrow, and the shaved head.

In September 1856, I was in Princes Street on a general survey. It was a fine day for the time of the year, and the street was crowded with that mixed set of people, preponderating so much towards the grand and gay, for which that famous promenade has of late years become remarkable. Yes, there has been a change going on, and I have marked it:—a far more expensive style of dressing in the middle classes—a more perfect imitation of the gait and manners of the higher, so that I defy you to tell a shopkeeper's son or daughter from a lord's—more of the grandees, too, and ten foreigners for one formerly seen—the only indelible mark remaining being that of the female “unfortunates,” destined to be for ever distinguished, and something about my old friends which they cannot conceal from a practised eye. Between St David Street and St Andrew Street, my attention was claimed by two ladies and a gentleman, who appeared to me to be English. They were what we call “tops,”—that is, you could hardly suppose it possible for one to be more obliged to the secretion of the silk-worm, or the ingenuity of the tailor or milliner. It was far more easy for me to mark them than

to give you reasons why they had an interest for me. What though I were to say that they appeared a degree too curious about the dresses of the lady-promenaders, and verified too much the common saying, which really has no reference to pocket-fanciers, that if you look in at a window, you will presently find people at your back?

At any rate, I thought I had some claims upon them, not that they were “old legs,” as we call the regulars, for, as I have hinted, they were entirely new to me, but that it appeared they thought they had claims upon others,—the natural claims, you know, that are born with us. A new-born infant will hang at any breast, or even fix to a glass nipple, and these people only retain their infantine nature. So I told Riley to shew deference, and keep off before them, always within eyeshot, while I kept up my interesting observation. I soon noticed that they were hopeful, with all that fidgettiness which belongs to flattering expectation. They wanted something, and would doubtless have been glad to see an old lady or gentleman faint; but there were none in that way, and no runaway horse would strike against a lamp-post, and throw its rider on the pavement. Neither did those clots of people at the windows seem worthy of their attention, yet they flitted about them, parted to meet again, and were as active as butterflies whirling in the air, and sucking no honey. With all this idle play, they kept up their cheerfulness, indulging in jokes, laughter, and other high jinks, so that I was doubtful whether they were less happy than I.

With the same fluttering levity, indulged in amidst what appeared to me might have been considered heavy expectations, they all three went tripping gaily up St Andrew Street, at the top of the northern division of which they met a very little dapper dandy, not over five feet and an inch or two. A more exquisite miniature for the cabinet of a fine lady I had never seen before,—dressed, brushed, combed, studded, ringed, and anointed; and so nimble, that if Gulliver had put him into his coat-pocket, it wouldn't have been without danger to his silver snuff-box. He seemed to be the friend of the taller belle, and, as I afterwards learned, bore the historical name of Beaumont, while she travelled by the name of Miss Mary Grant; the other, Evans, was devoted to the lesser lady, Miss Mary Smith. The little man must have been more successful than they, if I could judge from a united laugh which followed a stealthy glimpse of something which he shewed cautiously, and which I naturally took for a purse. They seemed to have much in hand—one pointing one way—another, another—then a few minutes' deliberation, not without signs of impatience, as if they thought they were losing time. At length Beaumont, who, though small, seemed to be the leader, pointed north, drawing out the while a watch, and they appeared decided,

all setting off along St Andrew Square. I immediately concluded they were for Scotland Street station, for I knew the northern train went about the time, and there is there often a conveniently crowded platform.

My conjecture was right. The party made direct for Scotland Street, and I signalled for Riley, who had kept his distance, without losing his vision. We followed, keeping apart, and enjoyed as we went the frolics of the party, who, coming from the heart of civilisation, probably considered themselves among some savage people, who could not help admiring—and would not be difficult to rob. As for the police of Scotland, they need not be much considered, and they at least had not heard of so humble an individual as I. So new to the town were they, that one of them, taking me by surprise, came running back, and asked me the way to the station. It was Miss Mary Grant.

“Very easy, ma’am—down to the end of the street, turn the railing on the left, and go round till you come to Scotland Street on a line with this.”

“Thank you, sir, and much obliged.”

Your *obligation* may be increased by and by, said I to myself, as I saw her hopping on to join the party—not the first time I’ve been asked the way to the net.

Miss Mary had understood my directions very well, for they never hesitated or stopped till they got to the top of the stair leading to the station-house. Being so utterly unknown to our English friends, there was no necessity for my usual caution; and accordingly, the moment they disappeared, Riley and I went forward to the parapet overlooking the stair and platform, and placing our elbows upon it, we put ourselves in the position of lounging onlookers. Our point of observation was excellent. We could see the entire platform, and everything that was going on there. A crowd of people were there, among whom a number of likely ladies, with pockets far better filled than those of mere promenaders in Princes Street. A kindred feeling might suggest to our “party of pleasure,” that people can’t travel now-a-days without a considerable sum of money with them, and therefore wherever there was a pocket there would also be money. And then the habit of purse-carrying, which brings all the money together—the notes in the one end, and the silver or gold in the other—is a preparation just made for thieves, a convenience for which, with little time to spare, they cannot be too grateful. My friends seemed to be delighted with the bustling assemblage, but then it was to last only for a few minutes, when the train would be down, and the platform left in solitude. So they behaved to make hay while the sun shone, and they knew it. The first observation I made was to the effect that they took no tickets—just as I suspected. My second, that they

began play at once, though with care, and in that shy way preliminarily to the required boldness when the hurry-scurry would begin with the coming of the train. It rather seemed that they only *marked* victims in the meantime—keeping separate—threading the crowd with alacrity and hope, picking up suitabilities by rapid glances.

Then came the rumble of the train down the tunnel, at the sound of which the passengers began to move, carrying their luggage to the edge of the platform, and all on the tiptoe of expectation. But now I fairly admit that I never more regretted so much the want of half-a-dozen of eyes. The nimble artistes were all at work at the same time—they were, in short, in a hurry of pocket-picking; and though myself cool enough, I was for an instant or two under the embarrassment of a choice to direct my vision from one to another, or to fix upon one. Miss Mary Smith was at the farther end—Evans busy helping a fat lady with her luggage—the little Beaumont deep among floating silks, and invisible. My mark was Miss Grant, who was devoted to the first-class passengers, and though versatile in the extreme, had a main chance in her eye, a lady who afterwards turned out to be Mrs C——n in Danube Street. From this lady, I saw her take a purse, just as the silk gown was being pulled in after the body. The whistle blows, away goes the train, and our friends are left all but alone on the platform.

It was now our time. Moving slowly—for though they had been in a great hurry, that was no reason for my being so too—accompanied by Riley, I entered the door at the top of the gangway, where we met the party coming up. Miss Mary Grant had not had time even to deposit her purse in her pocket, and Riley seizing her hand took it from her. They saw at once that they had been watched, and the face of the Miss Mary, whom I had directed to the scene, paled under my eye. A sign to the porters behind me brought them ready to help, and the station-master coming forward, with his assistance we bundled the whole four into the station-house. A telegraphic message was instantly sent to Burntisland, calling for the lady who had been robbed to return, and I then proceeded to search my “party of pleasure.” The purse captured contained only 9s. 6d., but from their pockets altogether I took notes to the amount of £50. And next came an evidence of the strength of that friendship which exists among this class of people, and which in those four, in particular, appeared to be so strong and heartfelt only a short time before. They swore beautiful English oaths that no one of them was known to the other; and as to the unfortunate Mary, who had the purse, they all repudiated her, even the dapper Beaumont, who swore that he was an English gentleman of family, connected distantly—how far, a point of honour prevented him from condescending on—with the noble family of that name. But if the

unhappy Mary was thus disowned, she could be a self-sacrifice, for she acknowledged that she did not know them, and that she had angled on her own hook. We had thus, like a bomb thrown among combustibles, severed a very close connexion; but then I had the consolation to think that we would be able to bring them together again at the bar of the court, where, if they should be once more separated, they might celebrate the occasion with tears.

It was, I admit, rather an occasion that, on which, helped by the station-master and the gallant porters, and escorted by an admiring crowd who wondered at such fine gentry being in the hands of the police, I conducted my swells to my place of deposit. I'm not sure if we had not some hurras, though I did not court notoriety of this kind; but the moment the people got an inkling they were English thieves, the old feelings between the nations seemed to rise up again—at least I could see nothing but satisfaction in the faces around us; nor was my satisfaction less when I introduced my friends to my superior, who doubtless did not expect the honour of receiving in his chambers four persons so distinguished, one being no less than a Beaumont—by Jupiter, 5 feet 2 inches, by the line!

The great Jack Cade, after swaying thousands of people, at last fell into the hands of a very simple clown. So here, as we soon understood, I had had the good fortune, in a very accidental way, of catching, at the very commencement of their Scotch career, four of the most celebrated of the English swells. They were quite well known to the authorities of London, Liverpool, and Manchester, where they had exercised their skill with so much adroitness that they had slipt through many well-drawn loops of the law; and having escaped so often there, where the detectives are supposed to be so much cleverer than ours, they had some grounds for the hope, so well expressed by their hilarity, short-lived as it was, that they would again cross the borders well loaded with Scotch booty.

Next day Mrs C——n obeyed the telegraph—an instrument, by the by, which seems to have more command at the end of the wire than spoken or written words, the more by token, perhaps, that it speaks like old Jove, through lightning. She at once identified the purse with the 9s. 6d.—yes, that 9s. 6d. which condemned parties who had ravished England of hundreds, and brought down a pillar of the house of Beaumont. The trial was just as easy an affair as the capture. Sheriff Hallard, that judge so steeled against all difference between rich and poor, genteel or ungenteel, tried them. I figured more than I desired or merited in his speech—which, by the by, I would like to reproduce, but I fear to affront the honourable judge's eloquence. There is no harm in an attempt at shewing my powers of memory, when I give warning that they are feeble in

forensic display, whatever they may be in retaining the faces of thieves.

“Prisoners, you have been found guilty of robbing from the person. It is not often that I have to pass sentence on people of your description from England, but I hope the circumstance of my being a Scottish judge will not be held to sway me in the discharge of my duty. Yet I am not sure if the circumstance of your being English men and women is not a considerable aggravation of your crime. What did Scotland ever do to you that you should come here, hundreds of miles, to prey upon her unwary subjects? Was it not rather that you thought her honest and simple people would become easy victims in hands made expert by efforts to elude the grasp of English authorities? You forgot, too, that in comparison of England we are poor, and less able to lose what we earn by hard labour. But such considerations have small weight with persons of your description, who, if you can get money to be spent in debauchery, care little whether it come from the rich or the poor. Now the issue has proved that you had made a wrong calculation, not only as to the intelligence and sharpness of our people, but the boldness and adroitness of our detectives; and I hope you will bear in mind, and tell your compeers in England, what we fear they sometimes forget, that we have not renounced our emblem of a thistle—the pricks of which you may expect to feel, when I now sentence you to sixty days’ hard labour. I am only sorry it cannot be made months,—a period more suited to your offence. For the advantage you thus gain, you are indebted to that cleverness in Mr M’Levy and his assistant by which you were so soon caught; for if you had been allowed to go on, you would have earned the attention of the High Court, and the privilege of being transported. I hope you may profit by the lesson he has taught you.”

The Club Newspaper.

THE sliding scale is so far applicable to us as well as to thieves. As the latter proceed from crime to crime, the less to the greater—in the scarlet tint from the lighter to the deeper, so we slide on from trace to trace till we get to the fountain. And there is this similarity, too, between the cases. Our beginnings are small, but they are hopeful, and as the traces increase, we get more energetic and bolder: so with the thieves; there is an achieved success which leads to the greater triumph. Nay, I have known the parallel carried further. If we fail in one attempt, we try again; and I have a case to give, but not just now, where the urchin Gibbon's first attempt at a till, from which he appropriated *one farthing*, and for which he was punished by confinement, was quickly succeeded by a greater triumph, to the amount of *seventeen shillings and sixpence*. My present case has a peculiarity, in so far as I contrived to make a *paltry* theft the lever whereby to raise up another of a serious description.

In 1840, Mr Ellis, the manager of the Queen Street Club, was exposed to much trouble, suspicion, and difficulty, by complaint after complaint, on the part of the officers frequenting and sleeping in the house, that money, in five and ten-pound notes, had been taken from their portmanteaus. The case was painful to Mr Ellis in more respects than one; for although no suspicion could attach to him, yet in all such concealed robberies, the natural shades that spread everywhere over all in positions liable to be suspected, require to be elevated or dispersed by the light of reason, and that light comes always with an effort. Mr Ellis came to the Office, and I got my charge. I saw at once that the culprit was one of the waiters; but then there were several in the house, and I knew all the difficulties of a case of that kind. The wider spread the suspicion, the less easy the concentration. I would do my best, and Mr Ellis had confidence at least in my zeal.

Repairing, accordingly, to the Club, one forenoon, I questioned Mr Ellis as to the habits of the waiters, and, in particular, which of them lived out of the house. I found that one man, Donald M'Leod, had a house in Rose Street, with a wife and no children; and in order that I may not take too much credit to myself, I may state that that man was more suspected by his master than any of the others. I was now so far on my way. I called the waiters together in a room with closed doors.

“Now, gentlemen,” (that's my polite way) “I have to inform you that there is

a robber among you. Bags and portmanteaus have for a lengthened period been opened in this house, and sums of money extracted. All who are innocent will be glad to answer in the affirmative to my question. Will you consent to your trunks and persons being searched?"

"Yes," answered every one.

"Donald M'Leod," continued I, "an honest married man, with a decent wife, I have no doubt can have no objection to my going to his house and taking a look about it—not that I have any suspicion of him because he lives out of the Club, but that his trunks being at home, I must make him like the others."

"No objection," replied honest Donald, whose honesty, however, did not sit so easy upon him as honest Rab's of certain romantic notoriety.

"You will all remain here till I finish my process in the house."

To which last question having got the answer I expected, I went out and told Mr Ellis to take care that no messenger should, in the meantime, be allowed to leave the house. The search among the trunks yielded me just as much as I expected—perhaps a little more, in the shape of certain love epistles, which might have made a little fortune to the street speech-criers. What a strange undercurrent, swirling in eddies, does love keep for ever moving! But what had I to do with love, who only wanted money,—two things that are so often cruelly separated, but which should be for ever joined.

I then proceeded to Rose Street, and soon finding my house, I knocked gently. A quiet, decent-looking woman opened it.

"Are you Mrs M'Leod?"

"Ay," she answered without fear or suspicion, for what did she know of James M'Levy the thief-catcher?

"Well, my good woman," said I, as I shut the door behind me somewhat carefully, and afterwards sat down, "you don't know, I fancy, that some things have been amissing belonging to the gentlemen of the Club? Donald, no doubt, so far as I know, is innocent; but as all the waiters, like honest men, have consented that their trunks should be searched, it is but fair, you know, that I should take a look through your house, to put them all on a footing of equality."

"And that's right," said she, with really so little timidity, or rather with so much apparent sincerity, that, if I had not been M'Levy, I would have thought that Donald was an honest man after all.

With this permission, and under so kindly a sanction, I commenced my search, by no means a superficial one—perhaps deeper in proportion to Mrs M'Leod's seeming sincerity. It was not altogether unsuccessful—small thefts

lead on in the scale to big ones, and superficial traces to deeper. I got some newspapers, one with the Club's address, and putting them together, said—

“Mrs M'Leod, you will allow me to take these papers; I fancy Mr Ellis allows Donald, as a favourite, to take away an old one now and then to amuse him at home, and, perhaps, to read to you.”

“Nae doot,” said she, “ye dinna fancy Donald wad steal them.”

“By no means. I never said it,” replied I. I was not bound to say I never *thought* it—a little beyond my candour.

So I bade Mrs M'Leod good day, and making my way to the Club, I told Mr Ellis the result of my search.

“Well,” replied he, “you have got something, and you have got nothing.”

“Had Donald M'Leod any authority from you to take these papers, and this one especially directed to the Club?”

“Certainly not; but the matter is so small, that I can't see how anything can be made of it.”

“And you would give up the charge?”

“Yes; it cannot lead to my money.”

“Well,” said I, “if that is your decision, I bow to it; but I tell you this, that out of that solitary old newspaper I will get your money. Will you give me my own way?”

“Well, I have heard so much of your success in desperate cases, I don't care though I do.”

“Agreed,” said I.

And without further parley, I went to Donald, who was at the time in the lobby.

“Donald,” said I, “I want you up to the Office.”

“Me,” replied Donald, with an ounce less blood in his cheek-veins than he had a minute before, “do you think I'm the robber?”

“I don't say so,” said I; “but I want some information from you which I cannot so well get here.”

And Donald, a little reconciled, and with a little of the blood in the act of returning, took his hat.

When I got him to the Office, I immediately clapped him into a cell, and locking the door, was under way once more for Rose Street.

“Mrs M'Leod,” said I, as the honest Gael opened the door, and shut it, “I am

a little vexed.”

“What’s the matter? I hope naething’s wrang wi’ Donald?”

“Why, not much,” said I; “I am only troubled about these old useless newspapers. The authorities up the way—dangerous creatures these authorities—have taken it into their wise heads that Donald stole the papers from the Club; nay, they have locked him up in a cell as dark as pitch, with bread and water for fare, and, I fear, no hope of anything but judgment and punishment.”

“Fearfu’ news!” said the woman. “Oh, terrible news! condemn a man for an auld newspaper!” and hiding her face in her hands, she burst into tears.

I need not say I pitied her, for in reality I did; for at that time I had not the slightest reason to suppose that she could know that the papers were not given to Donald, or allowed to be taken as having served their purpose, and being consequently useless.

“But there’s hope,” said I.

“Hope!” she cried, “Hope!” as she took away her hands, “Whaur?—how?—speak, for God’s sake!”

“The charge is a small one,” said I, “and I have no doubt it would be scored off, provided the missing money were got. I’m sure you don’t have it; I have searched the house; but perhaps”——

“What?” she broke in, “what?”

“Perhaps you may know through Donald where it is?”

I watched her face, which was now pale. She began to think, and she did think; for if ever thought came out of a face, it might have been read in the point of her nose, sharpened by the collapse of the muscles through fear.

If in this agony she sat a minute, she sat fully five; but I was patient. I turned my face from her, and looked at nothing, perhaps because my mind was directed to something. She was under a struggle; I heard the signs,—the quick breath, the heaving chest, the sobs, the efforts to suppress them,—still I was patient and pitiful. Sad duties ours! Yes, we must steel ourselves against human woes; nay, we must turn nature’s yearnings to the advantage of official selfishness. At length,

“Are you sure the newspapers will be scored aff?”

“Sure.”

And then another sinking into the battle of her thoughts,—the lips quivering, the desultory movements of the hands, the jerking from one position to the other,—at length calmness—the calmness of one whose agony is over,—a rest of

many minutes.

“And you’re sure,” she said again, as she fixed her eyes upon me, with such speech in them that my soul revolted at its very wickedness. Must I admit it? Yes, it is put upon us. A lie is one thing, the keeping deep down in our hearts the truth another. The one I abhor, the other is a duty. I knew that the money, if produced, would form a charge in place of the newspapers. I knew she didn’t think this; but I knew also I was not bound to tell her that she was wrong in not thinking it. Nay, there are worse cases than mine, that may be and are justified every day. When robbers are at the window, and you cry, “Bring me the gun,” when there is no gun in the house, you lie; but you are not bound to tell men whose hands are at your throat that you lie. There are necessities that go beyond all moral codes, and laugh at them. If this woman knew where that stolen money was, she was, by her own doing, under the sharp consequences of that necessity, and must abide the result as an atonement for an act not perpetrated under that necessity. Behold my logic! I am at the mercy of the public.

These were not my thoughts at the time; my conduct was merely the effect of them, and I was simply watchful. At length Mrs M’Leod rose from the chair,—she stood for a moment firm,—she then went into a closet, where, having remained a little, she came forth, to my astonishment, changed; she was dressed—shawl, bonnet, and veil.

“Come with me,” she said in a low voice, sorrowful, but without a tremor.

I said nothing, only obeyed. She shut the door, and proceeding down the stair, beckoned me to follow her. Not a word was spoken. We got down to the foot of the stair, then to the street, and I followed her as she led. We proceeded in this silent way until we came to Frederick Street. We then went along that street till she came to the area gate of a gentleman’s house; that gate she opened, and going down the stair, she again beckoned me to follow her. We now stood before the kitchen-door, at which she rapped. The knock was obeyed, and a young woman made her appearance.

“Peggy,” said Mrs M’Leod in a whisper, which I heard very well, “I ha’e come for yon.”

“Yon!” muttered I to myself; strange Scotch word—something like the mysterious “it,” when applied to a ghost.

“Weel!” replied the girl, “come in.”

We both entered, and were led along a dark passage till we came to a bedroom—no doubt that of the young woman. We entered it, and the servant, who seemed to be struck with the sympathy of our silence, proceeded to open a

blue trunk, from which she took out a small bundle, composed of a roll of a red handkerchief.

“There it is,” said she, as she put it into the hands of Mrs M‘Leod.

We then left the room, returning again to the kitchen, from which we proceeded into the area.

“There’s the siller,” said she, as she put the bundle into my hands.

I took the parcel and placed it in my pocket. We mounted the stair, and Mrs M‘Leod left me. It is needless to say that I could not restrain my curiosity; nor did I try. I went down towards Princes Street Gardens, and seating myself on the parapet, proceeded to undo the red handkerchief. I found within a large bundle of banknotes, composed of tens and fives, and upon counting them found the amount to be £180. Now I fairly admit I was not satisfied. I wanted something more; and tying up my bundle I repaired again to Rose Street.

“Mrs M‘Leod,” said I, as I entered, “it will be necessary that you mark these notes for me. My masters, the authorities, will not believe I got them from you unless I get your name to them. Have you pen and ink?”

“Ay,” said she, “but I daurna mark them, Donald would be angry.”

“But you forget the authorities,” said I.

“The authorities!” she repeated, with a kind of a tremble at the very sound of the word.

“Yes, they may be angry, and you know the anger of the authorities is very different from that of Donald M‘Leod.”

“Very true,” replied she.

And bringing the pen and ink I got her name to every note. I was *now* satisfied, and taking the direction of Queen Street, arrived at the Club, where I saw Mr Ellis.

“How much money was taken altogether?” inquired I.

“Why,” said he, “I collected the different complaints, and adding up the sums found they amounted to £180.”

“The Highlanders are a very careful people,” said I. “The sum I have recovered, and which is tied up in this handkerchief, is just £180.”

“Recovered!” said he, in astonishment. “Why, I thought it was a forlorn hope. Where in all the earth did you get it; or rather, I should ask, how?”

“Just by means of the old newspaper with the name of the Club upon it. I think I told you that if I took my own way, and not yours, I would get the cash.”

“You did,” replied he; “but to be very candid with you, I had no hope, though

I admitted I had faith in your name. But tell me where you got it, for I am dying to know?"

"I can hardly explain all in the meantime," said I. "I am bent for the Office, and up for time. But I may inform you that Donald M'Leod is the man, and we must keep him in custody."

"The newspaper!" again ejaculated Mr Ellis, as if he was in great perplexity. "How a piece of printed paper should be the means of getting £180! Was the money marked upon it?"

"No; yet I repeat it was the means of getting your money. Of course I cannot leave the notes with you. You will get them after Donald receives his sentence."

And with this I went away, leaving Mr Ellis to divine how the old newspaper came to have so much virtue. I then proceeded to the Office, where, having deposited the money, and explained the affair to the Superintendent, I was asked, "Where is the woman?"

And I knew that this question would be asked of me, and I knew also what would be my answer.

"Why, sir," said I, "do you really think that I should be the man to apprehend that woman?"

"Strictly, you should," said he, with a smile; "but if ever there was a case in which an officer might be passed over for a duty, it is this. I would rather go for her myself than put this duty on you. I acknowledge you were justified in the words you used, that the newspapers would be scored, and that you were entitled to your mental reservation. The question may be said to be a subtle one, suited to the logic of casuists, but I affirm that it may be resolved by a sturdy moralist. As for the rest, you have shewn a feeling creditable to the heart of a right man, in leaving the apprehension of the woman to another."

Mrs M'Leod was in the evening brought up by my assistant. The two were tried at the High Court, and Donald was sentenced to seven years' transportation, while Mrs M'Leod, as being under the iron rule of the Gael, was acquitted.

A Want Spoils Perfection.

THE coming round of extremes, so as to meet and disappear in each other's ends, is a thing which all must have noticed, and why not I among the rest? I rather think that in my small way I couldn't have done what I have done, if I hadn't been a *thinker*, and so I have noticed the danger of overdoing things. Not only do strong passions, though good, land in the slough of evil, but overstretched prudence, cold and calculating, leads to a pretty considerable combustion. Yes, our old mother says, "Walk in the middle"—on the sides there are pitfalls; and yet we are never happy if we are not gaping over precipices, and talking of the picturesque and the sublime. No wonder a few topple over, and thus add to the picturesque.

When Mr C——, watchmaker in Arbroath, afraid as he was to leave his stock of watches in his shop, bethought himself of the prudent step of removing them at night, by a medium exposed to danger, he was just walking to the *side*. One night in January 1850, his two apprentices, in pursuance of their master's care, collected all the watches—about fifty in number—with many other valuable things in silver and gold, and deposited them in a box, with the view of their being carried to Mr C——'s dwelling-house, at some distance from the shop. The shop was then locked up, and one of the lads, swinging the box on his back by means of a leather strap, proceeded, with his companion alongside of him as a guard, to the usual safe place of deposit. The night was pitch dark. Their way lay by a path where the houses were thinly scattered, and the property was thus placed in a far more dangerous position than if it had been left in a good safe under lock and key in the shop, also itself under lock and key, and all under the survey of neighbours—if not of the police. When some way on their road, up started two men, one of whom held the companion, while the other, applying a knife to the strap, undid the box and made off with it in an instant. The other, letting go his grip of the lad, was also off like a flash of lightning, and the extreme care of the valuable box was thus superseded by the effort of a few minutes. The boys were too much stunned to be able to pursue, even if they had had the courage, or even to bawl, though they had the common instinct. Like most other premeditated efforts, the thing was well done; and long before any hue and cry could be got up, the robbers were far away.

Next day the usual information came fulminating over to Edinburgh—usual, with the to-be-expected abatement, that no description could, in the

circumstances, be possible. The boys, under the influence of the fear which paralysed them, could and did give nothing but a “travestie” of the features of the men. When I read the confused account,

“Why,” said I to the Lieutenant, “these noses, eyes, and chins, are so like what we see every day, that I might as well take up the Lord Provost as any one else.” And as I had been reading a funny satire of the man called Lavater, some nights before, I could not help being humorous in my own blunt way. “Do you know that a great man, Lichtenberg by name, a queer satirical body with a hunch, raised all Germany into a laugh, by publishing the figure of a pig with a nicely curled tail, and marked on one turn of the said tail ‘firmness,’ on another ‘benevolence,’ on another ‘murder,’ all of which went to shew the nature of the animal, just as Lavater labelled the features of a man’s face. So here we are required to find these two clever fellows, by signs given by two boys in the dark. I may find the watches, and thereby the men, and so far the intimation is proper and hopeful, but to expect us to find the men by their *noses*, is just rather too much.”

“You can only do your best, James,” said Mr Moxey, looking up at what he thought wonderfully learned in me.

“Yes, sir,” replied I, “but I know no *best* but detection; without that the best is the worst.”

So I could only try the usual places of deposit and pledge, when there might be time for the thieves getting here and disposing of their prey. Watches are “casting-up” things. They are seldom melted, for their value is so much more than that of the materials, and then they are always in request, so I had some chance of meeting them somewhere—at least one or more out of such a stunning number as fifty. Accordingly, I did my best in the dead-object way, but without any success, and I could trust only to time and continual dodging to arrive at any discovery.

Some time passed, I don’t remember how long. As for trying *faces*, it was out of the question, when I had neither image in my mind, or description to go by; and I need not say that I did not continue that, because I really never began it. But, as it will appear, my lucky genius had not flown away up above the stars to report how she had favoured me and had got enamoured of some other winged creatures, so as to delay her return. I was one night on my rounds in the Grassmarket, attended as usual by my companion. The night was not so dark as that one could not see a considerable way before. I was rather complaining that there was nothing to see. We were approaching Smith’s Close, when my ear was startled, and my eye directed towards a man who had instantaneously left a

companion, and rushed with clattering steps up the close.

“Seize that one,” said I.

And after the other up the close I sprang at the top of my speed. I saw his dark figure before me, which, as the moon, getting from behind a cloud, threw a reflection, (made angular by the sky-line of the high houses,) came out in an instant, firm, clear, and distinct. There was no chance for him, and he knew it. She was not so kind to one of her “minions” on this occasion as she used to be in the old border times. Just as I was coming upon him, he whirled a guard from his neck and threw away a watch.

“What’s the matter with the timepiece, man?” said I, as I laid hold of him, and dragging him to the article, picked it up. “Isn’t it a good ’un that you threw it away?”

The fellow was sulky, and would not answer me; but a watch was so pleasant an object to me at that particular time that I overlooked the affront. Dragging him to the foot of the close, where his companion was in the custody of my assistant, we took our men to the Office, where I very soon discovered that the watch was one of Mr C——’s fifty. My anticipations, in which I had been so wise, were thus strangely enough reversed. In place of getting the men through the *watch*, I had got the watch through the *men*. And my next object was to improve upon the good fortune that had been so kind to me, in spite of my want of confidence in my benefactress. But here commenced a new difficulty. The men foolishly enough gave each the other’s name, Alexander Clark and James Mitchell—quite different from those they carried for the nonce; but as for aught else, they were what we call lockmouths. No skeleton-key would reach their works. I was thus driven aback, nor did I make much progress for some time, except in hearing that one Hart had got another of the watches from another man, who had got it from Mitchell. This I, of course, treasured up in the meantime; but I was so anxious to worm out of my men where they resided—the true clue to all other discoveries—that I postponed all other inquiries, and besides, from what I knew of Hart, a lockmouth too, I had no hopes of him. All my efforts with my men were, however, vain. They would admit nothing as to their place of putting up; sullen, if not enraged, at the trick practised on them in getting each to give the other’s real name. Why such men could have been so completely off their guard is not easy to be accounted for, except on the supposition that they were trying to fight shy of one another, or upon the principle I have often acted on, that even a cautious thief will sometimes allow the admission of a fact not directly implicating himself to be jerked out of him by a sudden question. After the men had been sent in custody to Dundee, I

sought out Hart, and was just as unsuccessful with him. He would not admit to the watch, neither would he confess that he knew the residence of either the one or the other.

And here this strange case—destined to have so many crooks in its lot—took another turn, which, involving a little disregard of courtesy towards me, roused my independence to a rather grand vindication. The authorities in Dundee sent over an officer, who informed us that eighteen of the watches had been recovered there, and that they had ascertained, by the confession of Mitchell, that the thieves had been residing in Edinburgh, in a certain tavern kept by a Mrs Walker. Mr Moxey got the intelligence, and whether or not it was that he had been suddenly seized with the ambition of becoming a practical detective I cannot say; but true it is that, without any communication to me, he set out with the Dundee officer to find out Mrs Walker, and, no doubt, recover the remainder of the watches. Well, I allowed them full rope, and they wandered about for a whole day, without being able to find this same tavern. I knew very well what they were after, and could have led them to the house as direct as to the jail, but I abstained from all interference, where my services were, as I thought, superseded. Perhaps there was a little cunning—what could we do without it?—at the bottom of my very virtuous indignation.

At length, and when utterly exhausted, my superior called me in the evening.

“James,” said he, “I can make nothing of this inquiry; there is no Mrs Walker’s tavern in Edinburgh.”

“Why, sir, hadn’t you better continue the search all night?” said I; “you may get the house before the morning.”

He looked at me to see the state of my face, and smiled, for he was a very good-natured man.

“Do you mean what you recommend?” said he.

“To be sure I do,” said I. “It was no wish of mine that you should begin the search, but seeing you have begun it, and every moment is precious, I think you should end it before you sleep.”

“But I *have* ended it.”

“Yes, in your way, but not exactly in mine. However, I am wearied, and, if you please, while you are *beginning* where you *ended*, I shall go to bed.”

“I have done enough to-day,” was the reply; “I shall see what more can be done to-morrow. I have some letters to write.”

Leaving him, I went out, but in place of going down the High Street home, I proceeded to Smith’s Close, where I knew Mrs Walker had her tavern, and had

had it for years.

“Mrs Walker,” said I, as the good woman opened the door, “did two young men lodge with you for a few days lately?”

“Ay,” replied she.

“Will you shew me where they slept?”

“Surely.”

And leading the way, she shewed me into a bedroom with one bed in it.

I then began to look about in my ordinary way, first very cursorily, and finding nothing, where I expected nothing, I got upon my knees, and sprawled in under the bed, so low being the bottom that it was with great difficulty I could get a part of my body in. I then came out again, as most people do when they get into any kind of holes, except one, pulling out after me a pillow-case, apparently, that is, to the touch, filled with hay, and so, to be sure, in undoing the mouth, I found it was. On pulling out the hay, however, I brought along with it a towel containing something hard.

“There will be eggs among the hay,” said the landlady.

“Laid by *cocks*, perhaps,” said I, as I undid the towel.

And there I laid open as pretty a sight as one could wish to see—thirty watches, white and yellow, just lovely to behold.

“Are you a wizard, Mr M‘Levy?” said the woman, as she held out her hands; “all that in my house, and me as ignorant of it as a sucking child!”

“I don’t doubt you, Mrs Walker,” said I; “but confess that you think I should be content.”

“Content!” replied she; “I know not what would content you if these didn’t. Just offer them to me, and see whether or not I would be content.”

“But I am not content,” said I; “I want one more.”

“Well, I aye thought you were a reasonable man, Mr M‘Levy.”

“ ‘A WANT SPOILS PERFECTION,’ Mrs Walker,” said I; “and I will not be satisfied till I get this want supplied.”

Rolling up my watches I left the house, and went direct to the Office. Mr Moxey was busy with his letters.

“What?” said he, “here again, James! I thought you had gone to bed.”

“I have just something to do first,” said I, as I laid down the parcel, (retaining the bundle of hay.) “Mrs Walker, tavern-keeper, Smith’s Close, Grassmarket, presents her compliments to Mr Moxey, and begs to send him two dozen and a half of fresh eggs from Arbroath.”

“Eggs to me! are you mad?” But beginning to smell, as he suspected, a trick, he opened the towel, and saw before him Mr C——’s thirty watches.

“Where got?” he asked.

“Where, but in Mrs Walker’s tavern, where they naturally fell to be.”

“And unknown to her?”

“Close up to the wall beneath the bed, and all, like eggs, enclosed in this hay.”

“I’ll never interfere with your searches again,” he added, laughing. “I’ll write this moment, and make C—— a happy man.”

“Yes,” said I; “and tell him, that, though I’m a *safe* enough *man*, I’m not ‘a patent safe.’ ”

“We’ve got all.”

“No, ‘A WANT SPOILS PERFECTION,’ ” said I. “There’s one awanting, and without that the rest are nothing.”

“Mr C—— will scarcely think that,” said he. “You have done enough to-day,

and I think you had better go to bed.”

“No, I must have *that* watch, otherwise I could sleep none.”

I then went to the desk, and taking a printed form of one of our complaints, not filled up, and not signed of course, I put it quietly in my pocket, departed, and took my way to the man Hart’s once more. I found him in, just preparing to go to bed.

“My last visit, Hart,” said I; “I am come once more for the watch you got from the friend of Mitchell.”

“I told you before,” said he, “that I have no such watch, and never had.”

“And I tell you that I have the very best authority for knowing that you have. Now, Hart, I have known you for some time, and would rather save you than banish you, but,” pulling out the useless bit of printed paper, “I have no discretion. There are certain people called authorities, you know, and they have long arms. Do you see that paper? Did you ever hear of such a thing as a complaint?”

“Do you mean a warrant of apprehension?” said he.

“Just as you choose to call it,” replied I, taking out my handcuffs. “I am sorry for this duty imposed upon me, but either you or I must suffer. You must walk up to the Office, or I must bid farewell to it.”

My man got into a pensive mood, and looked on the floor.

The conjurors on the stage do their work with little things, and they deceive the senses; but they don’t often touch the heart. I have done some things in my conjuring way with very puny instruments. Yes, the heart is a conjurable commodity, very simple and helpless when operated upon successfully, and I was here trying to vanquish a stronger one than Mrs Donald M’Leod’s, by the means of a bit of paper, with a few words of print on it, and a loop of leather. I have sometimes suspected that the world is juggled in a similar way, only the juggle is not very often known. If so, I may be allowed my small devices, especially when used in the cause of what is good and lawful. I wanted only to save another man’s watch. A bit of paper not much larger, once saved the lives of more Roman senators than my watches amounted to altogether.

The first sight of my talisman was not enough. Mr Hart was wary. He hesitated, and struggled with himself for a considerable time—not so much, I thought, for the sake of the watch, as from fear that, after all, I would apprehend him.

“You will do *me*,” said he, “as you did the Highlander’s wife.”

“No,” replied I, “I will be on honour with you. Look,—you may make sure

work,—I'll not take the watch out of your hands till I have burned the warrant."

The promise caught him. He drew on his stockings again,—for he had been preparing for bed,—put on his shoes and hat, and getting a candle, lighted it.

"Wait here," said he, and went out.

I don't like these *leavings*, I have sometimes found no *returns*; so I followed him to the door, and dogged him to the foot of a close not far from his house. He went up till he came to an old thatched byre, to the top of which he got by means of a heap of rubbish. When I saw the candle glimmering on the top of the house, a solitary light amidst the darkness, and all around as still as death, I could not help thinking of the romance that hangs round the secret ways of vice. The cowkeeper, as he fed his charge, never suspected that there was a treasure over crummie's head; no more did the urchins, who rode on the rigging, dream of the presence of so wonderful a thing to them as a gold watch.

All safe, said I to myself, as I saw the light changing its place, and descending. Then it came down the close, and we stood face to face.

"Here it is," said he; "but I tell you once for all, that I am as powerful a man as you, and that"——

"Stop," said I, "no need, my good fellow; give me your candle. There," continued I, as I applied the blank complaint to the flame, and saw it flare up and die away into a black film, "there's your bargain,—now mine."

And I got the watch, and supplied the *want*.

"Good night, my man; you will sleep sounder without the care and fear of this stolen watch than with it."

This bit of sentiment struck him.

"Well, I believe I will," he said, with a little thickening of the windpipe; "I'll have nothing more to do with stolen property. I have never been happy since I got possession of it."

In a short time, I was before Mr Moxey again, whose letters threatened to terminate in night-work.

"Put that to the rest," said I; "*the want is supplied*,—thirty-two and eighteen make up the fifty, I believe."

"You are refined, James," said he; and perhaps he would not have said it if he had known the story of the old complaint, which for the time I kept to myself. Self-love has its weaknesses. If I had told my device, I might have gratified my vanity; but my trick would have become common property, and thereby lost its charm.

After my day's work, I went home, and was soon asleep.

I acquired a little honour in this matter, although I considered it was not much more than apprentice-work. I had no objection, however, that my brother bluecoats of the bonny toun should see that M'Levy had not lost the keenness of his scent for such secreted articles as those stolen watches; and this shews that we have our little drops of enjoyment amidst our cares and anxieties, ay, and dangers, and, thank God, happiness is a comparative affair. The word "danger" suggests a few words. I have often been asked, "M'Levy, were you never hurt?" My answer being no,—“M'Levy, was you ever afraid?” My answer the same, though I have been amidst glittering knives before now, ay, and fiery eyes, brighter than the knives; but I early saw that a bold front is the best baton. A detective is done the moment his eye quivers or his arm falters. If firm, there is no risk, or if any, it is from the cowards. A brave thief has something like an understanding of the relation he bears to the laws and its officers. He has a part to play, and he plays it with something so much like the honour of the Honeycombs at cards or dice, that it would surprise you. These latter, to be sure, are only sliders too, and the end of their descent is often deeper than that of their humble brethren of the pea and thimble.

I have only to add, that my men were forthwith brought to trial. The real pith of my histories is to me the *end*; yes, all their *charm* to me lies in the tail, although others, and you may readily guess who they are, may think that the *sting* lies there. I would not, however, give the fact that Clerk got his seven years, and Mitchell his eighteen months as a resetter, for all the *eclat* accorded to any ingenuity I had displayed in bringing about these happy consummations.

The Coal-Bunker.

A CERTAIN small critic once took it into his head to laugh at another critic for commencing a learned essay with the words, "We are all born idiots," and the reason of the chuckle, though on the wrong side, was evident enough; and yet, methinks, the wise saying might have had a tail, to the effect, "and many of us live and die idiots." At least I know that I have met many imbeciles,—ay, even of that absolute kind who will not be taught that pain is pain, so that I am obliged to differ with Solomon when he says that "experience teacheth fools." How many beacon flashes, with red streaks in them, have I not thrown out, amidst the darkness of crime, to keep my children off the quicksands and the shelving rocks, and the shipwrecks have been as numerous as ever! Have I not proved the Happy Land to be a hell, resounding with oaths, screams, and hysterical ravings, not the songs of angels, and yet case after case proved the truth of the wise saying?

Another flash of the beacon—with perhaps redder streaks—something of the old story, yet with a difference. On the second flat of the Happy Land there lived for some considerable time, in 1848, two young women, Isabella Marshall and Margaret Tait. Their den was of the common order,—the room and the hiding-hole, the bed, the fir-table, and two chairs, the teapot and cups, two or three broken plates, the bottle and glass, and so forth,—squalor everywhere, like the green mould which springs up the more when the sun of domestic comfort flies away at the sight of crime. Yes, the green mould on the once fair living temples; for let them wash, and scrub, and "scent up" as they pleased, and deck out in the stolen or thrice-redeemed finery, the snare of uncircumcised eyes and sensual hearts was only the covering of impurity. Yet how all this goes on and thrives. One might be tempted to say, that the lovers of "the beautiful" (?) are something like the gobemouches, who admire a little tang or *hautgout*. Look you, I use the *adjective* here, just with the proper amount of derision; for although the fairer of the two conjunct tenants of the den, Bella, was admired, no one could miss the Cain mark of the class. Don't you know it? Coarse snobs, with cassowary gizzards, might think they saw delicacy of skin and colour; while others, with a modicum of true refinement, would try to find another name—not easy, I confess—perhaps livid sickliness, reminding one of a decayed peony of the pale variety. Don't let us mention the faded lily. But what matters it, when the thing is patent to all but those who will not be taught by experience, just because there is nothing inside to respond to the touch of common sense. Yet withal there is

something curious about Nature's manœuvres, in fencing as she does to conceal the cancer-spots on her favourites, just as if she were so fond of her few beauties that she will cling to them to the last, supporting their charms even amidst the blight of vice. Of Margaret I must speak otherwise,—a strong, burly wench, with little to attract, but capital hands at a grip, or what is not exactly the same, a gripe, and a tilt where ferocity stands against self-preservation. The two were very well mated; for while the one could allure, the other could secure.

But as the den was incomplete without the hiding-hole, so neither was this copartnership of Marshall & Co. perfect without the indispensable “bully;” for though Margaret could do wonders in her way, she could derive little aid from the delicate Isabella. So James Kidd, a stout young fellow, the Fancy of both, who apportioned his protection and favour between them according as they supplied him with money, was the chosen partner,—a fellow who, in such a connexion and conspiracy, had found an attraction which tore him from his home and his mother, whose heart he had broken. Nor is it easy otherwise to form a proper estimate of this species of ruffian, pouncing from a hole on a man whose powers of resistance he does not know. He must close in a struggle, which, though never intended to be deadly on his part, may become so, by a resistance or counter attack more powerful than his own. All this he must do in the very heart of a populous city, and in a large house of many flats, where he can count upon no more than the hush of other fiends, who may screen, though they will take no hand in another's business. It is in such a scene, enacted in a close room, sometimes with the light extinguished, and the actors doing their work in the dark, that we can form an adequate idea of the true *furor* of robbery. Even a listener at the door would hear only the bodily contortions—the deep breathing—the muttered vengeance—all a deep bass to the stifled treble of a woman's passion grasping at gold. I have known of two such conflicts going on in this “Happy Land” at the same moment,—the great scenes being illustrated the while by orgies in the other dens, the laughter from which drowned the dull sounds of the conflicts.

In the particular conspiracy I am now to relate, the scheme of attack was different from what was usually followed, as you will understand when I introduce Mr —— of ——; and you have only at present to keep in mind the general way of “doing” the victims:—the spring-out of the concealed bully—the seizure of his object—the assistant women rifling and robbing in the still flickering light—the sudden disappearance of the principal actor, which aids the blasphemous oaths of the subordinates that they know nothing of him, while it leaves the conversational winding-up to those whose conversational powers are

so seldom at fault.

On a certain night of the cold month of December, the delicate Isabella, dressed in the usual mackerel-bait, only a little subdued by the soft muff and boa, so suggestive of softness and delicacy in the wearer, went out on her mission of love, leaving Kidd and Margaret to await the bringing in of the prey. Nor was it long before she encountered the sympathetic Mr —— from Cumberland, who could make pleasure wait on business—just as a pretty handmaiden who comes and goes, and goes and comes. Oh yes, seldom coy, that faithful helpmate of anxious hearts—always everywhere and yet nowhere, turning her face and disappearing to return again. Then why shouldn't sympathy for a tender creature, exposed to a December chill, help the sympathy due to himself? He would not prey on that tenderness—only purchase a little pleasure with money that would nurse the seller in that land of bliss, where Justice would see to a fair bargain, Love filling the scales with hearts. So Mr —— would go with Isabella; all in the old way—respectable house—matronly mistress. Why, it would even be a duty to warm with a glass of generous spirits so gentle a creature. Up the North Bridge, and down the High Street—a sudden stand at the foot of the stair of the Happy Land. Mr —— did not think there was much promise of pleasure in that dark old region of sin, and he would be off and leave her who required so much sympathy from hard-hearted man. But Mr —— was a man of feeling notwithstanding, and how could he resist an appeal to his heart by one who asked no more than his arm up the stair? Nor did he. With Isabella receiving the proffered support, he mounted the stair. They entered the dingy lobby, and came to a door. The gentle knock, not to disturb the decent woman, and Margaret

——, “who knew the meaning of the same,”

opened, but not until Kidd had got into the closet.

Whether it was that our gentleman had heard some noise of a retreat, or that he had had his prior doubts confirmed by the smoky appearance of the den, I cannot tell, but certain it is that the startled lover stopped again.

“No, I have seen enough,” he cried, and was retreating, when Margaret, laying hold of him, pulled him in by main force.

“Away so soon,” she cried, laughing, while yet retaining her masculine grasp, “and not even bid us good night?”

“Or offer us a glass,” added the gentle Bella. “Surely two women can't harm a man!”

But Mr ——, who had felt, and was feeling, the tenderness of Margaret's love embrace, was perhaps more dissatisfied than ever, and hearing the click of the bolt under Isabella's stealthy hand got more resolute. Out goes the light, and now commenced one of those struggles for which the Happy Land was so famous. Another man, on thus finding himself encaged, and so suddenly deprived of light, might have succumbed to fear; but our hero was not of the timid order, who can enjoy love and be dead to the trump of war. Not even when he heard the spring of Kidd, as he bounced from his cell, did he think of yielding, but, by a strong effort throwing off the women, he made towards the door. He had even succeeded so far as to search for the lock, but found, to his dismay, that the key had been taken out. On turning round he was immediately in the grasp of Kidd, with the women hanging upon him. And now was the real conflict; all the contortions—the deep breathings from the oppressed lungs—the thumps on the sides of the room—but not a word of speech, only smothered mutterings and oaths ground between the teeth.

The effort on the part of the assailants was to get the gentleman on his back on the floor; nor could this issue be prolonged for many minutes, with a force of three arrayed against one. Yet the attempt failed more than once, an interval being occupied by a cry for help, shouted at the top of his voice, and responded to by an orgie-laugh from the further end of the lobby, and some suppressed mirth at the back of the door, as if some creatures of human shape were there, in the full enjoyment of what was likely to be their own game at another time. As confessed by Mr —— afterwards, this evidence of how completely he was, as it were, doubly or trebly caged, struck him with more dismay than even the extinguishing of the light or the bound of Kidd from his recess. The idea took hold of him that he was to be murdered, and though under this energy, inspired by the love of life, the increased strain brought up in his enemies by his now desperate resistance laid him flat on his back, with such force that his head dirled to the brain.

The remaining part of the process was easy—the gold watch pulled out of his pocket, the click of the bolt, and Kidd was gone.

“Catch the thief!” cried Margaret, with just enough of force as to reach the ears of the poor victim, as he lay stunned with the knock on the head, and almost exhausted by the struggle.

“He's gone,” added the gentle Isabella.

“Who is gone?” said Mr ——, as he looked up in the now lighted room.

“Why, the d——d villain who has taken your watch,” replied Margaret.

“An accomplice,” groaned the victim, as he attempted to rise.

“It’s a lie, sir,” replied Margaret again, with increased fury, as she breathed fast from her exertions. “The fellow lives ben in the other room, and this is not the first time he has played us a trick of the same kind; but he’ll be hanged some day.”

“Yes, and the sooner the better,” joined Isabella. “Come, we cannot help it. There’s no use following him. Give us a dram for defending you.”

“Ay, for saving your life,” added her neighbour; “for we know he would have murdered you.”

“I felt *your* hand on my throat,” cried Mr ——.

“Bob’s, you mean,” was the answer. “He has a hand like a woman, and yet it would choke a tiger.”

“I felt all your *six* hands on me,” roared he, unable to stand even this transparent dodge.

“How could we know you from him in the dark?” cried Margaret. “We intended to pull him off, and that’s our thanks, and you’ll not even give us a ‘budge,’ but accuse two innocent girls for being robbers.”

“Oh, it’s the way with them all,” added Isabella. “They first ruin us, and then charge us with theft; but we deserve it, don’t we, for trusting their lying words.”

“Liars and thieves, one and all of you,” replied the gentleman. “You know you inveigled me here to be robbed by your bully. That watch cost me £20.”

“Well, then,” said Margaret, “give us £5—you have money about you somewhere—and we’ll tell you where you will catch him.”

“Worse and worse,” ejaculated Mr ——; “but what am I doing here?” he added, as he for the first time, after recovering from his stupor, bethought himself of following the thief; and gathering up his hat, and arranging his torn garments, he made for the door.

“Not till you pay us for saving your life,” said Margaret, as she stood between him and the door, with the intention, no doubt, merely of gaining time for Kidd.

And so, to be sure, she made only a faint effort to hold him back, and he, pulling open the door, rushed out into the dark passage, saluted as he disappeared by the hoarse laugh of the women, and, as he thought, some other indications of the same kind from the sympathisers further ben. Glad to get off a living man, but yet not inclined to give up as lost his valuable property, he half walked and half tumbled down the stair of this, to him, most *unhappy* land; nor did he stop till he was in my presence in the Office. A few words, uttered with

much difficulty, very soon satisfied me that he was one of a host who had been turned away from the Happy Land with less ceremony than “Frau Schnipps,” on an occasion not altogether similar.

“Wait there,” said I, “I will bring up the women in the first place.”

“Oh, you know them?” said he.

“Yes, about as well as you, sir.”

“And that’s too well,” said he, with something like a heave of the chest.

“Bell Marshall and Margaret Tait,” said I; “but they haven’t the watch, and I know they will say they were helping you. The man is my object.”

So leaving him, and taking with me two constables, I went to the scene. As I expected, I found the girls. Two or three of the children of the Happy Land were with them, all engaged in drinking and laughing, no doubt at the excellent drama that had just ended, and upon which they thought that the green curtain had been drawn for ever, for it is not very often that the slain hero makes his appearance again at our Office; and there can be no question that sometimes it is as prudent to pocket shame as it is to put a gold sovereign into your purse, with the difference, that while the one ought to remain, the other should come out for the benefit of society. I was not expected, and was accordingly greeted with the honour of perfect silence.

“The old game, my lasses,” said I, as I beckoned to the others to get off, which they very soon did, growling as they went along the passage; “where is the gentleman’s watch?”

“Search, and answer for yourself,” replied Margaret. “The man has it.”

“What man?”

“How should we know? He came in upon us; we did our best to save the gentleman, and the scurvy dog wouldn’t give us a penny to buy pins.”

“Came *out*, you mean,” said I; “the old story, ‘the great unknown.’ Yet I think I know him.”

Just as I was speaking, I felt some small object under my foot, and stooping down found a small gold watch-key. The women looked sharp to try and find out what I had picked up and put into my pocket, but they said nothing, neither did I.

“Come,” said I. “The gentleman is in the Office, and wishes to thank you for trying to save his life.”

“Umph, and true, by ——,” said the reprobate.

“A terrible fellow this ‘unknown,’ ” said I, rather by way of amusing myself as they were getting equipped. “Don’t pare your nails, for I intend to introduce

him to you.”

And proceeding to make a search, which I knew would be attended by no greater result than a mocking laugh from my lasses, I was forced to be content with my small recovery of the gold key.

I marched them up to quarters where they had been before. It was too late that night to go after Kidd. I was sure enough of him, and an early catch was of no use as regarded the recovery of the watch, which I knew he would not carry with him a moment longer than he could find a hiding-place for it, and that he would find far more readily than one for himself.

Next morning some of the constables, who knew where Kidd’s mother lived in the Pleasance, thought very wisely they might help me in their way by searching the house. This they accordingly did before I was well out of bed; but their report was unfavourable. He was not in the house, and the mother denied all knowledge of her worthless son. I have often had reports of this kind made to me before, but I have been always fond of making my own searches. So away I went to do the work over again; but, to say the truth, I had little hope. It was as early as nine.

“I want to know where James is,” said I, as I entered the little shop.

“God bless me,” said she, with wondering eyes, “more policemen! why the men are scarcely awa’. They searched the hail house, and found naebody. Am I no enough tormented and heartbroken wi’ a neer-do-weel son, but I maun be treated as his keeper, whether I hae him or no, and my house searched by man after man, as if I mysel’ were a breaker of the laws.”

“I know you are not a breaker of the laws, Mrs Kidd,” replied I, calmly, “and that’s the very reason why you should even cheerfully allow an officer to go through your house. I am not in the habit of stealing, and, besides, I wish you to go along with me.”

“But there’s nae occasion,” was the reply. “Have I no tauld ye your men are scarcely out o’ the house, and lang and sair they searched. It’s no that I fear aught, nor the trouble either, but it’s the nonsense.”

“I will put up with the nonsense,” said I.

“Maun I tell you a third time,” said she, with increased firmness, “that my house has been searched by twa men, wi’ twa een each, this morning already?”

“Then two eyes more can do the less harm,” replied I, with a quiet pertinacity at least equal to her own, especially, and no doubt a consequence of, the said pertinacity on her part, which appeared to me somewhat more than was required, according to her own theory.

“Weel, een here or een there, there’s naebody in my house, and what’s the use of our paying for your men, when you have nae faith in them ony mair than in me?”

An adroit reply, but somehow the more she said the more I thought, only in a different direction. I had dallied myself into suspicion, and had little time to spare.

“Come,” said I, “let us end this; but I have consideration. I don’t want to trouble you to go up stairs with me.”

“I’ve been up already with the men,” she persisted, “and really I’m no just pleased to hae my word doubted. I’m no a policeman, and I’ve aye thought that when a man doesna believe me, he thinks me a leer. Just gae your wa’s, and be sure there’s nae James Kidd in my house.”

“Well,” replied I, getting impatient, “I must just step up myself.”

“Weel,” was the tardy reply, “a wilfu’ man maun hae his ain way. Come awa’, and ye’ll see what ye’ll mak o’t.”

And leading the way very reluctantly, she preceded me up to the little flat. I entered the kitchen, and began to peer about as carelessly to appearance as usual; but I confess I saw nothing which could lead me to suspect that there was any human being there except Mrs Kidd and myself; and she did not seem inclined to condole with me in my disappointment, though I could see, too, that she abstained from shewing any triumph in my discomfiture.

“You see how little harm my survey is doing you,” said I. “It is even pleasant work.”

“It’s no to me, whatever it may be to you,” said she. “You are searching for my son, and isn’t that enough for the heart of a mother? You’re maybe no a father, and canna ken thae things. Ay, it’s sair to hae the heart broken by the hands that should hae comforted it and bound it up. It’s the turning back o’ the yearning that braks it; but now I fancy ye’re satisfied James is no here.”

And I felt for the poor woman. I had the parlour to look through; but as the sounds of her grief fell on my ear, I stood musing a little, and when the mind is occupied, the eye trifles, and mine trifled, as well as did my foot, as I used it in kicking away a bit of coal, a “churl” as we call it, that lay before me. At the same instant my eye caught the heap of coals in the corner, and two thoughts came into my head—first, why the coals should be in *that* place; and secondly, why the “churl” should be in *this* place. It had not come there where it lay by having been dropped, because it was not in the line to the fire, and then it was at the edge of a little door which had escaped my notice; or rather, I should say, it

was so small an affair, without sneck or lock-handle, that I thought it a mere cupboard. Again, why was the “churl” so situated as if it had come out of the small recess? And once more, why was the cupboard without a projection whereby it could be opened? Ah, well, how the mind will work even when it is playing.

“What place is this?” said I.

“Oh, a little cupboard,” said Mrs Kidd; “just a place for cups and saucers.”

“Which you use every day?”

“Every day.”

“And yet there is no sneck-handle, whereby you can get in when you are maybe in a hurry for a cup of tea?”

No answer from poor Mrs Kidd, and the thought came that the coals in the corner were surely out of place, in a little tidy house; and just mark how that kind of natural logic works.

“I should just like to look in.”

“And what would be the use? Hae ye never seen a number o’ marrowless cups and saucers?”

And maybe something even more marrowless, thought I, as, taking out a penknife and inserting it in a small slit, something like that of a check lock, I opened the door, and there, lying in a hole—the veritable bunker—was my friend of the Happy Land, extended on a small mattress. On this exposure, the poor mother covered her face with her hands and sobbed hysterically.

“The last o’t,” she said, in a voice broken by sobs. “The lang train o’ griefs a’ frae whaur there should hae come comfort and help is wound up. I hide and conceal nae mair, and what signified my hiding when God saw through a’. Tak him, sir; and may ye mak o’ him a better man to his brither-man, than he has been a son to me.”

“Has he given you a watch?” said I, in the expectation of profiting by what I considered to be a breaking down.

“No,” she replied, “I have never had ony o’ his secrets, nor for a lang time has he been near me, except when he wanted meat. His wild ways are best kenned to himsel’, but I fear women and drink have been his ruin.”

“Rise, James,” said I, “and give me the watch you robbed the gentleman of last night in the Happy Land.”

“I deny it,” replied the incorrigible rogue, as he rose slowly, cursing between his teeth.

I searched the house, but the watch was never recovered. The three were brought to the High Court. It was a difficult case, in consequence of the darkness of the scene, which prevented recognition of Kidd; but a strange circumstance supplied the want. Mr —— could swear that Kidd had a large hard wart upon the right hand—the rough pressure of which in his neck had pained him so as to leave an impression on his mind. The wart was found still upon the thumb. Then the watch-key served its purpose, and it was found that Kidd was the daily associate of the women. They were each transported for fourteen years.

The Half-Crowns.

I HAVE often thought we are a little mole-eyed in social questions. How much were we to have paid the devil for our letting in mental food to the people, for the introduction of machinery, for giving up hanging poor wretches! and yet we have paid him nothing,—all movements coming to a poise. When I lay hold of a robber by the throat, we have a tussle, but it does not last long. Either he or I may be down; we don't murder each other; the forces destroy themselves, and there's peace. Where is all the expected crop of forgeries and coinings that were to spring up under the spread of the guano of education? The art of learning to write was to be the learning to forge, and electro-plating (if I can spell it) was to turn off half-crowns by the thousand. Nothing of all this. The people are better fed, the working men better employed, fewer murders, fewer forgeries, fewer coinings. I think we have rather taken from his majesty below, and I suspect he is fretful. What a fury we would put him in were we to take the young from him, of whom, in a certain class, he has had the charge since Adam coined that bad penny, Cain!

So I thought, when I told the story of the pewter spoons. I thought I had not another case of coining in my books; but I find I was wrong. Not long ago, in November 1858, I happened (I was always happening) to meet, at the foot of the stair leading to Ashley Buildings, in Nether Bow, near John Knox's Church, a clot of little boys and girls busy looking at some wonderful things, with eyes as bright and round as a new-turned-out shilling. On bending my head over the little people, and directing my eyes down through the midst of them, I found that the objects of their delight were a number (turned out to be a dozen) of beautiful glittering half-crowns and florins, all new from the mint. Was ever a nest of Raggediers shone upon with a blaze of such glory! Did ever her Majesty's face appear so beautiful to any of her loyal subjects!

On inquiry, I found that the urchins, when playing in the stair of Ashley Buildings, had found the pieces secreted in the corners of two window-soles. They were placed outside, so that any person going up the stair could reach them without entering any of the flats. I examined the places of deposit under the direction of my leaders—six of the pieces were on the window-sole of the first flat, and the other six on that of the highest. Then they had been cunningly placed in small-scooped crevices, close by the rybats. On coming down with my coins in my hand, and my troop around me, all chattering and vindicating their

rights to the waifs, I was a little taken aback by the appearance of two ladies coming up the dark, dingy stair. At the first glance, and under the impression of the rustle of their heavy silk skirts, I took them for philanthropical grandees from the New Town on a visit of mercy to the hags of Ashley Land; and no wonder, for the very gayest of our crinolined nymphs, so far as regarded silk velvet and ribbons, were not qualified to tie the latchet of one of their boots. Nor was my impression changed when, standing to a side to give space to the swirl of their wide skirts, as well as honour to their progress, I looked respectfully, if not with a little awe (not much in my way) into their faces,—delicate, pretty, genteel, nor with a single indication of the flaunting lightness sometimes, in my experience, accompanying, but not adorning very gay attire.

On ascending two steps above me, one of them turned round, and, with an inquiring gaze, asked what was the matter, in a clear, bell-like voice, which was to me at the moment perhaps the more musical, because it came from such a delicate throat; but the speech was English, and we want that *spoken* music in Scotland,—at least there's not much of it among the denizens of Ashley Land.

“A little row among the boys,” said I, just as a suddenly rising thought suggested something,—I won't say what.

“He's ta'en our half-croons, mem,” cried a bantam, whose windpipe I could have squeezed.

Upon hearing which, my ladies turned somewhat abruptly, and proceeded down stairs. I could even fancy that the noise of their silks was increased by a flurry,—a movement altogether which I could not, even with the aid of my sudden thought, very well understand. On getting to the foot of the stair, and quit of my brawlers, I observed my two damsels walking majestically up the High Street, as if they had utterly forgotten their visit of mercy, for which their purses, and probably their Bibles, had been put in preparation. I had intercepted grace, condescension, and mercy, even when about to light, like ministering angels, on the hearts and homes of the miserable. Well, another time—mercy is long-suffering.

Just as I thus found myself a little satirical perhaps, up comes the man Richardson, who lived in Ashley Buildings.

“It's not often,” said he, “that folks like me and my wife have lodgers in our small room like yon,” pointing in the direction of my ladies.

“Like whom?” said I.

“Why, did you not see them coming out of our stair?”

“Yes, I saw two ladies superbly dressed; who are they?”

“Just my lodgers; your common lodging-house keepers can’t touch that, I think.”

“Why, no,” said I; “but you haven’t told me who or what they are.”

“That’s a hard question,” replied he; “I can only say they are English, very polite, and pay their score.”

“Any more?” said I; for although I had no doubt of the man’s honesty, I did not wish to be forward with my half-crowns, as a “let up” in the first instance.

“Why, we are not sure of them,” said he. “They are the strangest customers we ever had. They keep their door shut, and every second day there comes to them a man, as much a tailor and jeweller-made swell in his way as they are in theirs. Then the door is still more sure to be locked, and the key-hole screened.”

“Did you ever hear his name?”

“Oh, yes—Mr Harvey.”

“And theirs?”

“Miss Matilda Jerome and Miss Elizabeth Jackson.”

“Is he English too?” inquired I.

“Yes, of the highest tone, but very condescending. He asks Mrs Richardson how she does, and she says, ‘Quite well, I thank you, sir;’ but this doesn’t prevent her, you know, from sometimes trying a *chink*—the *key-hole* is an impossibility.”

“And what has she seen?”

“Not much yet. The little is strange. The great Mr Harvey, the moment he gets in, takes off his fine suit and his rings, and puts on a fustian jacket and breeches. They work at something requiring a great deal of the fire, and then we hear *birrs*, and *clanks*, and *whizzes*—what you might expect where some small machinery is in gear.”

“Producing, perhaps,” said I, “something like *that*?” shewing him a half-crown piece.

“Our very suspicion,” replied he, as he took the piece into his hand, and seemed to wonder at the “turn out” of his little room. “But where got you it?”

“With eleven more, on two of the window-soles of your staircase.”

“Hidden there by them?”

“I can’t say,” replied I; “but hark ye, when would be the best time for me to see the ladies and Mr Harvey together—if in the fustian, so much the better?”

“To-morrow forenoon,” replied he. “They are all on the *stravaig* to-day.”

“Well, in the meantime, Richardson, you are mum.”

“Dumb.”

And leaving my useful informant, I proceeded on my way, ruminating as usual. It didn't need a witch to tell the intention of the deposit, or the place selected for it. The false money would, of course, be dangerous in their room, and even in their pockets it would be imprudent to have more at a time than perhaps the single piece they were trying to utter. The deposit was thus a little outside bank, from which the three might severally supply themselves any number of times a-day; and though the bank stood a chance of being broken, they could lose nothing, while there would always be the difficulty of connecting them with it either as *depositors* or *drawers*. The scheme exhibited at least adroitness enough to satisfy me that the three were experienced hands. And yet, just observe the insanity of crime, whereby it renders itself a fool to itself. These clever people, no doubt, never thought that their splendid dresses, their engrossing admiration of their persons, and their exacting claims on the attention of those who would have been very willing to pass them by, only tended to the sharpening of official vision.

On making some inquiries at the Office, I learned that from what we knew as yet of the great Mr Harvey, there could be little doubt that he was a personage who for years had been driving the same trade in the south of England, where he had been often in trouble, and where not less than in London he was reputed as the best “coiner” in the kingdom. His companions were also known as adepts, whose beauty and accomplishments in another peculiar line enabled them to help the common store. Nor was Harvey limited to one department alone, being as well adapted and inclined for *taking* good money as for *coining* or uttering bad; so that viewing them as possessed of these three sources of income, we need not be astonished at their personal equipment. How little people know of the money that passes, like water over stones, through the hands of such gentry! The swell is talked of as a poor devil, with stolen finery, who lives merely in that sense from hand to mouth, which implies only freedom from want. A swell is not thus made up or maintained. It is an expensive character. The hunger and burst may haunt him as an inevitable condition; but as is the hunger, so is the burst with them—an extravagance this latter that would provoke the envy of many a fast youth, born in a mansion, and who runs through his property as fast as the horse he rides. I am speaking of England. It is seldom that we have the pleasure of seeing the true grandee here. Scotland is too poor for them. Yet I have sometimes caught them grazing on our lean turnips, when the English fields were infested with these foxes, the detectives.

So I had got on my beat no fewer than three swells, and surely a hunter of sorry thieves like me behoved to be on my honour. There is, I understand, a difficult etiquette how to *approach* the great, and how to *recede*, without shewing to their circumcised eyes the back part of your person. Would I not require a lesson to save me from being dishonoured and disgraced by some offence against the code of genteel behaviour? Might they not smile at my Scotch bluntness and vulgarity, and refuse obedience to a baton of Scotch fir? One consolation at least—if the *rose* is for polite nostrils, the *thistle* is for thin skins. I scarcely think that I tried a rehearsal that night; but I was saved from all fears by my hope of being received by my great man in a fustian jacket; and as for the ladies, they might consider an Earlston gingham or a Manchester print sufficient for the trade of melting and silvering.

Next day I was on my watch, when about twelve o'clock I saw my great man enter the stair-foot of Ashley Buildings. The glance I got of him satisfied me that Richardson had not exaggerated his grandeur. Everything on him was of the best, and the jemmy cane shewed the delicacy of the hand by which it was held, and by which, too, it was made to go through those exquisite twirls, so expressive of a total absence of such a thing as thought, always necessarily vulgar, when one is surrounded by vulgar people. I gave him time to be *natural*, that I might be *easy*, and then went up stairs, leaving my assistant and two constables at the foot. Mrs Richardson shewed me in, but the mint was locked, on the principle of the Queen's establishment, where valuables run a risk of being taken away. I knocked and listened. Surely my grandees were in dishabille. At last my appeal, which they knew probably was not an usual one, produced uneasiness, so that the cool-bloodedness, which betokens high breeding, was reversed—low words, but quick—rapid movements—small chatterings. At length, perhaps at mere hazard, a voice inquired—

“Is that you, Missus Richardson?”

“No,” replied I.

“Mister Richardson?”

“No,” again.

“Who, then?”

“A friend.”

And so the door gave way to the charmed word.

“Friend? why, a lie!” said the voice of a man.

“Perhaps not,” said I, as I stood before them, and made my usual rapid survey.

I had been wrong in my expectation. The fustian jacket had not taken the place of the surtout, and my ladies were in the same splendid attire I had seen them in on the previous day, only the bonnets were not on their heads—adorned these with an exquisite abundance of fine hair, smooth and glossy, and done up in the first style of fashion. Yes, I defy you to have found in Moray Place more personable young women; nor if I had been there on a visit of condolence for the loss of one of their dearest friends, could I have found manners more staid and correct—I might add graceful, if I could lay claim to knowing much of the true and the false of that accomplishment. But all this I observed by one or two rapid glances diverted from my principal investigation, which latter yielded me at first but little: the indispensable bed—the table and chairs—the plate-rack, and some trunks. It was clear that they had resolved on no work that day, and no trace of their machinery was visible. My principal hope lay in an inviting press; and as I made a motion to proceed towards it, I thought I observed something like an indication that my gentleman would make free with the door; so applying my fingers to my mouth, I gave a shrill whistle, the sound of which echoed through the flat, startled my ladies out of their composure, and, what I wanted, reached the ear of my assistant, who, obeying the call, was instantly at the door.

I now proceeded to my work of search. From the lower part of the press I drew out the identical fustian coat and trousers described to me by Richardson.

“Your working-suit,” said I to Mr Harvey, who seemed to survey the articles with extreme contempt. “A fustian coat,” continued I, as I traced the blots of chemicals, and traces of quicksilver, and various scorplings, “is a thing I cannot but treat with respect, when it belongs to arms of independence. It is the fustian that makes the broadcloth and the silks.”

“They’re not mine,” said Harvey; “they must belong to the house.”

“They ain’t Mr Harvey’s, I assure you, sir,” said Miss Matilda Jerome.

“Perhaps not,” said I, as I proceeded, “some people have a habit of possessing things that do not belong to them—*possession* just wants a point to make *property*, and perhaps this point is awanting here.”

Forthwith I produced from the press several likely things—a bottle with quicksilver—some others with chemicals unknown to me—a portable vice with a screw to fix to the table, which latter had the screw mark upon it still—a hammer—files, coarse and fine—the indispensable stamp—but no galvanic battery as I was led to expect,—a circumstance which puzzled me, because I never could suppose that such adepts could be contented with the old process of salt and friction.

I had got enough for my purpose in the meantime, so, turning round—

“Please put on your bonnets and plaids, my ladies,” said I, “that you, Mr Harvey, and I, may walk up the High Street to my quarters.”

They obeyed with something even like alacrity, on the principle of that sensible man known to history, who, when standing at the gallows foot, said, “If it is to be done, let it be done quickly.” Such are the advantages of having to do with genteel people.

I have no doubt we made an excellent appearance in our promenade up the High Street, only I doubt if any one could comprehend the possibility of such people condescending to enter a police cell. In searching the women we got, strangely enough, no bad money, but a considerable amount of good. The deposit on the window soles had been intended for this day’s work, and scared a little by its having been taken away, they had resolved on out-door adventures.

I still wanted something, as I have said, to complete the catalogue of my articles in the working department, and, above all, I required to connect Mr Harvey with that, so I applied to him for help.

“I wish to know where you live, when in town, Mr Harvey.”

“In Mr Campbell’s, Bell’s Wynd,” he replied promptly affording still the same evidence of the advantages of having to do with high-bred people.

“Then you will please go with me and point it out.”

“Certainly.”

And getting again my assistant, I proceeded with him to Bell’s Wynd, where, having mounted one of the worst stairs in that dark alley, we came to a wretched little dwelling of two rooms and a dark closet. How the great man could have put up in that hovel is difficult to conceive, except upon the supposition that the *swells* shrink when they get home. With the exception of a truckle-bed and a shake-down, there was scarcely a bit of furniture in the house; nor could I find a recess in any way inviting to me except the dark closet, which was adroitly barricaded by the mattress of the shake-down, upon which Mrs Campbell, a miserable invalid, lay in squalid misery. I made short work here. Laying hold of the mattress, I pulled it and its burden away from the closet door into the middle of the floor. A loud scream burst from the invalid, which, from her look I knew to be intended as a fence to the closet, and not an expression of pain. The door was not locked, the bed and its occupant having probably been deemed a sufficient bar.

“Ye’ve murdered me,” cried the cunning wretch, so near her grave, and yet so keen in the concealment of vice. “The malison o’ the Lord light on your head,

and blast it! Haud awa'! my grave-claes are in that closet, and nae man will enter till that day when my soul gaes hame to glory."

"If you never die till you're *fit*, you'll live for ever," said I, when I saw there was not a trace of grave-clothes in the dark hole,—from which, however, I brought the galvanic battery, which I had found awaiting in Ashley Buildings to complete the apparatus, along with sixteen base shillings. I also got some other things of less importance.

"And now, Mrs Campbell, I will push you back again," said I, as I impelled the mattress to its old place.

"And the devil push *you* hame," she cried, "for you've murdered me."

And she groaned even in that way which aged people do when their wickedness is brought home to them; for that there was a complicity in these old people with Harvey, I had no doubt, even from the conduct of the harridan,—a conclusion confirmed by the assertion of Campbell himself that Harvey was his nephew.

I now took Mr Harvey back to the Police Office, thinking, as I went, upon the small amount of real happiness enjoyed by these adventurers among the rocks that lie in the midst of civilisation. Harvey's domestic comforts may be guessed from the account I have given. He was a man, and could bear the want of ease at night, in consideration of his privilege of walking the streets in a fine dress, and dining in the "Rainbow," with respectable people next box. But what are we to say for the women, with apparently delicate forms, and at least so much of feminine feeling as we might see shining through their really handsome faces? One might sum up all their pleasure in saying, that it consisted in promenading the streets in a silk gown. Even then they cannot be, and are not, devoid of fear. The same fear follows them home to an extinct fire, a truckle-bed with a few thin clothes, into which they huddle themselves, and try in sleep to get away from their own thoughts,—which thoughts sometimes go into the forms of dreams, wherein they take their own way, rejoicing in the tricks of a horrible nightmare. Such a being is everything but the woman she was intended to be,—her enjoyments everything but the affections and sympathies she was made to feel. Of course, I am assuming here, and I go upon appearances, that Miss Matilda Jerome and Miss Elizabeth Jackson were not originally Arabs. I might make another estimate in that case, for these are seldom touched by fear; and being against society, as society is against them, there is some inversion in them, the true nature of which, in enabling them to seek some strange kind of happiness, we cannot understand,—at least I could never understand it, and I have seen them in all humours. I suspect, however, that what we here sometimes call

happiness, is only a kind of accommodation of misery. Thus they take the *sign* for the *thing*; and when they are roaring over the tankard, they think they are enjoying themselves. Perhaps they have more of the real thing in the hardness of their rebellion; for I think I have read somewhere, that man (and woman too, I suspect) is such a strange being that he can feel a pleasure in the very *spite* of pleasure. I can't say I would relish that happiness very much.

Well, I find I am at my old trade of spinning morals, without a touch of which I suspect my experiences would not be of much service to mankind; and if I had had no hope of that, I doubt if I would have been at the trouble of opening my black book of two thousand detections. I have little more to say about my grandees. They were brought to trial before the High Court, where, on the evidence of Richardson and his wife, the urchins who found the pieces, our own testimony, and the tale told by the utensils, they were found guilty. This was not, as I have said, the first, nor the second, nor the third time for the gentleman; but the ladies had never been handled so roughly before. Harvey got eight years' penal servitude, and the two belles five years each. As they sat at the bar, I could not help thinking of their appearance that day I took them for ladies of rank on a mission of charity and mercy. Surely our real LADIES, in their present rage for finery, never think how easily, and by what base copyists, they are imitated.

One word more on this subject. I am certainly not over-fastidious as regards female dress. I have seen it in all its varieties, from the scanty cincture that adorned our first mother Eve, to the ingenious complications of modern taste and refinement; but I must observe, with all proper deference to the LADIES, that, in adopting the prevalent redundancy of skirt, the *imitated* have become the *imitators*, as the first of these "circumambient amplitudes" that I ever saw in Edinburgh, was sported by one of the most distinguished "Nightingales" that ever walked Princes Street. In fact, after the experience of thirty years, I find it almost impossible to distinguish the maiden from the matron,—the human vehicle for smuggled or surreptitiously acquired property from the sony housekeeper,—or the frail Magdalene, who knows there is a living secret to conceal, from the *robust* "habitante" just returned from an annual visit to her country cousins; nay, Paterfamilias himself, I have heard, on entering a cab or a box at the theatre, has *breathed*, if he did not *utter*, a heartfelt and pocketfelt anathema against such a superabundant and inconvenient display of hoop and crinoline.

Without attempting to quote the words of Pope as to "ribs of whale," I would simply say to all LADIES, as Hamlet said to the players, "I pray you avoid it."

The Society-Box.

THE way by which the ranks of thieves and robbers are recruited is by the *old* teaching the *young* the figure system. Yes, there is a proselytism of evil as well as of good. Society is always straining after the making of parties, and while churches are working for members, the old thieves are busy enlisting the young. The advantage, I fear, is with the latter, for there's something more catching in the example of taking another man's property than that of praying for grace. Of course I am here looking to the young, and I make this statement without caring much how your beetle-browed critic may take it.

I have known a good many of those dominies of the devil's lore, not a few of them with streaks of grey on their heads, who, having themselves been taught at the same desk, have taken up the trade as a kind of natural calling, and raised their pupils according to the old morality, "The sweet morsel of another person's property is pleasant to roll under the tongue;" and perhaps the more pleasant, too, that the tongue that *sucks* is the tongue that *lies*. There was Hugh Thomson, about the cleverest thief in my day, that rogue brought up as many youngsters in the faith as would have filled a conventicle; and what a glorious grip that was I got of him, just as he was trying to reap the fruits of his lesson, through the ingenuity of one of his scholars, William Lang! I would not have exchanged it for the touch of a bride's hand, with the marriage ring upon her finger.

In 1841, there was a Mr Brown who kept a spirit shop in the Low Calton, nearly opposite Trinity College Church. One of those modern unions called "Yearly Societies" was kept in his house, the members paying their contributions on the Monday evenings, which contributions, the produce of toil and sweat of poor, hard-working men, were deposited in the society box, and secured under lock and key. One Monday evening, I was passing down the Calton on my way to Leith Wynd homeward, to get myself refreshed with a cup of tea. In the mouth of an entry, on the other side of the street called the North Back of the Canongate, I observed Hugh and his scholar Lang, engaged, no doubt, in the mutual offices of teaching and learning. I thought I might learn something too, and stepping into the recess of Trinity Church gate, I watched their movements. Shortly, Lang came out—he had become a man by this time, recollect—and having mixed with the workmen, who were going into Brown's shop to make their weekly payments, he went in among the rest.

At first, I confess, I could not understand this. The thief could make nothing

of the workmen, even if unknown to them as a thief, which in all likelihood he was, and the idea of his trying the pocket line among fustian jackets never entered my head. But that there was some play to go on, where Thomson was patronising, I could have no doubt whatever. After a time, during which I took care that Thomson should not see me, Lang came out, and, having joined Thomson, the two went off together, with something that sounded in my ears as a laugh, and the meaning of which was made clear to me by a happy thought that occurred to me on the instant like a flash. I now wanted to see Brown by himself, but as the workmen were still going in and coming out, I was obliged to wait a considerable time. Selecting at length a moment when the coast was tolerably clear, I entered the shop. There, in the back room, was the sacred box, devoted to benevolence, and from which some widow and orphans might, before the year expired, receive something that would make *her* tear less scorching and *their* cry less shrill—some broken bones, too, broken through the labour and toil of the poor man for the rich one, might have less pain through the charm of that box. Thoughts these pretty enough to some minds, but to such as Thomson quaint, if not funny.

“Mr Brown,” said I, as I entered, “will you be kind enough to shew me your list of members?”

“Surely, Mr M‘Levy.” And he placed the book in my hands.

Running down the names I came to “William Lang, joiner,” though all his *junctions* were between his hand and the property of another.

“I have seen enough,” said I; “and now, Mr Brown, you will take especial care to carry your box up-stairs with you to-night to your dwelling-house.”

And without giving him time to ask for explanations, which I did not feel much disposed to give, I left him. I knew that Brown shut up late on the pay-nights, and therefore having plenty of time that evening, even in the event of an emergency, I went home to get my tea. After which, and having cogitated a little under its reviving influence, I took another turn down Leith Wynd. I wanted to examine the iron gate leading to the church. On looking at it, I found that the lock was off, and consequently free ingress was afforded to any one wishing to enter. I went to a blacksmith’s and got a chain and padlock, the use of which will be apparent, when I mention, that if I adopted the recess within the gate as a look-out, from which I could see Brown’s shop, it was as likely to be so used by those we wanted to observe, as by ourselves, the observers.

Having made these preliminary arrangements, I proceeded to the Office, where I secured the services of one or two of the most active constables, besides my assistant, for I knew that having Thomson to cope with, we had something to

encounter far more formidable than any other thief or robber within the sound of St Giles's. I was in all this, I admit, fired with the ambition of getting a man who had become as bold as Macbeth under the witches' prophecy. Having waited till about eleven o'clock, the hour when Brown generally closed, I repaired, accompanied by my men, to our place of retreat. We entered cautiously, and shutting the old gate with as little noise as possible, I secured the two halves with the chain and padlock, with which I had provided myself—a proceeding which, as it afterwards appeared, was necessary to the success of our enterprise, but the object of which my men could not at the time very clearly understand. Yet what more likely than that Thomson and his gang should wish to reconnoitre us, as we wished to reconnoitre them. We were soon enclosed, and ready for observation. We saw the light put out in Brown's shop, and heard the locking of the doors both in front and at the back, or rather in the side of the entry which led up to the premises above which the spirit-dealer resided. But more than this, we saw the cautious cashier with the sacred box under his arm, as he stepped up the entry—a sight which I enjoyed with a secret chuckle of satisfaction, for it was no mean pride to be up with a man such as Hugh Thomson.

It might be about twelve o'clock before we saw any symptoms of sport. Suddenly, three men, coming apparently from different directions, met, and whispering a few words parted, to act for caution-scouts to each other. Each took a round, casting wary glances to the right and left, and desultory as their movements were, I could recognise Hugh, Lang, and another, David L——, also an old pupil of Thomson's. It seemed to be Thomson's special care to look into the Trinity Church recess, and as we saw him coming forward, we retreated behind the pillars of the gate. He appeared to be taken aback as he observed the gate secured, and taking hold of a railing, he shook it; so that it was evident to me that the place we occupied had been fixed on for retreat, if not for observation. I had thus again the advantage of my old friend, and the moment he receded we resumed our posts. In a few minutes, the different scouts seemed to agree in the opinion that all was safe, and went direct to the work I had anticipated, the moment I saw Lang enter with the members of the society. The front door was not their object; it was the back, or more properly the side one in the entry, which, from the passage being right opposite to us, I could see along, though very indistinctly, scarcely more than to enable me to trace their dark figures against the light thrown in at the farthest opening. None but a keen trapper or snarer can appreciate the pleasure a detective of the true instinctive order feels when engaged in the capture of game so wild, shy, and cunning. Their very cunning is what whets our appetites, and I absolutely burned to embrace the

dauntless leader of the gang.

Now we saw one separate from the rest, come up the entry, and begin to act the “goose-guard,” dodging backwards and forwards, throwing up his head, and looking from one side to another. Inside the entry, meanwhile, some obstruction seemed to take place, even adroit as Thomson was; but presently we were surprised as a vivid flash of exploded gunpowder illuminated the passage. Though unprepared for this, I understood it at once. Thomson had a way of his own with *sullen* locks—placing a small parcel of powder into the key-hole, and pushing it home, so as to reach the wards, he exploded it with a match. The only thing I wondered at was the scarcely audible report—perhaps to be accounted for by the moderate charge, and the resistance of the guards which he intended to loosen. So long as they were in the entry, we could not move, even to undo the padlock and get the gate open and ready. Our moment was that of their entrance; and watching thus, with breathless anxiety, we saw that the door had been opened, by the disappearance of the shadows from the entry. Out we sallied. The “goose-guard,” L——, is made secure in an instant. Two constables, placed one on each side of the front door. I and my assistant enter the close and get to the side door. Lo! it is locked. The gentlemen had wanted time, not only to rifle the box, but to enjoy themselves with ample potations from the whisky barrel; and no doubt their libations would have been rather costly to Mr Brown, as every minute besides would have been devoted to the abstraction of as many portables as they could carry away.

Finding the door barred, (for I think the lock must have been rendered useless,) we began to force it—a circumstance that really added to my satisfaction, as every wrench and thump must have gone home to the hearts of the intruders, now fairly caught in a novel man-trap. Nay, with the constables at the outer door, I didn't care what noise we made, provided we were not annoyed by curious neighbours; and then, to make the play more exciting, we heard them as busy with the front door trying to get *out*, as we were with the back one endeavouring to get *in*. Forced at length, and a rush in in the dark, the noise making the thieves desperate, so that their energies to force the front door might rather be termed fury. They succeeded, just as we were at their back; and in consequence of the door being in two halves, and one starting open while the constables' eyes were fixed on the other, Lang bolted, at the moment that Thomson was embraced by a powerful constable. Another constable was off immediately in pursuit of Lang; and such was my weakness, that when I saw Thomson struggling ineffectually in the grasp of the officer, one whom I had so often sighed for in secret, and eyed in openness, that I took him from the man

with that kind of feeling that no person ought to have the honour of holding him but myself.

By this time Mr Brown was down among us in great consternation.

“Ah!” said he, “I see the reason now of your having told me to carry the society-box up-stairs.”

“I fear that would have been nothing to your loss,” replied I, “if we hadn’t been as sharp as we have been. All’s right.”

Mr Brown’s fears were appeased, and we then marched our gentlemen up to the Office, in which procession, so honoured by the presence of Hugh Thomson, I enjoyed one of my triumphs. Lang was sought for during weeks, but could not be found; and here I have to recount one of my wonders. One dark evening when I was acting the night-hawk out near the Gibbet Toll, I had gone considerably beyond that mark, and was returning. Dalkeith is a kind of harbour of refuge for the Edinburgh thieves when the city becomes too hot for them, and I had some hopes of an adventure on this road, otherwise I would not have been there at that hour, for it was late. The road to Portobello is also a hopeful place at times; but on that night I had some reasons, known only to myself, (and it was not often surmised where I was at any time,) for preferring the southern opening. Well, sauntering along I met a young fellow, but it was so dark that, at the distance of two or three yards, you could scarcely recognise anybody. I had a question ready, however, that suited all comers.

“Am I right for the city?” said I.

“Right in,” was the reply.

And seeing the man wanted to be off, I darted a look at the side of his face. It was Lang’s; and I suspected he had recognised *me* before I did *him*, for he was off in an instant on the way to Dalkeith, and I must take to my heels in pursuit, or lose him. I immediately gave chase, and a noble one it was, though the night was as dark as pitch, and every step was through liquid mud.

Lang was a good runner, and had, I fancy, confidence that he would escape, and that which he had to escape from might very well grease the heels of even a lazy fellow. He ran for freedom, that dear treasure of even a thief's soul; and I ran to deprive him of it, a feeling as dear to a detective. The race became hot and hotter, and I could see only the dark outline of the flying desperado, and I heard the sound of his rapid steps as the voice of hope. By the side of the road one or two people stood, and seemed to wonder at the chase, but no one ventured to interfere. We had run a mile and a half with no abatement of the speed of either, so that we were about equal, and if this continued we might run to Dalkeith; but this issue was rendered improbable by the fact, quite well known to me, that a *pursued criminal*, with a clever officer after him, may almost always be caught by loss of breath. The impulse under which he flies is far more trying to the nerves than that which impels the officer to follow, and hence it is that criminals are so often what is called "run down." The same remark is applicable to a chase of animals. Fear eats up the energies, the lungs play violently, and exhaustion is the consequence. And so it was here. I gained as time sped, and at length I heard the grateful sound of the blowing lungs. He felt his weakness, and the old bravado getting up, he stopt all of a sudden, and waited for me.

"Why, man," said I, "you have just to walk back again; so what's the use?"

"No use," he replied, doggedly; "only if you hadn't caught me I would have been well on to Dalkeith."

Plunging my hands into his coat-pocket, I pulled out a bundle of picklocks.

"Not cured yet?" said I.

"No," replied he, "and never will. You have spoiled a good job at Dalkeith with your d——d dodging."

"Are you a member of a Dalkeith society, too, Lang?" I retorted, good-naturedly.

"Something better," said he; "I might have had £10 in my pocket before morning, if you hadn't come between me and my game."

We began our walk homewards. I didn't require to take hold of him. We had measured our powers, and he knew he had no more chance in flight than in personal conflict, and he walked quietly enough. I would put my handcuffs to use, however, at the Gibbet Toll, to provide against the dangers of alleys favourable to a bolt. I remember I tried him on the soft parts, in regard to the society-box, reminding him that he was robbing the widow and the fatherless.

"Humph! what have I to do with the widow and the fatherless? I am an orphan myself, and there is a difference besides, for your widow and fatherless

have friends, because they have characters, and I don't know but they are better cared for than I, who have neither the one nor the other. I am bound to a trade, as that trade is bound to me, and I must live or die by it. So there's no use for your blarney about widows and orphans. All you have to do is to take me up, and get me condemned and imprisoned, and I will be the same man when I come out."

No doubt he would; and why should I have doubted, who scarcely, in all my experience, could hold out my finger and say, "There's a man whom I have mended, and he is grateful to me for having been hard with him?" No wonder I am weary of my efforts at penal reformation.

I believe the nine months' imprisonment awarded to these three desperate fellows only steeled them to dare the committal of crimes deserving transportation for as many years. How true it is, that the current of vice and criminality proceeds, both in its ebb and flow, on a "sliding scale."

The Miniature.

IT is not often that I have had to deal with irregular criminals, by which I mean those that are not moulded and hardened in infancy and early youth, but who, from some inherent weakness of nature have, by the force of example, or the spur of unlawful gratifications, been precipitated—sometimes against the silent admonitions of their better genius—into a breach of the laws. I have said already that those whom Mr Moxey used to call “abnormals” are comparatively few, and it is not difficult to see how it should happen that their cases are the most painful exhibitions of misery that can be witnessed in this—to most, I fear—very miserable world. In the normals the heart is all in one way. Seldom is there any conscience stirring to produce the terrors of retribution; nay, the conscience is often completely reversed, so that the struggle of pain or anxiety, if it exists, is between the impulse of selfishness and the check imposed by the restraining laws. If a regular thief is sorry for anything, it is for being detected before he has enjoyed the fruit of his ingenuity or violence. There are only two powers in opposition—self, and the world. God is not feared, simply because He is never thought of; religion has no sanction, because it is not known. In the irregulars again, their heart is divided between God and the devil. Yes, that’s my blunt way of putting it. And we may naturally look for some misery, I think, where the poor sensitive mind of the human creature is made the theatre of a contest between such powers.

In September 1850, Mr M——o, solicitor in Regent Terrace, had his bank account in the National Bank operated upon by a forged cheque to the extent of £195. So far as I remember, the forgery was not discovered at the time: nor did the startling intelligence come to him singly—at least it did not remain long single, for there was a crop of minor fabrications that started up like lesser evils round a great one. The forger, whoever he might be, had begun in a small way, as these abnormals generally do—boggling at the first step, then another as the terror waned and the confidence increased, then another and another, till primed for the great leap at length taken. The small cheque-books often kept by gentlemen in the names of their children with the Savings Bank, for the purpose of inducing habits of care and economy, were forged to the effect of abstracting such accumulations of the little daughters as £3 10s., and thereby—small sums and small sufferers—and then came the great feat on the great victim. How true a history of the progress of vice—the sliding scale of crime; fear leading passion to prey upon the weak and helpless, and passion throwing off fear, to rush

headlong upon the strong!

At first there was a great obscurity as to the depredator. It was with a recoil that Mr M——o thought of his clerks, until suspicion began to be raised by the fact of the absence from the office of one of them, of the name of William L——O——, who (as usual) seemed to be the very last on whom the mind of a confiding master could fix as the author of an act so treacherous, heartless, and cruel. The determination was at length come to, that he should be secured, and the charge of doing so was committed to me. I got my description, and how true it is that almost every case of the kind presents marks of personal aspect the very reverse of those we would expect; nay, I would say that, with the exception of a *side look*, expressive of fear, there is nothing about the face of a criminal that would imply either one thing or another as to the existence of tendencies towards even the *greater* crimes. Hence the common expressions, “Who would have supposed it?” “He was so unlike it,” and so forth; all perfectly true. I have seen a devil with the meek face of an infant not less often than I have witnessed the softness and smoothness of infancy overlying nerves of steel leading to powder-pouches of fury and revenge. So be it; but I would not give a very long or very decided squint for all your fanciful expressions of this devilry or t’other; and so in this case. I had enough of marks; but I soon learned that I was now, or later, sure of my man, for I ascertained that, like most other novices, he had taken to drink, to keep up his nerve and down his shame—a resource which throws a sought-for personage into my hands the quickest of any. He had changed his lodgings, and for a time I could only find traces of his fiery passage through taverns, as he flew, sometimes trembling with drink and horror, from one to another, seeking from a fiend, whose gift is delirium, that peace which can only be got from one who behind a rough providence hides a smiling face. His friends, who knew nothing of the charge against him, told me that he had gone with the quickness of a shot into this wild life, and that they considered him mad. I knew otherwise. I deemed that his disease was not remorse, though all such fits are placed to the account of that mysterious power; he was simply under the despair of terror, and as the impulse of fear is the quickest of all passions to take the wind out of a man, I had no doubt I would overtake him between the fiend’s temple and the suicide’s death-bed.

Nor was my expectation long delayed. The search among the lodgings was difficult; he must have changed in lucid intervals, for he cleared away so effectually all behind him, that no one could tell me where he now lived. But at length I discovered his retreat. Placing a couple of constables at the foot of the stair for fear of a window-drop, I ascended to his room, at the door of which I

placed my assistant. It was not a case for premonition by knocking, so I opened the door, which was merely on the lock-catch, and behold my sporter of the little Savings-Bank portions! He was sitting at a table, with a glass and bottle before him; but I could mark from the state of the bottle that his potations at this time had only commenced; nor was I blind to the conviction that the drink-fever was still careering through his veins; the old signs so familiar to me—the trembling hands—the flush—the tumid swellings at the top of the cheeks—the hare-brained eye, with its lightnings of fear.

I doubt if he knew who I was, but he needed no personal knowledge of me to quicken an apprehension that responded, no doubt, to every movement, even to that of a mouse. The first look of me bound him to the easy-chair,—not made for terror-ridden criminals these rests,—to which he fixed himself by hands grasping the soft cushioned arms; his mouth gaped quite open, so that I could even see his parched tongue, as it quivered like a touched jelly-fish, and his eye shot like a fox's when the hounds rush on him with their yell. I am not exaggerating—I doubt if any one can in such a case; at least all language appears to fall far short in depicting the real state of a man in this young offender's position. Even the best describers in such cases are only botchers. We see only physical conditions,—mere palpable signs given in the flesh; nor know aught of the spirit, with its agonising recollections of home,—father, sisters, brothers,—hopes once entertained of a successful future to shed happiness upon them,—all blasted and destroyed, and the only contrast a jail and ignominy.

Yet amidst all this I had a calm part to play.

“You are Mr William L—— O——?”

“Yes.”

“You were clerk to Mr M——o, of the Regent Terrace?”

As I uttered the words, I saw in an instant a change come over him, of a kind I have often noticed in people merely nervous from temperament and not drink. He clasped the arms of the chair more firmly, his trembling ceased as if in an instant, and his eye became steady. Yes, the energy of the instinct of self-preservation shot up through the drink-fever, confirmed his nerves, and prepared him for an onset. I have seen fear run into firmness like the congelations of a liquid metal; but such appearances, which I have learned to understand, never in any case shook my suspicions.

“Yes,” replied he; “and what then?”

“Not much,” said I, “in so far as I am interested, but something in so far as Mr M——o and his young daughters are concerned.”

“I have left his employment, and do not intend to go back,” was the answer, framed to avoid the main chance.

“I am not going to take you back to *your* office, but rather to take you up to *ours*, with a view to get some explanation of certain forgeries on the National and Savings Banks, perpetrated by some one.”

“Then *get* that some one,” said he, waxing firmer.

“I am just going to take him,” replied I, a little nettled, and taking out my handcuffs.

The sight of these produced another effect, which may be said to be inconsistent with human nature. For my part, I don’t know what human nature is, except just so far as I see it, and I never saw much consistency in it. The attempt to be firm, against the nervousness produced by his week’s drunkenness, seemed to give way, as if suddenly let loose by the opening of some unseen aperture, and the effort to say something strong was changed into a kind of hysterical laugh—something like the cackle of a goose, and dying away into loud breathings. This was the mere going down of the barometer; it got up again on the courage side.

“I deny all knowledge of these forgeries,” he cried.

“Well,” said I, “it will only put us to a little trouble in proving it. In the meantime, accept the handcuffs.”

To this I got no reply. He seemed to be struggling for stronger words of defiance, but they would not come at his bidding, and I heard nothing but a jabber, which expressed nothing but determination. I called in my assistant, and while he lay back in the chair we put on the cuffs—observing, as I have done before, the clenched hand, with the perspiration in the act of oozing out between the rigid fingers. Can any man imagine the fearful agony that could effect this, or the state of that conscience-riven and bursting heart?

Having raised him up, a little bit of romance introduced itself into this very prosaic affair, and, as it did not come out at the trial, was never known. He was standing by the side of a bureau, and suddenly he snatched with his left hand a *miniature* (that indispensable appurtenance of the romance-wrights), and placed it in his breast.

“What is that?” said I.

“The portrait of my mother,” he said, and the tear stood in his eye.

“Let me see it,” said I, taking hold of it; and examining it, I found that he had told me what was false. It was the portrait of a young woman, not above twenty years of age, with long black ringlets—exceedingly beautiful, of course—they all are in the velvet-coated case; but as I am no despiser of a good face, I may

admit she was really a fair creature,—ay, even as regards beauty, such a one as a man with more *love* than *duty* would even forge for.

“Why,” said I, “this is the portrait of a young lady. Why did you tell me a lie?”

He paused for a moment. His heart got big, all his hardness had gone, and with a choking voice he said, “I don’t want it to be known that she was connected with me, or ever saw me. So for God’s sake give it me back.”

I saw the impolicy of complying with this request, and put the miniature in my waistcoat pocket.

“No,” said I, “you deny the forgery, and this face may lead me to a witness!”

“Never!” he cried, “she is too innocent to know aught of evil.”

“Be it so,” said I; “I will make no improper use of it, and whatever may happen, I promise to return it to you.”

With this he seemed satisfied,—and we took him up to the Office, where he was locked up in a cell, with but little light, and where, I fear, in the dark hours he would see, in the magic lantern of a criminal’s fancy, many more familiar faces than that of the mysterious original of the portrait. A mother’s, at all events, would not fail to be illuminated there.

Somewhat troublesome as the apprehension of this unfortunate young man had been, it was far more easy than to procure the proper evidence to support an indictment. It turned out, to the annoyance of the authorities, who had no doubt of his guilt, that the imitation of the handwriting of Mr M——o was so skilfully executed, that the cheat was almost too much for the engravers. Forgery is, in this respect, a peculiar kind of crime. You may prove that the forger drew the money; but what then, if he was the person that ought to have drawn it for his master? Then, of whatever respectability the proprietor of the forged name, he is only a witness on his own behalf. Suppose the imitation *inimitable*, where are you? Yet it is to be confessed that so fine a case seldom happens, so that what I have said about the devil’s limp is true here. It seems to be almost beyond the power of a human being to write the name of another in all respects so like that it cannot be detected, even although he has been in the practice of doing so several times a-day for years. But what is still more wonderful, as I’ve been told—for I am now speaking much from hearsay—it is even more difficult to imitate a rude and illiterate hand than a learned one; just as if Providence cared more for the poor, who cannot so well guard and protect themselves against such attempts.

The indictment was, however, prepared and served, and as the case was now more in the hands of the engravers, I had little to do with it; but I could not get

quit of my portrait. There it was, still in my waistcoat pocket, just as if I had been some love-smitten swain, doing the romantic, notwithstanding my advanced years; so, thought I sometimes, if I had dropt down dead, or hung myself on a tree, or thrown myself over the Dean Bridge, as wiser men have done before me, what a story might have been founded on this miniature, and how appropriate for a woodcut stuck in front of my works! Doubtless some italic letters would have been in request by the printer:—"This great man hanged himself for love. The object of his affections was never known, and must remain a mysterious secret till that time when all things shall be revealed."

But even such thoughts as these had passed away. One night I went home late. I lighted my gas and sat down by the fire, in one of those reveries which have always taken possession of me when alone; very unlike other people's reveries, I suspect—for while these are occupied about catching money, or sweethearts, or fame, and sometimes the faces of departed friends, mine never had any other object than the catching of men. From a dream of this kind, and far removed from the case of the young man O——, I heard my door open, and, looking up, saw before me the figure of a fine tall young woman, muffled up in a cloak, and with a veil drawn closely under her chin, and held there by a gloved hand. Even I was amazed; for though I have had strange visitors, there was a something about this one that I am not much in the habit of seeing, at least within the walls of my humble dwelling—something of style and breeding so much above my Bess M'Diarmids and my Jean Brashes, that I was put off my calculations as to character.

"Are you Mr M'Levy?" said she, in a clear silvery voice.

"Ay, ma'am, at your service."

"It was you, I think, who apprehended the unfortunate young man, Mr L—— O——?"

"Yes."

"When you took him away from his lodgings, did you see about him the miniature of a young female?"

"Yes," replied I; and here my practical character began to shew signs of activity. I suspected my mysterious visitor had under her veil the fair face from which that miniature had been painted, and my detective instincts carried my hand to my waistcoat pocket.

"Now, my young lady," said I, "we have a peculiar curiosity about concealed things. If you will shew me your face, I will tell you whether this miniature I hold in my hand is the one you are inquiring after."

“That I dare not do,” replied she, with a tremble.

“Then I cannot shew you the picture,” said I.

“Would money move you?” said she.

“Not unless gold could cut or dissolve steel,” replied I.

“Ah, then, I am miserable indeed!” she said. “I would not for the whole world that my friends, who are of rank, should know that the miniature of their relative had been found in the possession of a forger.”

“I see no occasion for that coming out,” said I; “the picture is of no use at the trial, and I can prevent every chance of such a circumstance obtaining publicity.”

“Oh, Heaven bless you for the words!” she cried. “Can I trust you?”

“Yes,” said I; but becoming again official, and not relishing the idea of being *done* by a female, I could not help adding, “But if you can have faith in my promise as regards the *picture*, why do you doubt me as respects the *original*?”

“I cannot—I dare not,” she ejaculated, as she held the veil more firmly. “Adieu! I trust to your pity for one who truly deserves compassion.”

And my mysterious visitor departed. I never heard or saw more of her; but I have since frequently thought of that lovely face, as portrayed no doubt truthfully in the miniature, and formed numerous conjectures:—the disappointed hopes, it might be, of early affection,—the bleeding heart, brooding in secret over the shame of such a connexion,—or, stranger still, the misplaced sympathy of a woman’s love clinging with mistaken tenacity to the unworthy object, notwithstanding the disgraceful crime of which he had been convicted,—these and many others have often passed across my mind as the mysterious visit occurred to me. Nor is it possible to contemplate this affair without wondering at the fatality of the youth, with beauty if not rank in his power, and yet preying on the portions of children.

I have only to add, in conclusion, that the unfortunate young man was found guilty, and sentenced to fourteen years’ transportation,—a life of misery entailed, and everything worth living for obscured and forfeited, by the unprincipled and criminal desire of display and prodigality. What a lesson for those holding confidential positions against listening for a moment to the insidious wiles of the tempter!

The Wrong Shop.

IT is only a state of *civilisation* that can produce so strange a relation as that between detectives and robbers. In any other condition of society it is inconceivable, for love is almost always mutual, and hatred reciprocal in rude states; and it is not very easy to conceive a condition where one party follows and seeks from a spirit of well-wishing, and another curses and flies from a spirit of hatred. If there is any one we wish to see more than another, it is a robber; and if there is any creature out of the place of four letters a robber wishes to be away from, it is an officer of the law. It may seem strange enough if I should be able to give a case where this was reversed, in a manner which has sometimes forced from me a laugh.

In 1847, a house in Minto Street, and another in Claremont Crescent, were broken into, and robbed of a vast number of portable articles of great value. The families had left the houses to go to the country; and the robbers, being aware that there was nobody to disturb them, had gone about their selection of articles with much artistic deliberation and skill, taking only those things which could be melted, such as silver utensils, or altered or dyed, such as silk dresses, shawls, and the like. We got intimation first of the Minto Street affair, for it was some time before it came to be known even to the proprietor that the house in Claremont Street had been disturbed. Having got my commission, I very soon came to the conclusion that, for a time at least, there could be no discovery by tracing the articles; and just as soon to another, that the whole were secreted, probably in a mass, in some of the lodging-houses resorted to by the gang—for that there was a gang I had no manner of doubt—nor was I at a loss about some of the component parts of the crew,—at least I knew that one or two well-known housebreakers had been seen in the city, and their affinities are almost a matter of course with us.

There was ingenuity, therefore, required in this affair beyond the mere care in dogging some of the artists to their dormitories, and this I soon accomplished by tracing Jane Walker, one of their callets, to the house of one Sim at the West Port. Other bits of intelligence contributed to the conclusion, that Sim's house was the sleeping place of some of them, and the rendezvous of the whole pack. As I have already said, I have always had a craving for a full haul when I put out my net, and take my seat in the cobble to see the wily tribe get into the meshes. So on this occasion I made my arrangements with this view. At a late hour one

night I took with me several constables and proceeded to Sim's house. I arranged my men in such a way that egress was scarcely possible, while some one would be ready to help me inside in the event of an emergency; for it is no indifferent affair to go bang in upon an entire gang of desperate burglars, especially when there are women among them—a remark which requires merely this explanation, that the women egg up the men to resistance, and the men have often a desire to shew off their prowess before their dulcineas.

Having presented myself at Sim's door, I heard a shout of merriment, indicative of a goodly company; and I confess the sound, though rough and brutal, was rather pleasant to me, for it satisfied me they were all there, and, moreover, off their guard, through the seduction of their tender dalliances. I am often fine in my self-introductions, but here I found my cue in bluntness. I opened the door with a sudden click of the sneck, and stood before as motley a crew of ruffians and viragoes as I ever remember to have seen. Nor was the effect all on one side. If I was amazed at seeing such a collection of celebrities, they were not less astonished at seeing me. Laughter did not need to hold her sides, nor Mockery to twist her chaps into mows, nor even Inebriety to flare up into a rage. All was quiet in an instant, with every eye fixed upon me as if by a charm. No placating subtlety was of any use among that gang. They were up to every manœuvre. Sim himself, James M'Culloch, John Anderson, Hector M'Sally, James Stewart, Agnes Hunter, Sarah Jack, Christian Anderson, and Jane Walker, had been all too well accustomed to such blandishments as mine, to be thrown off their guard beyond the instant of the working of the first charm. They simply took me for a devil, who might seize their bodies for punishment, but could not insist upon their pledges to be his for ever. In short, they knew the extent of my power, as well as their necessities to resist it, but only if resistance could be successful.

I had stopt their merriment;—but just allow me, as I stand for a moment before them, to say, it is no merriment that these strange beings enjoy: their hearts have no part in their laughter, which is a mere dry shaking of the lungs, and better named as a cackle, or sometimes a vociferation. It is almost always the result of a personal gibe; for there is no real friendship to restrain them, and their art is a deadly fly that kills at the first leap. They seem to find some relief from the tearing devil within, by tearing their brother devils without; and though it is done under the semblance of fun, it is as cruel and wicked as they can make it. But then the very cruelty in the personality gets applause; the laugh rings, and every one has his turn to be quizzed and gibed—the bearing of which, again, is a kind of stern virtue among them. It is all a heart-burning, with a flickering

ebullition over the surface; and the effort seems to be to produce pain, and yet to make it pass as a kind of pleasure. I know them well; and could, at a distance, distinguish between the merriment of people with sound hearts, and that of these artificial beings, as well as I could do were I among them, and knew the two sets of characters.

A moment sufficed for my introduction.

“There are some things that have gone amissing,” said I, “and I want to know whether any of them are here.”

“Nothing,” said Sim; but the manner of his “nothing” shewed me it was a misnomer for “something.”

“No harm in seeing. I don’t charge any of you, but I may just say that you are as safe in your seats there, as you could be if you had wings and used them. I have friends at the door, so—quiet. Sim, I want to speak with you in the other room. Get a candle.”

All authority lies in bearing. The man obeyed like a machine, got his dip lighted, and followed me into the small room, (there were only two in the house,) when I took the light from him, with the intention of looking into hidden places, but there was strangely enough no necessity for searching. There before me stood a huge trunk or box, more like a coal bunker or ship’s locker than a chest, and sufficient to have held within its capacious sides a jeweller’s stock. Knocking my foot against it, and finding it heavy with contents,

“Why,” said I, “how comes this to be here?”

“All right,” replied the man; “nothing of yours there.”

“Let me see,” said I. “Get me the key.”

“The key is with the proprietor,” said he, coolly. “Why you know, sir, it’s an emigrant’s box that there, and he has merely left it with me till the ship sails, when he will return for it—all right.”

“And there’s nothing in it belonging to these gentry in the kitchen?”

“Not a handkerchief.”

“Well,” said I, “as I don’t wish this trunk to *emigrate* before I know what’s inside, I will break it open.”

And going into the kitchen, I seized a big salamander, standing by the fire, and without saying a word to the no doubt wondering company, who were working hard to look easy, I returned to the room. Up to this kind of work, I managed, by getting a lever point for my poker, to send the top of the box in splinters in a very few minutes, but with a crash which, like the laughter of my

friends in the kitchen, had more sound than music in it. And lo! there was a sight—a veritable curiosity box—a bazaar in miniature; in short, as I afterwards ascertained, all the valuables abstracted not only from the house in Minto Street, but from that in Claremont Crescent, had been brought together, as if by the hand of Prospero's little friend, for my gratification, and yet with no bidding from me.

I had taken a large liberty, and I must take a larger to justify the first. I had provided myself with some of Mrs M'G——r's marks—the lady in Minto Street—so I straightway began to turn out the fine poplins and silks, which overlaid the jewellery at the bottom, till I could find a handkerchief or some article bearing a name, and that I very soon did, in a damask towel, bearing "M'G. 6." I was now relieved from all fears of a misused freedom.

"All right," said I.

And going to the door, I called on my men. There was here a little mismanagement. They were not so close as they should have been, and M'Sally and Stewart, the real burglars, getting desperate, jostled the first officer, and pushing him up against the wall, escaped; nor were the other men sufficiently on the alert to be able to intercept them, so that they got themselves reserved, as it were, for a fate which is the real burden of my story.

The trunk, and all the remaining members of the gang, were straightway under better keeping than that of Mr Sim, who considered all so right; but I had to lament the want of my *chiefs*, the very men on whom my mind was set, and for whom I would have given the whole contents of the locker; but I was not to be done out of them by a mere flight, which did not exclude me from a long shot, and that shot I proceeded to prepare. The prior history of M'Sally enabled me to suspect that he was away down by the east coast to get to London, and I had no doubt Stewart would accompany him, so I straightway got the Lieutenant to forward their portraits to Berwick-on-Tweed, Newcastle, and Shields, with directions to the different Lieutenants to seize and send them back to Edinburgh, where they were specially wanted. As matters turned out, this was a happy suggestion, and proved a comfort to me after my distress.

My gentlemen, just as I suspected, had made their way down to Berwick, with very little money as it appeared, yet with such a locker at home, upon which they had expected to live and feast for many months, (alas, the vanity of human wishes!) and arrived there pretty late at night. They, of course, wanted lodgings, and why should they not get them for nothing, where the philanthropic people of the old town, reversing their former fire-eating character, had prepared the town-hall, of ancient renown for bellicose orations, as a place of refuge for the destitute. The two refugees were even in their misfortunes inclined to be

humorous, and took it into their heads to act the part of industrious “tramps,” travelling to the south in search of work, and apply for a night’s lodging at the very town-hall itself. But who had the privilege of giving out the tickets? Why, who better qualified than the Superintendent of Police himself, who could, from his office, make the proper distinction between the really deserving applicants, and those to whom a jail was a more fitting place of abode? And so it was the Superintendent had the charge of the house of refuge as well as the house of bondage. They had run away for housebreaking, and escaped the fiend M’Levy, and there was a neat squareness in playing off a trick upon his brother of Berwick. A glimpse of the sunshine of fun comes well after the gloom of misfortune; besides, sweet is refuge to the houseless; and then a supper and a breakfast was not to be despised.

They were accordingly soon brought before the dispenser of refuge and justice, who was busy at the time scanning a paper.

“Poor workmen, sir, going south in search of work,” said M’Sally; “would your honour pass us to the town-hall?”

“Where from?” said the Superintendent.

“Aberdeen.”

“Your names?”

“James M’Intosh and John Burnet,” was the reply.

“Blue coat and grey trousers,” muttered the Superintendent, as he looked at the paper—“blue coat and grey trousers,” he repeated, as he glanced at M’Sally. “Monkey jacket and buff vest,” looking again at the paper—“monkey jacket and buff vest,” directing his eyes to Stewart.

“We have been travelling all day, sir,” said Stewart, “and are weary; please pass us on.”

But the Superintendent was in no hurry.

“Grey eyes and foxy whiskers,” he muttered, again getting more curious, as he read and looked, and looked and read, still going over features—“sharp nose, grey eyes, fiery-coloured whiskers—dark eyes and black whiskers”—and so forth, until at last he came to the conclusion—“the very men.”

“Yes,” he said, as he rose and touched a small bell, “I will pass you, but not to the town-hall of Berwick.”

“Any other quarters for poor destitutes will do, sir,” said Stewart.

“What think you of the police-office of Edinburgh,” said the Superintendent, “where you, Hector M’Sally and Joseph Stewart, are, according to this paper I

have in my hands, and which I got just as you entered, charged with breaking into a house in Minto Street, and another in Claremont Crescent, and stealing therefrom many valuable articles.”

“We are not the men,” said the two, determinedly.

“Read your paper again, sir,” said M‘Sally, “and compare, and you’ll find we are not the men.”

The Superintendent was taken aback, and did look again.

“Would you read out the description?” said M‘Sally.

“I think you have got on a blue coat and grey trousers,” said the Superintendent.

“Yes, sir.”

“And you have got grey eyes and foxey whiskers?”

“No, sir; black eyes and black whiskers.”

“And you,” said the Superintendent, a little put out, turning to Stewart, “you have a monkey-jacket and buff vest?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And black eyes and beard?”

“No, sir; grey eyes and light whiskers.”

“Well, then, how stand your noses? You”—to M‘Sally—“have a turned-up one, and a little awry, I think?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you”—to Stewart—“have a very long one, raised in the middle?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, well; suppose the clothes of the one put upon the other—it was easy for you to change them—and we have you to a button. Bertram, pass these gentlemen to a cell for the night, and I shall get them sent off to Edinburgh in the morning.”

Next day we had a letter setting forth the dodge of the exchange, and the curious way they had fallen into the hands of the Superintendent. It was thence an easy business to get our two gentlemen to go to the right shop—Norfolk Island—after having tried the wrong one at Berwick. They and Anderson were transported for seven years. M‘Culloch was acquitted.

The Mustard-Blister.

I BELIEVE that if any one were to look back upon his past life for the purpose of tracing out the most curious parts of it, he would find that they originated in the work of my old lady, Chance, and which is nothing more than something occurring just at the moment when it is unlooked for, but, being taken advantage of, turns out to be important. The great secret is to be able to seize the advantage, and this, as concerns my kind of work, lies in something like natural reasoning. If there's anything out of the ordinary fitness of things, I begin to try to find out why it should be so. Books and learning don't help a man here. I have sometimes thought they rather work against him, and hence it is that we find so many illiterate people rise up to be great and wealthy. Ay, but they can also be clever in a bad way; so with our thieves; but I have this consolation, that if their mother-wit has done a great deal for them, mine has also to their cost done something for me. I will give you a case.

In 1845, there were almost daily occurring cases of robbery from larders in the New Town, and, what was more extraordinary, the accounts all tallied as to the fact that the thieves were exceedingly dainty. It was only the fine pieces of meat that would please them—large joints and legs of mutton—nor did they seem to care for cold meat, in some instances leaving it, as if they were above that kind of food. Of course, I had my ordinary professional reasons for being active in endeavouring to lay hold of these burglars, who seemed to be so envious of the good things of their neighbours, but I confess to the weakness of having had a little of that same feeling in regard to them. I was not easy under the notion that any of my children should be thus living at hack and manger in so very much more luxurious a manner than myself, and felt a great desire to shew them the difference between these hot joints and the fare I am in the habit of providing for them.

But how was I to get hold of them? Who could trace a leg of mutton after it was cut down and eaten? No wee pawns for joints or beefsteaks, and then the omnivorous gentry are generally so hungry that they could not afford, however epicurean, to lay past, to get tender and high-flavoured, a gigot of wether mutton or piece of venison. Then as to catching red-hand, that was out of the question, for upon inquiry it was found that the thieves never tried a larder a second time. I could, in short, make no discovery, and I was more uncomfortable under my want of success than I generally am, insomuch that my cooks were not only

angry at losing their joints, but driven into a passion at the gentry's dinners being spoilt by the disappearance on the previous night of some "old leg" which had been kept a fortnight for the very occasion, and which could not be supplied by the butcher. Their honour was at stake, and we all know what the honour of a *cuisinière* amounts to when the same is calculated by the dripping lips of a *gobe-mouche*. I have caught "old legs," which, like Madeira, had been sent over the sea to improve, and have found them improved in the contrary way, but here my "old legs" defied me.

I had given up hope, and my angry cooks were left to look better after the joints that were to be used in future, when one night I happened to go into the shop of Mr M'Dougal at the foot of the High Street. There were several people in the shop, and I stood back, not to avoid the gaze of Mrs Biddy Riddel of the Fountain Close, (her maiden name was O'Neil), who didn't look for me, and didn't see me, for, in truth, I was after no game that evening, but merely to avoid interfering with the customers. Now was Biddy's turn to be served.

"Half an ounce ov good tay—an ounce ov sugar—and an ounce ov raal Durham mustard," said she.

The purchase struck me as being singular, and I'm sure the grocer was of the same opinion. I was perfectly aware that she was of the class of the half-ounce-of-tea-and-glass-of-whisky buyers, and if she had asked the whisky I would have considered the purchase as quite in the ordinary way, but the "raal Durham" was quite another thing, and I could account for it nohow.

I saw that the grocer had looked at Biddy when she asked the mustard, just as if he felt inclined to ask what she was to do with so large a quantity, nay, any quantity, however small, but he proceeded without saying a word to tie up the tea and the sugar, then, coming to the third article,

"Did you say an ounce of mustard, Mrs Riddel?"

"Ay, raal Durham."

"Why, that will go a far way with you," said Mr M'Dougal, as he looked over to me, and laughed—a kind of interference with the rights of trade that Biddy did not seem to relish.

"Wid me?" she said; "and why wid me? Shure, couldn't I buy a pound ov it if I chose?"

"And most happy would I be to sell it to you," was the reply.

"Ay, and I may need a pound ov it too," she continued, "if it doesn't plase the Lord to be kinder to me; for hasn't Willie caught a terrible cowld, and amn't I to put a blither on his throat this blissid night?"

“Ah, that’s another thing, Mrs Riddel. I’m sorry for William. His trade of chimney-sweeping takes him early out in the cold mornings.”

“And shure it does,” she replied; “but the never a bit less shame to ye to think I was to ate musthard like honey and the devil a bit ov salt mate to take wid it.”

“I am sorry for the mistake,” said the grocer, as he rolled up the small packet, and Biddy laid down the pence.

“And so you may,” added she, not altogether reconciled; “and, what’s more, have I not as good a right to a piece of salt bacon as the gintry?”

And not contented yet without the parting salute—

“And ye don’t know yet that we kept pigs at home, at Ballynagh; ay, an’ they more than paid the rint; and, what’s more, bedad, we didn’t need to tie the bit ov bacon to the ind ov the string and swallow it, and thin pull it out agin.”

“I believe it, Mrs Riddel,” said the grocer.

And then the last words came—

“And what’s more, it wasn’t straike wid a hunger and a burst, like your gintry’s. Just purty white and red where it should be; and we had musthard, too, galore, when we wanted it. Shure, and I’ve settled your penn’orth, anyhow.”

And so she had; for as she went grandly away, carrying in her hand her half-ounce of tea, and in her head the honour of Ballynagh, Mr M’Dougal looked as if he had committed an error in joking as he had done on the wants of the poor.

“You’ve raised the lady’s dander,” said I.

“Which I shouldn’t have done,” said he, “for her penny is as good to me as another’s; and then she needs the mustard for the *outside* of her son’s throat, not the *in*.”

To which sentiment I agreed, even with a little sympathy for the feelings of a mother, whose penny for a blister for her son’s throat was just the tribute which she could ill spare paid from a mother’s affection to old Æsculapius. I confess to having been somewhat amused by Biddy’s Irish vindication of the rights of her family, but having been merely amused, the interlude passed out of my mind—so completely so, that by the next morning I was thinking of something very different from Mrs Riddel and her invalid son, Willie, with the sore throat.

Next day I was passing the mouth of the Fountain Close, and whom did I see standing there, with a pipe in his mouth, but Bill himself, arrayed in his suit of black, with face of the same, indicating that he had been at work in the morning? He was quite well known to me, and from a circumstance which will appear ludicrous. I had occasion at one time to separate him from a baker with whom he

had quarrelled, and with whom, also, he had fought so long that the two had so mixed colours that you couldn't have told which was the man of the oven or the man of the chimney; but the truth is, that he had more to answer for than thrashing a baker, for he was an old offender in another way, where he took without giving something more than dust. Of course it was a mystery to me how he had so soon recovered from his sore throat, and the effects of the "raal Durham."

"Well, Bill, how's your throat, lad?" said I, going up to him.

"My throat?" replied he; "nothing's wrong with it—never had a sore throat in my life."

"Except once," said I.

"When?"

"When I took you by it rather roughly," said I.

"Unpleasant recollection," said the rogue. "Don't wish it mentioned. Steady now,—nothing but lum-sweeping and small pay."

"And no mustard-poultice last night?"

"Mustard-poultice? Strange question! never had a mustard-poultice in my life."

"Quite sure? let me see your throat."

"More sure than I am that you're not gibing a poor fellow," replied he, pulling down his neckcloth. "I don't belong to you now, so be off, unless you want me to sweep your vent for sixpence—cheap, as things go, and I'll leave you the soot to hide your shame for what you did to me yon time."

Well, I took the joke, and really I had no reason in the world for doubting his word as to either the throat or the blister, but I confess I was startled, and couldn't account for the discrepancy between the story of the lady of Ballynagh and that of her son. Things were out of their natural fitness, and there was some explanation required to bring them into conformity with it and themselves. What that explanatory thing was I couldn't tell, and so I walked into the grocer's.

"Why," said I, "Biddy Riddel's black darling has no sore throat, after all. He is standing at the close-head quite well, with his throat, which I have seen, as black as soot."

"Strange enough," said he.

"Have you sold her any ham of late?" said I, after musing a little.

"Too poor for that," he replied; "all goes for whisky, and Biddy's half-ounces of tea, with, no doubt, a bit of coarse meat occasionally, to which an ounce of

Durham would, of course, be out of the question.”

“Did she ever buy from you any mustard before?” I inquired again.

“Why, now when I recollect, yes,” replied he. “About a week ago she had an ounce. I had really forgotten that, when last night I touched her on a tender part.”

With my additional information I left the shop, meditating as I went up the High Street on the strangeness of the affair, small though it was—for a little animal is just as curious in its organization as a big one, and I’ve heard of some great man who lost his eyesight by peering too closely into these small articles of nature’s workmanship. I didn’t intend to lose mine, and yet I couldn’t give over thinking, though it is just as sure as death that I saw no connexion between what I had heard noticed and the larder affair, neither then nor afterwards, during the entire day. Besides, another business took the subject out of my head, so that I thought no more of it.

Next morning, as I was proceeding to the Office, my attention was again called to the mystery of the mustard-blister, by encountering the lady of Ballynagh carrying a stoup of water from the Fountain Well, and I couldn’t resist a few words as I passed.

“Well, Mrs Riddel,” said I, with true official gravity, “how is your darling’s throat after the blister?”

“And it’s you that has the impudence to ask it?” replied she; “are you a docthor?”

“Yes, I sometimes try to mend people when they’re *bad*.”

“To kill them, you mane, and the heart ov many a dacent widdow besides,” was the reply.

“But I didn’t make Bill’s throat sore this time.”

“No more ye did; but small thanks to ye, for wouldn’t ye hang him, if yez could? and, shure, to hang a man wid the proud flesh in his throat would be a mighty plaisant thing to the likes ov ye; and didn’t I look down it wid me own eyes?”

“But Bill says he never had a sore throat in his life.”

“And isn’t that becuse he’s so bowld a boy?” replied she. “He never complains, becuse he knows it would hurt me; but is that any raison I shouldn’t blister him when he’s ill? And didn’t I know he was ill when he could only spake like a choking dog, and couldn’t for the life ov him take a cup of tay or ate a bit ov bread?”

And taking up her pitcher, she hurried away, leaving me as much in the dark

as ever on this great subject, destined to become so much greater before even that day was done, but not by any exertions of mine, for as yet I could see nothing in it beyond the fact that there was some incident required to be known to bring out the fitness of things. Nor was it long before I got satisfaction. The day was a strolling one with me, more a look-out for “old legs” than a pursuit after new ones, and for some reason which I don’t now recollect, I was in Hanover Street, along which I had got (it was now dark) a short way when I observed a sweep coming along with a jolly leg of mutton in his hand. We are sometimes blamed for being somewhat curious in our inquiries into the nature of carried parcels, but here there was so much of the real unfitness of things that I might, I thought, be justified in my curiosity—all the more, too, when I discovered that the proprietor or carrier was my friend of the sore throat.

“Where got you the leg of mutton, Bill?” inquired I, as I stood before him, and stopped his quick pace, intended to be much quicker the moment he saw me.

“The leg of mutton?” replied he, taken aback.

“Yes,” said I, “just the leg of mutton. It is so seldom you have a thing of that kind about you that I feel curious to know.”

“You might as well ask that gentleman where he got his umbrella or his coat,” was the cool reply.

“Not just the same,” said I; “but I do not choose to point out the difference. Where got you it?”

“Bought it to be sure, and that’s enough for you.”

“Quite enough,” said I, “if you did buy it, and I confess you have a good taste. A better leg I haven’t seen for a long time. An ‘old leg’ too, and just kept long enough to be tender. Who’s your butcher?”

“What’s that to you?”

“Perhaps I might fancy one the same,” said I; for I felt inclined to play a little as the idea of the mustard began to tickle my brain and make me merry. “I might even fancy that one and offer a premium upon it.”

“What premium?” he said, perhaps not knowing very well what to say.

“Perhaps sixty days and ‘skeely’ without a drop of mustard.”

The word operated like a charm on my sooty epicure, but he didn’t seem to understand it any way, looking into my face inquisitively, and no doubt remembering the conversation about the blister without being able to connect the two things, for doubtless his mother had told him nothing of his sore throat and of the remedy.

“Come,” said I, “there are just two ways. You take me to the butcher’s shop or I take you to mine.”

Bill was too sensible a fellow not to see, even without the quickening of the blister, that it was all up with him, and so accordingly, carrying his leg of mutton, he accompanied me very quietly to the Office, where I deposited him and his burden. I now examined the leg with the view of endeavouring to ascertain whether it might be identified, for I was here in the position I was in that morning I had so much difficulty about my booty in the Cock and Trumpet. But I soon discovered what I thought might serve my purpose, and, telling the lieutenant to take care not to allow the leg to be handled, I took my way to the Fountain Close, where I found my proud lady of Ballynagh sitting at her ease, no doubt expecting her son in by and by, or at least before supper, which supper he would doubtless bring in himself, she providing the mustard.

“I’m just here again,” said I, as I opened the door and went in.

“Ay, always shoving in your nose where you’ve no more right to be than in heaven, where you’ll never have any right at all,” replied she. “What wid me now?”

“I just want to know, Mrs Riddel, what you did with the ounce of mustard you bought two nights ago at Mr M‘Dougal’s?”

“The musthard?” she exclaimed, at the top of her voice.

“Just the ‘raal Durham.’ ”

“The raal Durham! and what should I do wid it but make a blister for Bill’s throat, as I towld ye before, and tell ye agin?”

“And yet here is the most of it in this cup, ready made for supper,” said I, as I took from the old cupboard the article, and held it before her.

“And was I to use it all at wunst for a blister, d’ye think, ye mighty docthor M‘Lavy?” said she, with something of her usual greatness; “and isn’t his throat sore yet, and won’t he naid the rest ov it this very night?”

“Then what will become of this fine piece of salt beef?” said I, as I pulled out of the same recess the article which appeared so strange in a small hovel, with two chairs and a table, and scarcely a bit of furniture besides. “You must reserve a little for it?”

“And who gave ye the power to spake about my mate, and ask whether I ate musthard to it or not? Isn’t it me own?”

“That’s just what I want to know,” said I, as I took out my handkerchief to roll it up in.

“And who knows that better than the woman who bought it, and salted it, ay, and put saltpatre upon it, and hung it, and boiled it?”

“And told me that the mustard was for her son’s throat,” said I.

“Ay, and the thruth, too, every word ov it.”

“Well, I’m going to take the beef to the Police Office, where Bill is,” said I; “I will leave you the mustard.”

“If you are going to be a thaif, take it altogether,” she cried, “and may the devil blister your throat before you try to ate what belongs to a poor widdow! And you’ve ta’en up the boy agin, have yez?”

“Yes.”

“For stailing his own mate?”

“And if you are not quiet,” said I, “I will return and take up you for helping him to eat it.”

“And that would just make the right ind ov it, you murtherin’ spoiler ov widdows and orphans.”

And now that she had begun to abuse me I might get more of her “good words” than I wanted, so I left her, hearing, as I went down stairs, as many of the widow’s malisons as would have served, if they had been blessings, for the contents of all the rifled larders.

I had nearly got to the Office when a cook from Inverleith Terrace came and reported the theft of a leg of mutton. I was now pretty certain I had not overstepped my duty in apprehending Bill, but the difficulty remained as to the identification.

“Would you know your leg if you saw it?” inquired I.

“As easily as I would know my own, if it were cut off,” she replied, with a grim smile.

“Is that it, then?” said I, as I shewed her the article.

“The very leg,” said she. “There’s the wether mark and the snip off the tail, to shew me which I was to use first, and to-morrow is the great dinner day.”

“I was trusting to the string,” said I, as I held within my hand the piece by which the leg had been hung on the hook.

“And so you might,” replied she, “for it is a piece of an old window cord which was lying on the dresser, and the rest of it is still in the kitchen.”

“Is that it?”

“The very bit; I tied it with my own hands. But how, in the name of all that’s wonderful, has the leg found its way here before me?”

“Never you mind that,” said I. “You will be able to swear to the article?”

“Ay; but what am I to do for the dinner?”

“Why,” said I, “you could scarcely serve up to your master and his guests a leg of mutton that had been stolen by a sweep, and been in the Police Office. Our ‘old legs’ don’t get into high company when they leave our society.”

For the leg Bill was supplied with the “raal Durham” in the shape of twelve months’ imprisonment.

Typographical errors corrected by the etext transcriber:

I rememember that=> I remember that {pg 48}

through a mean of the residence=> through a means of the residence {pg
105}



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