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MILDRED ARKELL

A Novel.

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF
"EAST LYNNE," "LORD OAKBURN'S DAUGHTERS," "TREVLYN HOLD,"
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.—A SURPRISE.

IT happened on that same second of December that Mr. Littelby took his place for the first time as conductor of the business of Mynn and Mynn. He had arrived at Eckford the previous day, as per agreement, but was not installed formally in the office until this. Old Mynn, not in his gout now, had come down early, and was brisk and lively; George Mynn was also there.

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He was an admitted solicitor just as much as were Mynn and Mynn; he was to be their confidential *locum tenens*; the whole management and conduct of affairs was, during their absence, to fall upon him; he was, in point of fact, to be practically a principal, not a clerk, and at the end of a year, if all went well, he was to be allowed a share in the business, and the firm would be Mynn, Mynn, and Littelby.

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It was not, then, to be wondered at, that the chief of the work this day was the inducting him into the particulars of the various cases that Mynn and Mynn happened to have on hand, more especially those that were to come on for trial at the Westerbury assizes, and would require much attention beforehand. They were shut up betimes, the three, in the small room that would in future be Mr. Littelby's—a room which had hitherto been nobody's in particular, for the premises were commodious, but which Mr. Richards had been in the habit of appropriating as his own, not for office purposes, but for private uses. Quite a cargo of articles belonging to Mr. Richards had been there: coats, parcels, pipes, letters, and various other items too numerous to mention. On the previous day, Richards had received a summary mandate to "clear it out," as it was about to be put in order for the use of Mr. Littelby. Mr. Richards had obeyed in much dudgeon, and his good feeling towards the new manager—his master in future—was not improved. It had not been friendly previously, for Mr. Richards had a vague idea that his way would not be quite so much his own as it had been.

He sat now at his desk in the public office, into which clients plunged down two steps from the landing on the first flight of stairs, as if they had

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been going into a well. His subordinate, a steady young man named Pope, who was browbeaten by Richards every hour of his life, sat at a small desk apart. Mr. Richards, ostensibly occupied in the perusal of some formidable-looking parchment, was, in reality, biting his nails and frowning, and inwardly wishing he could bring the ceiling down on Mr. Littelby's head, shut up in that adjoining apartment; and could he have invented a decent excuse for sending out Pope, in the teeth of the intimation Mr. George Mynn had just given, that Pope was to stop in, for he should want him, Mr. Richards would have had his own ear to the keyhole of the door.

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Mr. Littelby and Mr. Mynn sat at the square table, some separate bundles of papers before them, tied up with red string; Mr. George Mynn stood with his back to the fire. Never was there a keener or a better man of business than Mynn the elder, when his state of health allowed him a respite from pain. He had been well for two or three weeks now, and the office found the benefit of it. *He* was the one to explain matters to Mr. Littelby; Mr. George only put in a word here and there. In due course they came to a small bundle of papers labelled "Carr," and Mr. Mynn, in his rapid, clear, concise manner, gave an outline of the case. Before he had said many words, Mr. Littelby

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raised his head, his face betokening interest, and some surprise.

"But I thought the Carr case was at an end," he observed. "At least, I supposed it would naturally be so."

"Oh dear no," said old Mynn; " it's coming on for trial at the assizes—that is, if the other side are so foolish as to go on to action. I don't myself think they will be."

"The other side? You mean the widow of Robert Carr the clergyman?" asked Mr. Littelby, scarcely thinking, however, that Mr. Mynn could mean it.

"The widow and the brother—yes. Fauntleroy, of Westerbury, acts for them. But he'll never, as I believe, bring so utterly lame a case into court."

Mr. Littelby wondered what his new chief could mean; he did not understand at all.

"I should have supposed the case would have been brought to an end by you," he observed. "From the moment that the marriage was discovered to have taken place, your clients, the Carrs of Eckford, virtually lost their cause."

"But the marriage has not been discovered to have taken place," said Mr. Mynn.

"Yes, it has. Is it possible that you have not had intimation of it from Mr. Fauntleroy?"

Mr. Mynn paused a moment. Mr. George, who

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had been looking at his boots, raised his head to listen.

"Where was it discovered?—who discovered it?" asked Mr. Mynn, with the air of a man who does not believe what is being said to him.

"The widow, young Mrs. Carr, found the notice of it. In searching her late father-in-law's desk, she discovered a letter written by him to his son. It was the week subsequent to her husband's death. The letter had slipped between the leaves of an old blotting-

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book, and lain there unsuspected. While poor Robert Carr the clergyman was wearing away his last days of life in those fruitless searchings of the London churches, he little thought how his own carelessness had forced it upon him. He examined this very desk when his father died, for any papers there might be in it, and must have examined it imperfectly, for there the letter must have been."

"But what was in the letter?" asked George Mynn, speaking for the first time since the topic arose.

"It stated that he had married the young lady who went away with him, Martha Ann Hughes, on the morning they left Westerbury—married her at her own parish church, St.—St.—I forget the name."

"Her parish church was St. James the Less," said Mr. Mynn, speaking very fast.

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"Yes, that was it; I remember now. It struck me at the time as being a somewhat uncommon appellation. That is where the marriage took place, on the morning they left Westerbury."

Mr. Mynn sat down; he had need of some rest to recover his consternation. Mr. George never spoke: he said afterwards, that the thought flashed upon him, he could not tell how or why, that the letter was a fraud.

"How did you know of this?" was Mr. Mynn's first question.

Mr. Littelby related how: that Mrs. Carr had informed him of it at the time of the discovery: and, it may be observed, that he was unconscious of breaking any faith in repeating it. Mrs. Carr, attaching little importance to Mr. Fauntleroy's request of keeping it to herself, had either forgotten or neglected to caution Mr. Littelby, to whom it had at once been told. Mr. Littelby, on his part, had never supposed but the discovery had been made known to Mynn and Mynn and the Carrs of Eckford, by Mr. Fauntleroy, and that the litigation had thus been brought to an end,

"And you say this is known to Mr. Fauntleroy?" asked old Mynn.

"Certainly. Mrs. Carr forwarded the letter to him the very hour she discovered it."

"Then what can possess the man not to have

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sent us notice of it?" he exclaimed. "He'd never be guilty of the child's play of concealing this knowledge until the cause was before the court, and then bringing it forward as a settler! Fauntleroy's sharp in practice; but he'd hardly do this."

"Is it certain that the marriage did take place there?" quietly put in Mr. George Mynn.

They both looked at him; his quiet tone was so full of significance: and Mr. Mynn had to turn round in his chair to do it.

"It appears to me to be a very curious story," continued the younger man. "What sort of a woman is this Mrs. Carr?"

A pause. "You are not thinking that she is capable of—of—concocting any fraud, are you?" cried Mr. Littelby.

"I should be sorry to say it. I only say the thing wears a curious appearance."

"She is entirely incapable of it," returned Mr. Littelby, warmly. "She is quite a young girl, although she has been a wife and mother. Besides, the letter, remember, only stated where the marriage took place, and where its record might be found. I remember she told me that the words in the letter were, that the marriage would be found duly entered in the register."

Mr. Mynn was leaning back in his chair; his

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hands in his waistcoat pockets, his eyes half closed in thought.

"Did you see this letter, Mr. Littelby?" he inquired, rousing himself.

"No. Mrs. Carr had sent it off to Mr. Fauntleroy. She told me its contents, I daresay nearly word for word."

"Because I really do not think the marriage could have taken place as described. It would inevitably have been known if it had: some persons, surely, would have seen them go into the church; and the parson and clerk must have been cognisant of it! How was it that these people kept the secret? Besides, the parties were away from the town by eight o'clock, or thereabouts."

"I don't know anything about the details," said Mr. Littelby; "but I do know that the letter, stating what I have told you, was found by Mrs. Carr, and that she implicitly believes in it. Would the letter be likely to assert a thing that a minute's time could disprove? If the record of the marriage is not on the register of St. James the Less, to what end state that it is?"

"If this letter stated what you say, Mr. Littelby, rely upon it that the record is there. There have been such things known, mind you"—and old Mynn lowered his voice as he spoke—"as frauds committed on registers; false entries made.

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And they have passed for genuine, too, to unsuspicious eyes. But, if this is one, it won't pass so with me," he added, rising. "Not a man in the three kingdoms has a keener eye than mine."

"It is impossible that a false entry can have been made in the register!" exclaimed Mr. Littelby, speaking slowly, as if debating the question in his own mind.

"We shall see. I assure you I consider it equally impossible for the marriage to have taken place, as stated, without detection."

"But—assuming your suspicion to be correct—who can have been wicked enough to insert the entry?" cried Mr. Littelby.

"That, I can't tell. The entry of the marriage would take the property from our clients, the Carrs of Eckford, therefore they are exempt from the suspicion. I wonder," continued Mr. Mynn in a half-secret tone, "whether that young clergyman got access to the register when he was down here?"

"That young clergyman was honest as the day," emphatically interrupted Mr. Littelby. "I could answer for his truth and honour with my life. The finding of that letter would have sent him to his grave easier than he went to it."

"There's another brother, is there not?"

"Yes. But he is in Holland, looking after the

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home affairs, which are also complicated. He has not been here at all since his father's death."

"Ah, one doesn't know," said old Mynn, glancing at his watch. "Hundreds of miles have intervened, before now, between a committed fraud and its plotter. Well, we will say no more at present. I'll tell you more when I have had a look at this register. It will not deceive *me*"

"Are you going over now?" asked Mr. George.

"At once," replied old Mynn, with decision; "and I'll bring you back my report and my opinion as soon as may be."

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But Mr. Mynn was away considerably longer than there appeared any need that he should be. When he did arrive he explained that his delay arose from the effectual and thorough searching of the register.

"I don't know what could have been the meaning or the use of that letter you told us of, Mr. Littelby," he said, as he took off his coat; "there is no entry of the marriage in the church register of St. James the Less."

"No entry of it!"

"None whatever."

Mr. Littelby did not at once speak: many thoughts were crowding upon his mind. He and old Mynn were standing now, and George Mynn was sitting with his elbow on the table, and his

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aching head leaning on his hand. The least excitement out of common, sometimes only the sitting for a day in the close office, would bring on these intolerable headaches.

"I have searched effectually—and I don't suppose the old clerk of the church blessed me for keeping him there—and I am prepared to take an affidavit, if necessary, that no such marriage is recorded in the book," continued the elder lawyer. "What could have been the aim or object of that letter, I cannot fathom."

"Mr. Carr will not come into the money, then?" said Mr. Littelby.

"Of course not, so far as things look at present. I thought it was very strange, if such a thing had been there, that Fauntleroy did not let it be known," he emphatically added.

"You are sure you have fully searched?"

"Mr. Littelby, I have fully searched," was the reply; and the lawyer was not pleased at being asked the question after what he had said. "There is no such marriage entered there; and rely upon it no such marriage ever was entered there. I might go farther and say, with safety in my opinion, that there never was such marriage entered anywhere."

"Then why should Robert Carr, the elder, have written the letter?"

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"*Did* he write it? It may be a question."

"No, he never wrote it," interposed George Mynn, looking up. "There was some wicked plot concocted—I don't say by whom, and I can't say it—of which this letter was the prologue. Perhaps the epilogue—the insertion of the marriage in the register—was

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frustrated; possibly this letter was found before its time, and the despatching it to Mr. Fauntleroy marred the whole. How can we say?"

"We can't say," returned old Mynn. "One thing I can say and affirm—that there's no record; and had the letter been a genuine one, the entry would be there now."

"I wonder if Mr. Fauntleroy believes the entry to be there?" cried Mr. Littelby. "I am nearly sure that he has not given notice of the contrary to Mrs. Carr. She would have told me if he had."

"If Fauntleroy has been so foolish as to take the information in the letter for granted, without sending to see the register, he must put up with the consequences," said old Mynn; "I shall not enlighten him."

He spoke as he felt—cross. Mr. Mynn was not pleased at having spent the best part of the day over what he had found to be a fool's errand; neither did he like to have been startled unnecessarily. He sat down and drew the papers before

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him, saying something to the effect that perhaps they could attend to their legitimate business, now that the other was disposed of. Mr. Littelby caught the cue, and resolved to say no more in that office of Carr *versus* Carr.

And so, it was a sort of diamond cut diamond. Mr. Fauntleroy had said nothing to Mynn and Mynn of his private information; and Mynn and Mynn would say nothing to Mr. Fauntleroy of theirs.

Christmas drew on. Mrs. Dundyke, alone now, for Mr. Carr had gone back to Holland, was seated one afternoon by her drawing-room fire, in the twilight, musing very sadly on the past. The servants were at tea in the kitchen, and one of them had just been up to ask her mistress if she would take a cup, as she sometimes did before her late dinner, and had gone down again, leaving unintentionally the room door unlatched.

As the girl entered the kitchen, the sound of laughter and merriment came forth to the ears of Mrs. Dundyke. It quite jarred upon her heart. How often has it occurred to us, bending under the weight of some secret trouble that goes well-nigh to break us, to envy our unconscious servants, who seem to have no care!

The kitchen door closed again, and silence supervened—a silence that soon began to make itself

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felt, as it will in these moments of gloom. Mrs. Dundyke was aroused from it in a remarkable manner; not violently or loudly, but still in so strange a way, that her mouth opened in consternation as she listened, and she rose noiselessly from her chair in a sort of horror.

She had distinctly heard the latch-key put into the street-door lock; just as she had heard it many a time when her husband used to come home from business in the year last gone by. She heard it turned in the lock, the peculiar click it used to give, and she heard the door quietly open and then close again, as if some one had entered. Not since they went abroad the previous July had she heard those sounds, or had the door thus been opened. There had been but that one latch-key to the door, and Mr. Dundyke, either by chance or intention, had carried it away with him in his pocket. It had been in his pocket during the whole period of their travels, and been lost with him.

What could it mean? Who had come in? Footsteps, slow, hesitating footsteps were crossing the hall; they seemed to halt at the dining-room, and were now ascending the stairs. Mrs. Dundyke was by far too practical a woman to believe in ghosts, but that anything but the ghost of her husband could open the door with that latch-key and be stealing up, was hard to believe.

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"Betsey!"

If ever she felt a wish to sink into the wall, or through the floor, she felt it then. The voice which had called out the familiar home name, was her husband's voice; his, and yet not his. His, in a manner; but querulous, worn, weakened. She stood in horror, utterly bewildered, not daring to move, her arms clasping a chair for protection, she knew not from what, her eyes strained on the unlatched door. That it could be her husband returned in life, her thoughts never so much as glanced at.

He pushed open the door, and came in without any surprise in his face or greeting on his tongue; came in and went straight to the fire, and sat down in a chair before it, just as though he had not been gone away an hour—he who had once been David Dundyke. Was it David Dundyke still—*was* it? He looked thin and shabby, and his hair was cut close to his head, and he was altogether altered. Mrs. Dundyke was gazing at him with a fixed, unnatural stare, like one who has been seized with catalepsy.

He saw her standing there, and turned his head, looking at her for a full minute.

"Betsey!"

She went forward then; it *was* her husband, and in life. What the mystery could have been she did

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not know yet—did not glance at in that wild moment—but she fell down at his knees and clasped him to her, and wept delirious tears of joy and agony.

It seemed—when the meeting was over, and the marvelling servants had shaken hands with him, and he had been refreshed with dinner, and the time came for questions—that he could not explain much of the mystery either. He had evidently undergone some great change, physically and mentally, and it had left him the wreck of what he was, with his faculties impaired, and a hesitating speech.

More especially impaired in memory. He could recollect so little of the past; indeed, their sojourn at the hotel at Geneva seemed to have gone from his mind altogether. Mrs. Dundyke saw that he must have had some sort of brain attack; but, what, she could not tell.

"David, where have you been all this while?" she said, soothingly, as he lay on the sofa she had drawn to the fire, and she sat on a stool beneath and clasped his hand.

"All this while? I came back directly."

She paused. "Came back from where?"

"From the bed."

"The bed!" she repeated; and her heart beat with a sick faintness as she felt, for the twentieth

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time, that henceforth he could only be questioned as a child. "From the bed you lay in when you were ill?"

"Yes."

"Were you ill long?"

"No. I lay in it after I got well: my head and my legs were not strong. They turned. It was the bed in the kitchen with the large white pillows. They slept in the back room."

"Who did?"

"Paul and Marie. She's his wife."

"Did they take care of you?"

"Yes, they took care of me. Little Paul used to fetch the water. He's seven."

"Do you remember—" (she spoke the words with trembling, lest the name should excite him) "Mr. Hardcastle?"

It did in some degree. He lay looking at his wife, his face and thoughts working. "Hardcastle! It was him that—that—was with me when I fell down."

"Where did you fall?" she asked, as quietly as she could.

"In the sun. We walked a long, long way, and he gave me something to drink out of a bottle, and I was giddy, and he told me to go to sleep."

"Did he stay with you?"

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Mr. Dundyke stared as though he did not understand the question.

"I went giddy. He took my pocket-book; he took out the letters, and put it back to me again. Paul found it. I went to sleep in the sun."

"When did Paul find it?"

David Dundyke appeared unable to comprehend the "when." "In his cart" he said; "he found me too."

"David, dear, try and recollect; did Paul take you to his cottage?"

David looked puzzled, and then nodded his head several times, as if wishing to convince himself of the fact.

"And I suppose you were ill there?"

"I suppose I was ill there; they said so. Marie spoke English; she had been at—at—at sea."

This was not very perspicuous, but Mrs. Dundyke did not care for minor details.

"How did you come home?" she asked. And she glanced suddenly down at his boots; an idea presenting itself to her, that she might see them worn and travel-stained. But they were not. They were the same boots that he had on that last morning in Geneva, and they appeared to have been little worn.

"How did I come home?" he repeated. "I

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came. Marie said I was well enough. Paul changed the note."

"What note?" she asked.

"The note from England. He didn't see that when he took the others."

"He" evidently meant Mr. Hardcastle. She began to comprehend a little, and put her questions accordingly.

"Mr. Hardcastle must have robbed you, David."

"Mr. Hardcastle robbed me."

She found he had a habit of repeating her words. She had noticed the same peculiarity before, in cases of decaying intellect.

"The bank note that he did not find was the one you had written for over and above what you wanted. Why did you write for it, David?"

This was a back question, and it took a great many others before David could answer.

"He might have wanted to borrow more," he said at length; "I'd have lent him all then."

Poor man! That he should have had such blind faith in Mr. Hardcastle as to send for money in case he should "want to borrow more!" Mrs. Dundyke had taken this view of the case from the first.

"You don't believe in him now, David?"

"I don't believe in him now. He has got my

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bank notes; and he left me in the sun. Paul put me in the cart when it came by."

"David, why did you not write to me?"

David stared. "I came," he said. And she found afterwards, that he could not write; she was to find that he never attempted to write again.

"Did you send to Geneva?—to me?"

"To Geneva?—to me?"

"To me—me, David; not to you. Did you send to Geneva?"

He shook his head, evidently not knowing what she meant, and seemed to think. Mrs. Dundyke felt nearly sure that he must have lain long insensible, for weeks, perhaps months; that is, not sufficiently conscious to understand or remember; and that when he grew better, Geneva and its doings had faded from his remembrance.

"How did you come home, David?" she asked again. "Did you come alone?"

"Did you come alone—yes, in the diligences, and rail, and sea. I told them all to take me to England; Paul got the money for me; he took the note and brought it back."

Paul had changed it into French money; that must be the meaning of it. Mr. Dundyke put his hand in his pocket and pulled out sundry five-franc pieces.

"Marie's got some. I gave her half."

Mrs. Dundyke hoped it was so. She could hardly understand yet, how he could have found his way home alone; even with the help of "I told them all to take me to England."

"David!" she whispered,, "David! I don't know how I shall ever be thankful enough to God!"

"I'd like some porter."

It was a contrast that grated on her ear; the animal want following without break on the spiritual aspiration. She was soon to find that any finer feeling he might ever have possessed, had gone with his mind. He could eat and drink still, and understand that; but there was something wrong with the brain.

"How did you come down here to-night, David?"

"How did I come down here to-night? There was the omnibus."

The questions began to pain her. "He is fatigued," she thought; "perhaps he will answer better to-morrow." The porter was brought to him, and he fell asleep immediately after drinking it. She rose from her low seat, and sat down in a chair opposite to him.

It was like a dream; and Mrs. Dundyke all but pinched herself to see whether she was awake or

asleep. She believed that she could tell pretty accurately what the past had been. Mr. Hardcastle had followed her husband to the side of the lake that morning, had in some way induced him to go away from it; had taken him a long, long way into the cross country—and it must have been at that time that the Swiss peasant, who gave his testimony at Geneva, had seen them. At the proper opportunity, Mr. Hardcastle must have, perhaps, given him some stupefying drink, and then robbed him and left him; but Mrs. Dundyke inclined to the opinion that the man must have believed Mr. Dundyke insensible, or he surely would never have allowed him to see him take the notes. He must then have lain, it was hard to say how long, before Paul found him; and the lying thus in the sun probably induced the fit, or sun-stroke, or brain fever, whatever it was, that attacked him. He spoke of a cart: and she concluded that Paul must have been many miles out of the route of his home, or else the search instituted would surely have found

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him, had he been within a few miles of Geneva. Why these people had kept him, had not declared him to the nearest authorities, it was hard to say. They might have kept him from benevolent motives; or might have seen the bank note in his pocket-book, and kept him from motives of worldly interest. However

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it might be, they had shown themselves worthy Christian people, and she should ever be deeply grateful. *He* had evidently no idea of the flight of time since; perhaps—

"What do you wear that for?"

He was lying with his eyes open, and pointing to the widow's cap. She rose and bent over him, as she answered—

"David! David, dear! we have been mourning you as dead."

"Mourning me as dead! I am not dead."

No, he was not dead, and she was shedding happy tears for it, as she threw the cap off from the braids of her still luxuriant hair.

As well, perhaps, almost that he had been dead! for the best part of his life, the mind's life, was over. No more intellect; no more business for him in Fenchurch Street; no more ambitious aspirations after the civic chair!—it was all over for ever for poor David Dundyke.

But he had come home. He who was supposed to be lying dead—murdered—had come home. It was a strange fact to go forth to the world: one amidst the extraordinary tales that now and then arise to startle it almost into disbelief.

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CHAPTER II.

A DOUBTFUL SEARCH.

ON the 3rd of February the college boys reassembled for school, after the Christmas holidays. Rather explosive were the choristers at times at getting no holidays—as they were pleased to regard it; for they had to attend the cathedral twice daily always. Strictly speaking, the boys had assembled on the previous day, the 2nd of February, and those who lived at a distance, or had been away visiting, had to be back for that day. It is Candlemas Day, as everybody knows, and a saint's day; and on saints' days the king's scholars had to attend the services.

On the 3rd the duties of the school began, and at seven in the morning the boys were clattering up the steps. It was not a propitious morning: snow and sleet doing battle, one against the other. Jocelyn had left, and the eldest of the two Prattletons had succeeded him as senior. Cookesley was second senior, Lewis third, and the eldest of the Aultanes was fourth.

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The boys were not assembling in any great amount of good feeling. Lewis, who with his brother had passed the holidays at the house of the late Marmaduke Carr, and consequently had been in Westerbury, did not forget the grudge he owed to Henry Arkell. It had been Mr. Lewis's pleasure to spend his leisure-hours (time, possibly, hanging somewhat heavily on his hands) in haunting the precincts of the cathedral. Morning, noon, and night had he been seen there; now hovering like a ghost in one of the cloister quadrants, now playing at solitary pitch-and-toss in the grounds, and now taking rather slow, meditative steps past the deanery. He had thus made himself aware that Henry Arkell and Miss Beauclerc not unfrequently met; whether by accident or design on the young lady's part, she best knew. Four times each day had Henry Arkell to be in the grounds and cloisters on his way to and from college; and, at the very least, on two of those occasions, Miss Beauclerc would happen to be passing. She always stopped. Lewis had seen him sometimes walking on with only a lift of the trencher, and Miss Beauclerc would not have it, but stopped as usual. There was no whispering, there were apparently few secrets; the talking was open and full of gaiety on the young lady's part, if her laughter was anything to judge by; but Lewis was not the less savage.

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When *he* met her, she would say indifferently, "How d'ye do, Lewis?" and pass on. Once, Lewis presumed to stop her with some item of news that ought to have proved interesting, but Miss Beauclerc scarcely listened, made some careless remark in answer, and continued her way: the next minute she met Henry Arkell, and stayed with *him*. That Lewis was in love with the dean's daughter, he knew to his sorrow. How worse than foolish it had been on his part to suffer himself to fall in love with her, we might say, but that this passion comes to us without our will. Lewis believed that she loved Henry Arkell; he believed that but for Henry Arkell being in the field, some favour might be shown to him; and he had gone on hating him with a fierce and bitter hatred.

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One day, Henry had come springing down the steps of the cathedral, and encountered Miss Beauclerc close to him. They stood there on the red flagstones of the cloisters, no gravestone being in that particular spot, Georgina laughing and talking as usual. Lewis was in the opposite quadrant of the cloisters, peeping across stealthily, and a devout wish crossed his heart that Arkell was buried on the spot where he then stood. Lewis was fated not to forget that wish.

How he watched, day after day, none save himself saw or knew. He was training for an admirable

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detective in plain clothes. He suspected there had been some coolness between Henry and Miss Beauclerc, and that she was labouring to dispel it; he knew that Arkell did not go to the deanery so much as formerly, and he heard Miss Beauclerc reproach him for it. Lewis had given half his life for such a reproach from her lips to be addressed to him.

There were so many things for which he hated Henry Arkell! There was his great progress in his studies, there was the brilliant examination he had undergone, and there was the gold medal. Could Lewis have conveniently got at that medal, it had soon been melted down. He had also taken up an angry feeling to Arkell on account of the doings of that past November night—the locking up in the church of St. James the Less. Lewis had grown to nourish a very strange notion in regard to it. After puzzling his brain to torment, as to how Arkell *could* have got out, and finding no solution, he arrived at length at the conclusion that he had never been in. He must have left the church previously, Lewis believed, and he had locked up an empty church. It is true he had thought he heard the organ going, but he fully supposed now that he heard it only in fancy. Arkell's silence on the point contributed to this idea: it was entirely beyond Lewis's creed to suppose a fellow could

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have such a trick played him and not complain of it. Arkell had never given forth token of cognisance from that hour to this, and Lewis assumed he had not been in.

It very much augmented his ill feeling, especially when he remembered his own night of horrible anticipation. Mr. Lewis had come to the final conclusion that Arkell had been "out on the spree;" and but for a vague fear that his own share in the night's events might be dragged to light, he would certainly have contrived that it should reach the

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ears of Mr. Wilberforce. He and his brother were to be for another half year boarders at the master's house. Cookesley acted there as senior; the senior boy, Prattleton, living at home.

The boys trooped into the school-room, and Prattleton stood with the roll in his hand. Lewis had not joined on the previous day; he had obtained grace until this, for he wanted to spend it at Eckford. As he came in now, he made rather a parade of shaking hands with Prattleton, and wishing him joy of his honours. Most of the boys liked to begin by being in favour with a new senior, however they might be fated to end, and Lewis and Prattleton were great personal friends—it may be said confidants. Lewis had partially trusted Prattleton with the secret of his love for Miss

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Beauclerc; and he had fully entrusted him with his hatred of Henry Arkell. Scarcely a minute were they together at any time, but Lewis was speaking against Arkell; telling this against him, telling that. Constant dropping will wear away a stone; and Prattleton listened until he was in a degree imbued with the same feeling. Personally, he had no dislike to Arkell himself; but, incited by Lewis, he was quite willing to do him any ill turn privately.

The roll was called over when Henry Arkell entered. He put down a load of books he carried, and went up to Prattleton to shake hands, as Lewis had done; being a chorister, he had not gone into the school-room on the previous day; and he wished him all good luck.

"I am sorry to have to mark you late on the first morning, Arkell," Prattleton quietly said as he shook hands with him. "The school has a superstition, you know—that anyone late on the first morning will be so, as a rule, through the half."

"I know," answered Henry. "It is no fault of mine. Mr. Wilberforce desired me to tell you that he detained me, therefore I am to be marked as having been present."

"Did he detain you?"

"For ten minutes at least. I met him as I was

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coming in, and he caused me to go back with him to his house and bring in these books. He then gave me the message to you."

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"All right," said Prattleton, cheerfully: and he erased the cross against Arkell's name, and marked him as present.

Even this little incident exasperated Lewis. His ill feeling rendered him unjust. No other boy, that he could remember, had been marked as present, not being so. He was beginning to say something sarcastic upon the point, when the entrance of the master himself shut up his tongue for the present.

But we cannot stop with the college boys just now.

On this same day, later, when the sun, had there been any sun to see, was nearing the meridian, Lawyer Fauntleroy sat in his private office, deep in business. Not a more clever lawyer than he throughout the town of Westerbury; and to such men business flocks in. His table stood at a right angle with the fireplace, and the blazing fire burning there, threw its heat upon his face, and his feet rested on a soft thick mat of wool. Mr. Fauntleroy, no longer young, was growing fonder and fonder of the comforts of life, and he sat there cosily, heedless of the hail that beat on the window without.

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The door softly opened, and a clerk came in. It was Kenneth. "Are you at home, sir?"

Mr. Fauntleroy glanced up from the parchment he was bending over—a yellow-looking deed, and his brow looked forth displeasure. "I told you I did not care to be interrupted this morning, Kenneth, unless it was for anything very particular. Who is it?"

"A lady, sir. 'Mrs. Carr' was the name she gave in."

"Carr—Carr?" debated Mr. Fauntleroy, unable to recal any lady of the name amidst his acquaintance. "No. I have no leisure for ladies to-day."

Kenneth hesitated. "It's not likely to be the Mrs. Carr in Carr *v.* Carr; the lady you have had some correspondence with, is it, sir?" he waited to ask. "She is a stranger, and is dressed as a widow."

"The Mrs. Carr in Carr *v.* Carr!" repeated Mr. Fauntleroy. "By Jupiter, I shouldn't wonder if she's come to Westerbury! But I thought she was in Holland. Show her in."

Mr. Kenneth retired, and came back with the visitor. It was Mrs. Carr. Mr. Fauntleroy pushed aside the deed before him, and rose to salute her, wondering at her extreme youth. She spoke English fluently, but with a foreign accent, and

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she entered at once upon the matter which had brought her to Westerbury.

"A circumstance has occurred to renew the old anxiety about this cause," she said to Mr. Fauntleroy. "Should we lose it, I shall lose all I have at present to look forward to, for our affairs in Holland are more complicated than ever. It may turn out, Mr. Fauntleroy, that my share of this inheritance will be all I and my little children will have to depend upon in the world."

"But the cause is safe," returned Mr. Fauntleroy. "The paper you found and forwarded to me last October—or stay, November, wasn't it—"

"Would you be so kind as let me see that paper?" she interrupted.

Mr. Fauntleroy rose and brought forward a bundle of papers labelled "Carr." He drew out a letter, and laid it open before his visitor. It was the one you saw before; the letter written by Robert Carr the elder to his son, stating that the marriage had been solemnized at the church of St. James the Less, and that the entry of it would be found there.

"And there the marriage is entered, as I subsequently wrote you word," observed Mr. Fauntleroy. "It is singular how your husband could have overlooked that letter."

"It had slipped between the leaves of the

blotting-book, or else been placed there purposely by Mr. Carr," she answered; "and my husband may not have been very particular in examining the desk, for at that time he did not know his legitimacy would be disputed. Are you sure it is in the register, sir?" she continued, some anxiety in her tone.

"Quite sure," replied Mr. Fauntleroy. "I sent to St. James's to search as soon as I got this letter, glad enough to have the clue at last; and there it was found."

"Well—it is very strange," observed Mrs. Carr, after a pause. "I will tell you what it is that has made me so anxious and brought me down. But, in the first place, I must observe that I concluded the cause was at an end. I cannot understand why the other side did not at once give up when that letter was discovered."

Knowing that *he* had kept the other side in ignorance of the letter, Mr. Fauntleroy was not very explanatory on this point. Mrs. Carr continued—

"My husband had a friend of the name of Littelby, a solicitor. He was formerly the manager of an office in London, but about two months since he left it for one in the country, Mynn and Mynn's —"

"Mynn and Mynn," interrupted Mr. Fauntleroy;

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"that's the firm who are conducting the case for your adversaries—the Carrs, of Eckford. Littelby? Yes, it is the name of their new man, I remember."

"Well, sir, last week Mr. Littelby was in London, and he called at Mrs. Dundyke's, where I had been staying since I came over from Holland, a fortnight before. The strangest thing has happened there! Mr. Dundyke—but you will not thank me to take up your time, perhaps, with matters that don't concern you. Mr. Littelby spoke to me upon the subject of the letter that I had found, and he said he feared there was something wrong about it, though he could not conceive how, for that there had been no marriage, so far as could be discovered."

"He can say the moon's made of green cheese if he likes," cried Mr. Fauntleroy.

"He said that the opinion of Mynn and Mynn was, that the pretended letter had been intended as a *ruse*—a false plea, written to induce the other side to give up peaceably; but that most positively there was no truth in the statement of the marriage being in the register. Sir, I am sure Mr. Littelby must have had good cause for saying this," emphatically continued Mrs. Carr. "He is a man incapable of deceit, and he wishes well to me and my children. The last advice he gave me was, not to be sanguine; for Mynn and Mynn were clever and cautious practitioners,

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and he knew they made sure the cause was theirs."

"Sharp men," acquiesced Mr. Fauntleroy, nodding his head with a fellow-feeling of approval; "but we have got the whip hand of them in your case, Mrs. Carr.

"I thought it better to tell you this," said she, rising. "It has made me so uneasy that I have scarcely slept since; for I know Mr. Littelby would not discourage me without cause."

"Without fancying he has cause," corrected Mr. Fauntleroy. "Be at ease, ma'am: the marriage is as certain as that oak and ash grow. Where are you staying in Westerbury?"

"In some lodgings I was recommended to in College-row," answered she, producing a card. "Perhaps you will take down the address—"

"Oh, no need for that," said Mr. Fauntleroy, glancing at it, "I know the lodgings well. Mind they don't shave you."

Mrs. Carr was shown out, and Mr. Fauntleroy called in his managing clerk. "Kenneth," said he, "let the Carr cause be completed for counsel; and when the brief's ready, I'll look over it to refresh my memory. Send Omer down to St. James the Less, to take a copy of the marriage."

"I thought Omer brought a copy," observed Mr. Kenneth.

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"No; I don't think so. It will save going again if he did. Ask him."

Mr. Kenneth returned to the clerks' office. "Omer, did you bring a copy of the marriage in the case, Carr *v.* Carr, when you searched the register at St. James's church?" he demanded.

"No," replied Omer.

"Then why did you not?"

"I had no orders, sir. Mr. Fauntleroy only told me to look whether such an entry was there."

"Then you must go now—What's that you are about? Winter's settlement? Why, you have had time to finish that twice over."

"I have been out all the morning with that writ," pleaded Omer, "and could not get to serve it at last. Pretty well three hours I was standing in the passage next his house, waiting for him to come out, and the wind whistling my head off all the time."

Mr. Kenneth vouchsafed no response to this; but he would not disturb the clerk again from Winter's deed. He ordered another, Mr. Green, to go to St. James's church for the copy, and threw him half-a-crown to pay for it.

Young Mr. Green did not relish the mission, and thought himself barbarously used in being sent upon it, inasmuch as that he was an articled clerk and a gentleman, not a paid nobody. "Trapesing

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through the weather all down to that St. James's!" muttered he, as he snatched his hat and greatcoat.

It struck three o'clock before he came back. "Where's Kenneth?" asked he, when he entered.

"In the governor's room. You can go in."

Mr. Green did go in, and Mr. Kenneth broke out into anger. "You have taken your time!"

"I couldn't come quicker," was Mr. Green's reply. "I had to look all through the book. The marriage is not there."

"It is thrift to send you upon an errand," retorted Mr. Kenneth. "You have not been searching."

"I have done nothing else but search since I left. If the entry had been there, Mr. Kenneth, I should have been back in no time. It is not exactly a day to stop for pleasure in a mouldy old church that's colder than charity, or to amuse oneself in the streets."

Mr. Fauntleroy looked up from his desk. "The entry is there, Green: you have overlooked it."

"Sir, I assure you that the entry is not there," repeated Mr. Green. "I looked very carefully."

"Call in Omer," said Mr. Fauntleroy. "You saw the entry of Robert Carr's marriage to Martha Ann Hughes?" he continued, when Omer appeared.

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"Yes, sir."

"You are sure of it?"

"Certainly, sir. I saw it and read it."

"You hear, Mr. Green. You have overlooked it."

"If Omer can find it there, I'll do his work for a week," retorted young Green. "I will pledge you my veracity, sir—"

"Never mind your veracity," interrupted Mr. Fauntleroy; "it is a case of oversight, not of veracity. Kenneth, you have to go down to Clark's office about that bill of costs; you may as well go on to St. James's and get the copy."

"Two half-crowns to pay instead of one, through these young fellows' negligence," grumbled Mr. Kenneth. "They charge it as many times as they open their vestry."

"What's that to him? it doesn't come out of his pocket," whispered Green to Omer, as they returned to their own room. "But if they find the Carr marriage entered there, I'll be shot in two."

"And I'll be shot in four if they don't," retorted Omer. "What a blind beetle you must have been, Green!"

Mr. Kenneth came back from his mission. He walked straight into the presence of Mr. Fauntleroy, and beckoning Omer in after him, attacked him with a storm of reproaches.

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"Do you drink, Mr. Omer?"

"Drink, sir!"

"Yes, drink. Are the words not plain enough?"

"No, sir, I do not," returned Omer, in astonishment.

"Then, Mr. Omer, I tell you that you do. No man, unless he was a drunken man, could pretend to see things which have no place. When you read that entry of Robert Carr's marriage in the register, you saw double, for it never was anywhere but in your brain. There is no entry of the marriage in St. James's register," he added, turning to Mr. Fauntleroy.

Mr. Fauntleroy's mouth dropped considerably. "No entry!"

"Nothing of the sort," continued Mr. Kenneth. "There's no name, and no marriage, and no anything—relating to Robert Carr."

"Bless my heart, what an awful error to have been drawn into!" uttered Mr. Fauntleroy, who was so entirely astounded by the news, that he, for the moment, doubted whether anything was real about him. "All the expense I have been put to will fall upon me; the widow has not a rap, certain; and to take her body in execution would bring no result, save increasing the cost. Mr. Omer, are you prepared to take these charges on yourself, for the error your carelessness has led us into? I

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should not have gone on paying costs myself but for that alleged entry in the register."

Mr. Omer looked something like a mass of petrifaction, unable to speak or move.

"But for the marriage being established—as we were led to suppose—we never should have gone on to trial. Mrs. Carr must have relinquished it," continued Mr. Fauntleroy.

"Of course we should not," chimed in the managing clerk.

"I thought there must be some flaw in the wind; I declare I did, by the other side's carrying it on, now that I find Mynn and Mynn knew of the alleged marriage," exclaimed Mr. Fauntleroy. "I shall look to you for reimbursement, Omer. And, Mr. Kenneth, you'll search out some one in his place: we cannot retain a clerk in our office who is liable to lead us into ruinous mistakes, by asserting that black is white."

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Mr. Omer was beginning to recover his senses. “Sir,” he said, “you are angry with me without cause. I can be upon my oath that the marriage of Robert Carr with Martha Ann Hughes is entered there: I repeated to you, sir, the date, and the names of the witnesses: how could I have done that without reading them?”

“That’s true enough,” returned Mr. Fauntleroy, his hopes beginning to revive.

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“Here’s a proof,” continued the young man, taking out a worn pocket-book. “I am a bad one to remember Christian names, so I just copied the names of the witnesses here in pencil. ‘Edward Blisset Hughes,’ and ‘Sophia Hughes,’ ” he added, holding it towards Mr. Fauntleroy.

“They were her brother and sister,” remarked Mr. Fauntleroy, in soliloquy, looking at the pencilled marks. “Both are dead now; at least, news came of her death, and he has not been heard of for years: she married young Pycroft.”

“Well, sir,” argued Omer, “if these names had not been in the register, how could I have taken them down? I did not know the names before, or that there ever were such people.”

The argument appeared unanswerable, and Mr. Fauntleroy looked at his head clerk. The latter was not deficient in common sense, and he was compelled to conclude that he had himself done what he had accused Mr. Green of doing—overlooked it.

“Allow me to go down at once to St. James’s, sir,” resumed Omer.

“I will go with you,” said Mr. Fauntleroy. The truth was, he was ill at ease.

They proceeded together to St. James’s church, causing old Hunt to believe that Lawyer Fauntleroy and his establishment of clerks had all gone

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crazy together. “Search the register three times in one day!” muttered he; “nobody has never done such a thing in the memory of man.”

But neither Omer nor his master, Mr. Fauntleroy, could find any such entry in the register.

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CHAPTER III.

DETECTION.

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AFTERNOON school was over. Mr. Wilberforce had been some time at home, and was bestowing a sharp lecture on his son Edwin for some delinquency, when he was told that Lawyer Fauntleroy waited in his study. The master brought his anger to a summary conclusion, and went into the presence of his visitor.

"My business is not of a pleasant nature," he premised. "I must tell you in confidence, Mr. Wilberforce, that after all the doubt and discredit cast upon the affair, Robert Carr was discovered to have married that girl at St. James's—your church now—and the entry was found there."

"I know it," said Mr. Wilberforce. "I saw it in the register."

The lawyer stared. "Just repeat that, will you?" said he, putting his hand to his ear as if he were deaf.

"I heard it was to be found there, and the first

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time afterwards that I had occasion to make an entry in the register, I turned back to the date, out of curiosity, and read it."

"Now I am as pleased to hear you say that as if you had put me down a five-hundred pound note," cried Mr. Fauntleroy. "I daresay you'll not object, if called upon, to bear testimony that the marriage was registered there."

"The register itself will be the best testimony," observed Mr. Wilberforce.

"It would have been," said the lawyer; "but that entry has been taken out of the register."

"Taken out!" repeated Mr. Wilberforce.

"Taken out. It is not in now."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried the master.

"So I said, when my clerks brought me word to-day that it was not in. The first sent, Green—you know the young dandy; it's but the other day he was in the college school—came back and said it was not there. Kenneth gave him a rowing for carelessness, and went himself. He came back and said it was not there. Then I thought it was time to go; and I went, and took Omer with me, who saw the entry in the book last November, and copied part of it. Green was right, and Kenneth was right; there is no such entry there."

"This is an incredible tale," exclaimed Mr. Wilberforce.

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The old lawyer drew forward his chair, and peered into the rector's face. "There has been some devilry at work—saving your calling."
"Not saving it at all," retorted Mr. Wilberforce, as hot as when he had been practically demonstrating of what birch is made in the college school-room. "Devilry has been at work, in one sense or another, and nothing short of devilry, if it be as you say."
"It has not only gone, but there's no trace of it's going, or how it went. The register looks as smooth and complete as though it had never been in any hands but honest ones. But now," added the lawyer, "there's another thing that is puzzling me almost as much as the disappearance itself; and that is, how you got to know of it."
"I heard of it from Travice Arkell."
"From Travice Arkell!"
"Yes, I did. And the way I came to hear of it was rather curious," continued the master. "One of my parishioners was thought to be dying, and I was sent for in a hurry, out of early school. Mr. Prattleton generally attends these calls for me, but this poor man had expressed a wish that I myself should go to him. It was between eight and nine o'clock, and Travice Arkell was standing at their gates as I passed, reading a letter which the postman had just delivered to him. It
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was from Mrs. Dundyke, with whom the Carrs were stopping—"
"When was this?" interrupted Mr. Fauntleroy.
"The beginning of November. Travice Arkell stopped me to tell of the strange news that the letter conveyed to him; that a paper had been found in Robert Carr the elder's writing, stating that the marriage had taken place at St. James the Less, the morning he and Miss Hughes left Westerbury, and it would be found duly entered in the register. The news appeared to me so excessively improbable, that I cautioned Travice Arkell against speaking of it, and recommended him to keep it to himself until the truth or falsehood of it should be ascertained.
"What made you give him this caution?"
"I tell you; I thought it so improbable that any such marriage should have taken place. I thought it a hoax, set afloat out of mischief, probably by the Carrs of Eckford; and I did not choose that my church, or anything in it, should be made a jest of publicly. Travice

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Arkell agreed with my view, and gave me his promise not to mention it. His father was away at the time."

"Where?"

"I really forget. I know he had come home only the day before from a short visit to London,

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and went out again somewhere the same day. Travice said he did not expect him back that second time for some days.

"Well?" said Mr. Fauntleroy, in his blunt manner, for the master had stopped, in thought.

"Well, the next morning Travice Arkell called upon me here. He had had a second letter from Mrs. Dundyke, begging him not to mention to anyone what she had said about the marriage, for Mrs. Carr had received a hasty letter from Mr. Fauntleroy, forbidding her to speak of it to anyone. So, after all, that caution that I gave to Travice might have been an instinct."

"And do you think he had not mentioned it?"

"I feel sure that he has never allowed it to escape his lips. He has too great a regard for his aunt, Mrs. Dundyke. She feared she had done mischief, and was most anxious. On the following Sunday, when I was marrying a couple in my church before service, and had got the register out, I looked back to the date, and there, sure enough, was the marriage duly entered."

"And *you* have not spoken of it?"

"I have not. If, as you say, the marriage is no longer there, it is a most strange thing; an incredible thing. But I'll see into it."

"Somebody must see into it," returned the

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lawyer, as he departed. "A parish register ought to be kept as sacred as the crown jewels."

Mr. Wilberforce—a restless man when anything troubled him—started off to Clark Hunt's, disturbing that gentleman at his tea. "Hunt, follow me," said he, as he took the key from its niche, "and bring some matches and a candle with you. I want to examine the register."

"If ever I met with the like o' this!" cried Hunt, when the master had walked on. "Register, register, register! my legs is aching with the tramping backwards and for'ards, to that vestry to-day."

He walked after Mr. Wilberforce as quickly as his lameness would allow. The latter was already in the vestry. He procured the key of the safe (kept in a secret place which no one knew of save himself, the clerk, and the Reverend Mr. Prattleton) opened it, and laid the book before him. Mr. Wilberforce knew, by the date, where the entry ought to be, where it had been, and he was not many minutes ascertaining that it was no longer there.

"Gone and left no trace, as Fauntleroy said," he whispered to himself. "How can it have been done? The leaf must have been taken out! oh yes, it's as complete a thing as ever I saw accomplished: and how is it to be proved that it's gone?

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This comes of their careless habit of not paging their leaves in those old days: had they been paged, the theft would have been evident. Hunt," cried he, aloud, raising his head, "this register has been tampered with."

"Law, sir, that's just what that great lawyer, Fauntleroy, wanted to persuade me on. He has been a-putting it into your head, maybe; but don't you be frighted with any such notion, sir. 'Rob the register!' says I to him; 'no, not unless they robs me of my eyesight first. It's never touched, nor looked at,' says I, 'but when I'm here to take care on it.' "

"A leaf has been taken out. Who has had access here?"

"Not a soul has never had access to this vestry, sir, unless I have been with 'em, except yourself or Mr. Prattleton," persisted the old register keeper. "It's not possible, sir, that the book has been touched."

"Now don't argue like that, Hunt," testily returned Mr. Wilberforce, "I tell you that the register has been rifled, and it could not have been done without access being obtained to it. To whom have you entrusted the key of the church?"

"Never to nobody, save the two young college gents, what comes to play the organ," said the clerk, stoutly.

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"And they could not get access to the register. Some one else must have had the key."

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The old man sat down on a chair, opposite Mr. Wilberforce; placing his two hands on his knees, he stared very fixedly on vacancy. Mr. Wilberforce, who knew his countenance, fancied he was trying to recal something.

"I remember a morning, some time ago," cried he, slowly, "that one of them senior college gents—but that couldn't have had nothing to do with the register."

"What do you remember?" questioned Mr. Wilberforce.

"Your asking if anybody had had the key, put me in mind of it, sir. One of them college seniors; Lewis, it was; came to my house soon after I got up. A rare taking he seemed to be in with fright, or something like it; and wanted me to lend him the key of the church. 'No, no, young gent,' says I, 'not without the master's orders.' He was a panting like anything, and looked as resolute as a bear, and when he heard that, he snatched the key, and tore off with it. Presently, back he comes, saying it was the wrong key and wouldn't undo the door. Mr. George Prattleton had come round then: Mr. Prattleton had told him to ask about the time fixed for a funeral—which, by token, I remember was Dame

Furbery's—and he took the key from Mr. Lewis, and hung it up, and railed off at me for trusting it to the college gents. Lewis finding he couldn't get it from me, went after Mr. George Prattleton, and they came back, and Mr. George took the key from the hook to go to the church with Lewis. What it was Lewis had said to him, I don't pertend to guess, but they was both as white as corpses—as white I know, as ever was dead Dame Furbery in her coffin: which was just about then a being screwed down. After all, they hung the key up again, and didn't go into the church."

"When was this?" asked Mr. Wilberforce.

"It was the very day, sir, after our cat's chaney saucer was done for; and that was done for the day after the grand audit dinner at the deanery. Master Henry Arkell, after going into the church to practise, couldn't be contented to bring the key back and hang it up, like a Christian, but must dash it on to the kitchen floor, where it split the cat's chaney saucer to pieces, and scattered the milk, a-frighting the cat, who had just got her nose in it, a'most into fits, and my missis too. Well, sir, when I opened my shutters the next morning, who should be a standing at the gate but Arkell, so I fetched him in to see the damage he had done; and it was while he

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was in the kitchen, a-counting the pieces, that Lewis came to the door."

"But this must have been early morning," cried Mr. Wilberforce.

"Somewhere about half after six, sir: it was half moonlight and half twilight. I remember what a bright clear morning it was for November."

"Why, at that hour both Lewis and Arkell must have been in their beds, asleep, at my house."

"Law, sir, who can answer for schoolboys, especially them big college gents? When they ought to be a-bed, they're up; and when they ought to be up, they're a-bed. They was both at my house that morning."

Mr. Wilberforce could not make much of the tale, except that two of his boarders were out when he had deemed them safe in bed; and he left the church. It was dusk then. As he was striding along, in an irascible mood, he met Henry Arkell. He touched his cap to the master, and was passing on.

"Not so fast, Mr. Arkell. I want a word with you."

Arkell stopped and stood before Mr. Wilberforce, his truthful eye and open countenance raised fearlessly.

"I gave you credit for behaving honourably,

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and as a gentleman ought, during the time you were residing in my house, but I find I was deceived. Who gave you leave, pray, to sneak out of it at early morning, when everybody else was in bed?"

"I never did, sir," replied Henry.

"Take care, Arkell. If there's one fault I punish more than another, it is a falsehood; and that you know. I say that you did sneak out of my house at untoward and improper hours."

"Indeed, sir, I never did," he replied with respectful earnestness.

The master raised his forefinger, and shook it at his pupil. "You were down at Hunt's one morning last November, by half-past six, perhaps earlier; you must have gone down by moonlight—Ah, I see," added the master, in an altered tone, for a change flashed over Henry Arkell's features, "conscience is accusing you of the falsehood."

"No, sir, I told no falsehood. I don't deny that I was at Hunt's one morning."

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"Then how can you deny that you stole out of my house to get there? Perhaps you will explain, sir."

What was Henry Arkell to do? Explain, in the full sense of the word, he could not; but explain, in a degree, he must, for Mr. Wilberforce was not one

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to be trifled with. He was a perfectly ingenuous boy, both in manner and character, and Mr. Wilberforce had hitherto known him for a truthful one: indeed, he put more faith in Arkell than in all the rest of the thirty-nine king's scholars.

"Perhaps you will dare to tell me that you stopped out all night, instead of sneaking out in the morning?" pursued the master.

"Yes, sir, I did; but it was not my fault: I was kept out."

"Where were you, and who kept you out?"

"Oh, sir, if you would be so kind as not to press me—for indeed I cannot tell. I was kept out, and I could not help myself."

"I never heard so impudent an avowal from any boy in my life," proceeded Mr. Wilberforce, when he recovered his astonishment. "What was the nature of the mischief you were in? Come; I will know it."

"I was not in any mischief, sir. If I might tell the truth, you would say that I was not."

"This is most extraordinary behaviour," returned the master. "What reason have you for not telling the truth?"

"Because—because—well, sir, the reason is, that I could not speak without getting others into trouble. Indeed, sir," he earnestly added, "though I did stop out from your house all night, I did no

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wrong; I was in no mischief, and it was no fault of mine."

Strange perhaps to say, the master believed him: from his long experience of the boy, he could believe nothing but good of Harry Arkell, and if ever words bore the stamp of truth, his did now.

"I am in a hurry at present," said the master, "but don't flatter yourself this matter will rest."

Henry touched his cap again, and the master strode on to the residence of the Reverend Mr. Prattleton, and entered it without ceremony. Mr. Prattleton was seated with his two sous, and with George.

"Send the boys away for a minute, will you?" cried the master to his brother clergyman.

The boys went away, exceedingly glad to be sent. "You can go on with your Greek in the other room," said their father. But to that suggestion they were conveniently deaf, preferring to take an evening gallop through some of the more obscure streets, where they knocked furiously at all the doors, and pulled out a few of the bell-wires.

"An unpleasant affair has happened, Prattleton," began the master. "The register at St. James's has been robbed."

"The register robbed!" echoed Mr. Prattleton. "Not the book taken?"

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"Not the book itself. A leaf has been taken out of it."

"How?"

"We must endeavour to find out how. Hunt protests that nobody has had access to it but ourselves, save in his presence."

"I do not suppose they have," returned Mr. Prattleton. "How could they? When was it taken?"

"Sometime since the beginning of November. And there'll be a tremendous stir over it, as sure as that we are sitting here: it was wanted for—for—some trial at the next assizes," concluded the master, recollecting that Mr. Fauntleroy had cautioned him still not to speak of it. "Fauntleroy's people went to-day to take a copy of it, and found it gone; so Fauntleroy came on to me."

"You are sure it is gone?" continued Mr. Prattleton. "An entry is so easily overlooked."

"I am sure it is not in the book now: and I read it there last November."

"Well, this is an awkward thing. Have you no suspicion?—no clue?"

"Not any. Hunt was telling a tale—By the way," added Mr. Wilberforce, turning to George Prattleton, who had moved himself to a polite distance, as if not caring to hear, "you were mixed up in that. He says, that last November you and

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Lewis had some secret between you, about the church. Lewis went down to his house one morning by moonlight, got the key by stratagem, and brought it back, saying it was

the wrong one: and you then went to the church with him, and both of you were agitated. What was it all about? What did he want in the church?"

"Oh—something had been left there, I think he said, when one of the college boys had gone in to practise. That was nothing, Mr. Wilberforce. We did not go into the church, after all."

George Prattleton spoke with eagerness, and then hastened from the room, but not before Mr. Wilberforce had caught a glimpse of his countenance.

"What is the matter with George?" whispered he.

Mr. Prattleton turned, and looked at the door by which he had gone out. "With George? he repeated: "nothing that I know of. Why?"

"He turned as pale as my cravat: just as Hunt describes him to have been when he went into the church with Lewis. I shall begin to think there is a mystery in this."

"But; not one that touches the register," said Mr. Prattleton. "I'll tell you what that mystery was, but you must not bring in me as your informant; and don't punish the boy, now it's over,

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Wilberforce; though it was a disgraceful and dangerous act. It seems that young Arkell—what a nice lad that is! but he comes of a good stock—went into St. James's one evening to practise, and Lewis, who owed him a grudge, stole after him and locked him in, and took back the key to Hunt's, where he broke some heirloom of the dame's, in the shape of a china saucer, Hunt and his wife taking it to be Arkell. Arkell was locked in the church all night."

"Locked in the church all night!" repeated the amazed Mr. Wilberforce. "Why the fright might have! turned him—turned him—stone blind!"

"It might have turned him stone dead," rejoined Mr. Prattleton. "Lewis, it appears, got terrified for the consequences, and as soon as your servants were up, he went to Hunt's to get the key and let Arkell out. Hunt would not give it him, and Lewis appealed to George. That's what has sent George out of the room, pale, as you call it; he was afraid lest you should question him too closely, and he passed his word to Lewis not to betray him."

"What a villanous rascal!" uttered the master. "I never liked Lewis, but I would not have given him credit for this. Did George tell you?"

"Not he; he is not aware I know it. Lewis,

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some days afterwards, imparted the exploit to my boy, Joe. Joe, in his turn, imparted it to his brother, under a formidable injunction of secrecy, and I happened to overhear them, and became as wise as they were."

"You ought to have told me this," remarked Mr. Wilberforce, his countenance bearing its most severe expression.

"Had one of my own boys been guilty of it, I would have brought him to you and had him punished in the face of the school; but as no harm had come of it, I did not care to inform against Lewis: though I don't excuse him; it was a dastardly action."

"Well, this explains what Lewis wanted in the church, but it brings us no nearer the affair of the register. I think I shall offer a reward for the discovery."

Mr. Wilberforce proceeded home, and into the study where his boarders were assembled, some half dozen of the head boys. One of them, a great tall fellow, stood on his head on a table, his feet touching the wall. "Who's that?" uttered the master. "Is that the way you prepare your lessons, sir?"

Down clattered the head and the feet, and the gentleman stood upright on the floor. It was Lewis senior. Mr. Wilberforce took a seat, and

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the boys held their breath: they saw something was wrong.

"Vaughan."

"Yes, sir."

"Did you lock Henry Arkell up in St. James's Church, and compel him to pass a night there?"

Mr. Vaughan opened all the eyes he possessed.

"I, sir! I have not locked him up, sir. I dont think Arkell is locked up," added Vaughan, in the confusion of his ideas. "I saw him talking to you, sir, just now, in Wage-street."

Lewis pricked up his ears, which had turned of a fiery red; then Arkell *had* been locked in! Mr. Wilberforce sharply seized upon Vaughan's words.

"What brought you in Wage-street, pray?"

"If you please, sir," coughed Vaughan, feeling he had betrayed himself, "I only went out for an exercise book. I finished mine last night, sir, and forgot it till I went to do my

Latin just now. I didn't stop anywhere a minute, sir; I ran there and back as quick as lightning. Here's the book, sir."

Believing as much of this as he chose, Mr. Wilberforce did not pursue the subject. "Then which of you gentlemen was it who did shut up Arkell?" asked he, gazing round. "Lewis, senior, what is the matter with you, that you are skulking behind? Did *you* do it?"

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Lewis saw that all was up. "That canting hound has been peaching at last," quoth he to himself. "I laid a bet with Prattleton he'd do it."

"It is the most wicked and cowardly action that I believe ever disgraced the college school," continued Mr. Wilberforce, "and it depends upon how you meet it, Lewis, whether or not I shall expel you. Equivocate to me now, if you dare. Had it come to my knowledge at the time, you should have been flogged till you could not stand, and ignominiously expelled. Flogged you will be, as it is. Do you know, sir, that he might have died through it?"

Lewis hung his head, wishing Arkell had died; and then he could not have told the master.

"I think the best punishment will be, to lock you up in St. James's all the night, and see how you will like it," continued Mr. Wilberforce.

Lewis wondered whether he was serious; and the perspiration ran down him at the thought. "He was not locked in all night," he said, sullenly, by way of propitiating the master. "When we went to open the church, he was gone."

"Gone! What do you mean now?"

"He had got out somehow, sir, for Hunt said he had just seen him, and when I ran back to morning school, he was in the college hall. Mr.

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George Prattleton advised me not to make a stir, to know how he had got out, but to let it drop."

As Lewis spoke, Mr. Wilberforce suddenly remembered that Hunt said Henry Arkell was in his kitchen, when Lewis came, frightened, and thumping for the key. It occurred to him now, for the first time, to wonder how that could have been.

"When you locked Arkell in, what did you do with the key?"

"I took it to Hunt's, sir."

"And gave it to Hunt?"

"Yes, sir. That is," added Lewis, thinking it might be as well to be correct, "I pushed it into the kitchen, where Hunt was."

"And broke Dame Hunt's saucer," retorted Mr. Wilberforce. "When did you have the key again. Speak up, sir?"

"I didn't have it again, sir," returned Lewis. "The key I took from the hook, next morning, would not fit into the lock, and I took it back. Hunt said it was the right key, and George Prattleton said it was the key; but I am sure it was not, although George Prattleton called me a fool for thinking so."

The master revolved all this in his mind, and thought it very strange. He was determined to

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come to the bottom of it, and despatched Vaughan to Arkell's house to fetch him. The two boys came back together, and Mr. Wilberforce, without circumlocution, addressed the latter.

"When this worthy companion of yours," waving his hand contemptuously towards Lewis, "locked you in the church, how did you get out?"

Henry Arkell glanced at Lewis, and hesitated in his answer. "I can't tell, sir."

"You can't tell!" exclaimed Mr. Wilberforce. "Did you walk out of it in your sleep? Did you get down from a window?—or through the locked door? How did you get out, I ask?"

Before there was time for any reply, the master's servant entered, and said the Rev. Mr. Prattleton was waiting to speak to the master immediately. Mr. Wilberforce, leaving the study door open, went into the opposite room. Mr. Prattleton, who stood there, came forward eagerly.

"Wilberforce, a thought has struck me, and I came in to suggest it. When the boy passed the night in the church, did he get playing with the register?"

"He would not do it; Arkell would not," spoke the master, in the first flush of thought.

"Not mischievously; but he may have got fingering anything he could lay his hands upon—and it is the most natural thing he would do, to

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while away the long hours. A spark may have fallen on the leaf, and—"

"How could he get a light?—or find the key of the safe?" interrupted Mr. Wilberforce.

"Schoolboys can ferret out anything, and he may have found its hiding-place. As to a light, half the boys keep matches in their pockets."

Mr. Wilberforce mused upon the suggestion till it grew into a probability. He called in Arkell, and shut the door.

"Now," said he, confronting him, "will you speak the truth to me, or will you not?"

"I have hitherto spoken the truth to you, sir," answered Arkell, in a tone of pain.

"Well; I believe you have: it would be bad for you now, if you had not. It is about that register, you know," added Mr. Wilberforce, speaking slowly, and staring at him.

There was but one candle on the table, and Henry Arkell pulled out his handkerchief and rubbed it over his face: between the handkerchief and the dim light, the master failed to detect any signs of emotion.

"Did you get fingering the register-book in St. James's, the night you were in the church?"

"No, sir, that I did not," he readily answered.

"Had you a light in the church?"

"You boys have a propensity for concealing

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matches in your clothes, in defiance of the risk you run," interrupted Mr. Prattleton. "Had you any that night?"

"I had no matches, and I had no light," replied Henry. "None of the boys keep matches about them except those who "—smoke, was the ominous word which had all but escaped his lips—"who are careless."

"Pray what did you do with yourself all the time?" resumed the master.

"I played the organ for a long while, and then I lay down on the singers' seat, and went to sleep."

"Now comes the point: how did you get out?"

"I can't say anything about it, sir, except that I found the door open towards morning, and I walked out."

"You must have been dreaming, and fancied it," said the master.

"No, sir, I was awake. The door was open, and I went out."

"Is that the best tale you have got to tell?"

"It is all I can tell, sir. I did get out that way."

"You may go home for the present," said Mr. Wilberforce, in anger.

"Are you satisfied?" asked Mr. Prattleton, as Arkell retired.

"I am satisfied that he is innocent as to the

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register; but not as to how he escaped from the church. Allowing it to be as he says—and I have always found him so strictly truthful—that he found the door open in the middle of the night, how did it come open? "Who opened it? For what purpose?"

"It is an incomprehensible affair altogether," said the Rev. Mr. Prattleton. "Let us sit down and talk it over."

As Arkell left the room, Lewis, senior, appeared at the opposite door, propelling forth the fire-tongs, a note held between them.

"This is for you," cried he, rudely, to Arkell, who took the note. Lewis flung the tongs back in their place. "My hands shouldn't soil themselves by touching yours," said he.

When Arkell got out, he opened the letter under a gas-lamp, and read it as well as he could for the blots. The penmanship was Lewis, junior's.

"Mr. ARKELL,—Has you have chozen to peech to the master, like a retch has you ar, we give you notise that from this nite you will find the skool has hot has the Inphernal Regeons, a deal to hot for you. And my brother dont care a phether for the oisting he is to get, for he'll serve you worce. And if you show this dockiment to any sole, you'l be a dowble-died sneek, and we will thresh

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your life out of you, and then duck you in the rivor."

Henry Arkell tore the paper to bits, and ran home, laughing at the spelling. But it was a very fair specimen of the orthography of Westerbury collegiate school.

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CHAPTER IV.

ASSIZE SATURDAY,

TO attempt to describe the state of Mr. Fauntleroy would be a vain effort. It was the practice of that respected solicitor never to advance a fraction of money out of his pocket for any mortal client, unless the repayment was as safe and sure as the Bank of

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England. He had deemed the return so in the case of Mrs. Carr, and had really advanced a good bit of money; and now there was no marriage recorded in the register.

How had it gone out of it? Mr. Fauntleroy's first thought, in his desperation, was to suspect Mynn and Mynn, clean-handed practitioners though he knew them to be, as practitioners went, of having by some sleight of hand spirited the record away. But for the assertion of Mr. Wilberforce, that he had read it, the lawyer would have definitely concluded that it had never been there, in spite of Mr. Omer and his pencilled names. He went tearing over to Mynn and Mynn's in a

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fine state of excitement, could see neither Mr. Mynn nor Mr. George Mynn, hired a gig at Eckford, and drove over to Mr. Mynn's house, two miles distant. Mr. Mynn, strong in the gout, and wrapped up in flannel and cotton wool in his warm sitting-room, thought at first his professional brother had gone mad, as he listened to the tale and the implied accusation, and then expressed his absolute disbelief that any record of any such marriage had ever been there.

"You must be mad, Fauntleroy! Go and tamper with a register!—suspect us of stealing a page out of a church's register! If you were in your senses, and I had the use of my legs, I'd kick you out of my house for your impudence. I might just as well turn round and tell you, you had been robbing the archives of the Court of Chancery."

"Nobody knew of the record's being there but you, and I, and the rector," debated Mr. Fauntleroy, wiping his great face. "You say you went and saw it."

"I say I went and didn't see it," roared the afflicted man, who had a dreadful twinge just then. "It seems—if this story of yours is true—that I never heard it was there until it was gone. Don't be a simpleton, Fauntleroy."

In his heart of hearts, of course Mr. Fauntleroy did not think Mynn and Mynn had been culpable,

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only in his passion. His voice began to cool down to calmness.

"I'm ready to accuse the whole world, and myself into the bargain," he said. "So would you be, had you been played the trick. I wish you'd tell me quietly what you know about the matter altogether."

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"That's where you should have begun," said old Mynn. "We never heard of any letter having been found, setting forth that the record of the marriage was in the register of St. James's, never thought for a moment that there had been any marriage, and I don't think it now, for the matter of that," he added, *par parenthèse* "until the day our new manager, Littelby, took possession, and I and George were inducting him a little into our approaching assize and other causes. We came to Carr *versus* Carr, in due course, and then Littelby, evidently surprised, asked how it was that the letter despatched to you—to you, Mr. Fauntleroy, and which letter it seems you kept to yourself, and gave us no notice of—had not served to put an end to the cause. Naturally I and my brother inquired what letter Mr. Littelby alluded to, and what were its contents, and then he told us that it was a letter written by Robert Carr, of Holland, stating that the marriage had taken place at the church of St. James the Less, and that its record would be found

entered on the register. My impression at the first moment was—and it was George's very strongly—that there had been nothing of the sort; no marriage, and consequently no record; but immediately a doubt arose whether any fraud had been committed by means of making a false entry in the register. I went off at once to Westerbury, fully determined to detect and expose this fraud—and my eyes are pretty clear for such things—I paid my half-crown, and went with the clerk and examined the register, and found I had my journey for nothing. There was no such record in the register—no mention whatever of the marriage. *That* is all I know of the affair, Mr. Fauntleroy."

Had Mr. Fauntleroy talked till now, he could have learnt no more. It evidently was all that his confrere knew; and he went back to Westerbury as wise as he came, and sought the house of Mr. Wilberforce. The record must have been taken out between the beginning of November and the 2nd of December, he told the master. Omer, and the master himself, had both seen it at the former time; old Mynn searched on the 2nd of December, and it was gone.

This information did not help Mr. Wilberforce in his perplexity, as to who could have tampered with it. It was impossible but that his suspicion should be directed to the night already spoken of,

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when Arkell was locked up in the church, and seemed to have got out in a manner so mysterious nobody knew how. Arkell adhered to his story: he had found the door open in the night, and walked out; and that was all that could be got from him. The master took him at his word. Had he pressed him much, he might have heard more; had he only given him a hint that he knew the register had been robbed, and that both trouble and injustice were likely to arise from it, he might have heard all; for Henry fully meant to keep his word with George Prattleton, and declare the truth, if a necessity arose for it. But it appeared to be the policy of both the master and Mr. Fauntleroy to keep the register out of sight and discussion altogether. Not a word of the loss was suffered to escape. Mr. Fauntleroy had probably his private reasons for this, and the rector shrank from any publicity, because the getting at the register seemed to reflect some carelessness on him and his mode of securing it.

Meanwhile the public were aware that some internal commotion was agitating the litigants in the great cause Carr *versus* Carr. What it was, they could not penetrate. They knew that a young lady, Mrs. Carr the widow, was stopping in Westerbury, and had frequent interviews with Mr. Fauntleroy; and they saw that the renowned

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lawyer himself was in a state of ferment; but not a breath touching the register in any way had escaped abroad, and George Prattleton and Henry Arkell were in ignorance that there was trouble connected with it. George had ventured to put a question to the Reverend Mr. Prattleton, regarding Mr. Wilberforce's visit in connection with it, and was peremptorily ordered to mind his own business.

And the whole city, ripe for gossip and for other people's affairs, as usual, lived in a perpetual state of anticipation of the assizes, and the cause that was to come on at them.

It is probable that this blow to Mr. Fauntleroy—and he regarded it in no less a light—rendered him more severe than customary in his other affairs. On the first of March, another ten pound was due to him from Peter Arkell. The month came in, and the money was not paid; and Mr. Fauntleroy immediately threatened harsh measures: that he would sell him up for the whole of the debt. He had had judgment long ago, and therefore possessed the power to do it; and Peter Arkell went to him. But the grace he pleaded for, Mr. Fauntleroy refused longer to give; refused it coarsely and angrily; and Peter was tempted to remind him of the past. Never yet had he done so.

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"Have you forgotten what I did for you?" he
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asked. "I saved you once from what was perhaps worse than debt."
"And what if you did?" returned the strong-minded lawyer—not to speak more plainly. "I paid you back again."
"Yes; but how? In driblets, which did me no good. And if you did repay me, does that blot out the obligation? If any one man should be lenient to another, you ought to be so to me, Fauntleroy."
"Have I not been lenient?"
"No. It is true, you have not taken the extreme measures you threaten now, but what with the sums you have forced me to pay, the costs, the interest, I know not what all, for I have never clearly understood it, you have made my life one of worry, hardship, and distress. But for that large sum I had to pay suddenly for you I might have done differently in the world. It was my ruin; yes, I assert it, for it is the simple truth, the finding of that sum was my ruin. It took from me all hope of prosperity, and I have been obliged ever since to be a poor, struggling man."
"I paid you, I say; what d'ye mean?" roughly spoke Mr. Fauntleroy.
Peter Arkell shook his head. He had said his say, and was too gentle-minded, too timid-mannered to contend. But the interview did
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him no good: it only served to farther anger Mr. Fauntleroy.
A few days more, and Assize Saturday came in—as it is called in the local phraseology. The judges were expected in some time in the afternoon to open court, and the town was alive with bustle and preparation. On this bright day—and it was one of the brightest March ever gave us—a final, peremptory, unmistakable missive arrived for Peter Arkell from Mr. Fauntleroy. And yet the man boasted in it of his leniency of giving him a few hours more grace; it even dared to hint that perhaps Mr. Arkell, if applied to, might save his home. But the gist of it was, that if the ten pounds were not paid that afternoon by six o'clock, at Mr. Fauntleroy's office, on Monday morning he should proceed to execution.
It was not a pleasant letter for Mrs. Peter Arkell. She received it. Peter was out; and she lay on the sofa in great agitation, as might be seen from the hectic on her cheeks, the

unnatural brightness of her eyes. How lovely she looked as she lay there, a lace cap shading her delicate features, no description could express. The improvement so apparent in her when they returned from the sea-side had not lasted; and for the last few weeks she had faded ominously.

The cathedral clock chimed out the quarter to

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three, and the bell rang out for service. It had been going some time, when Henry, who had been hard at his studies in the little room that was once exclusively his father's, came in. The great likeness between mother and son was more apparent than ever, and the tall, fine boy of sixteen had lost none of his inherited beauty. It was the same exquisite face; the soft, dark eyes, the transparent complexion, the pure features. Perhaps I have dwelt more than I ought on this boy's beauty; but he is no imaginary creation; and it was of that rare order that enchains the eye and almost enforces mention whenever seen, no matter how often. It is still vivid in the remembrance of Westerbury.

"I am going now, mamma."

"You will be late, Henry."

Something in the tone of the voice struck on his ear, and he looked attentively at his mother. The signs of past emotion were not quite obliterated from her face.

"Mamma, you have been crying."

It was of no use to deny it; indeed the sudden accusation brought up fresh tears then. Painful matters had been kept as much as possible from Henry; but he could not avoid knowing of the general embarrassments: unavoidable, and, so to speak, honourable embarrassments.

"What is it now?" he urgently asked.

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"Nothing new; only the old troubles over and over again. Of course, the longer they go on, the worse they get. Never mind, dear; *you* cannot mend matters, so there's no necessity for allowing them to trouble you. There is an invitation come for you from the Palmers'. I told Lucy to put the note on the mantelpiece."

He saw a letter lying there and opened it. His colour rose vividly as he read, and he turned to look at the direction. It was addressed "Mr. Peter Arkell;" but Henry had read it then.

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"You see, they want you to spend Monday with them at Heath Hall, and as it will be the judges' holiday, you can get leave from college and do so."

"Mother," he interrupted—and every vestige of colour had forsaken his sensitive face—"what does this letter mean?"

Mrs. Arkell started up and clasped her hands. "Oh, Henry! what have you been reading? What has Lucy done? She has left out the wrong letter. That was not meant for you."

"Does it mean a prison for papa?" he asked, controlling his voice and manner to calmness, though his heart turned sick with fear. "You must tell me all, mother, now I have read this."

"Perhaps it does, Henry. Or else the selling up of our home. I scarcely know what myself, except that it means great distress and confusion."

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He could hardly speak for consternation. But, if he understood the letter aright, a sum of ten pounds would for the present avert it. "It is not much," he said aloud to his mother.

"It is a great deal to us, Henry; more than we know where to find."

"Papa could borrow it from Mr. Arkell."

"I am sure he will not, let the consequences be what they may. I don't wonder. If you only knew, my dear, how much, how often, he has had to borrow from William Arkell—kind, generous William Arkell!—you could hardly wish him to."

"But what will be done?" he urged.

"I don't know. Unless things come to the crisis they have so long threatened. Child," she added, bursting into tears, "in spite of my firmly-seated trust, these petty anxieties are wearing me out. Every time a knock comes to the door, I shiver and tremble, lest it should be people come to ask for money which we cannot pay. Henry, you will be late."

"Plenty of time, mamma. I timed myself one day, and ran from this to the cloister entrance in two minutes and a half. Are you being pressed for much besides this?" he continued, touching the letter.

"Not very much for anything else," she replied. "That is the worst: if that were settled, I think

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we might manage to stave off the rest till brighter days come round. If we can but retain our home!—several times it would have gone, but for Mr. Arkell. But I was wrong to

speak of this to you," she sighed: "and I am wrong to give way, myself. It is not often that I do. God never sent a burden, but He sent strength to bear it: and we have always, hitherto, been wonderfully helped. Henry, you will surely be late."

He slowly took his elbow from the mantelpiece, where it had been leaning. "No. But if I were, it would be something new: it is not often they have to mark me late."

Kissing his mother, he walked out of the house in a dreamy mood, and with a slow step; not with the eager look and quick foot of a schoolboy, in dread of being marked late on the cathedral roll. As he let the gate swing to, behind him, and turned on his way, a hand was laid upon his shoulder. Henry looked round, and saw a tall, aristocratic man, looking down upon him. In spite of his mind's trouble, his face shone with pleasure.

"Oh, Mr. St. John! Are you in Westerbury?"

"Well, I think you have pretty good ocular demonstration of it. Harry, you have grown out of all knowledge: you will be as tall as my lanky self, if you go on like this. How is Mrs. Arkell?"

"Not any better, thank you. I am so very pleased

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to see you," he continued: "but I cannot stop now. The bell has been going ten minutes."

"In the choir still? Are you the senior boy?"

"Senior chorister as before, but not senior boy yet. Prattleton is senior. Jocelyn went to Oxford in January. Did you come home to-day?"

"Of course. I came in with the barristers."

"But you are not a barrister?" returned Henry, half puzzled at the words.

"I a barrister! I am nothing but my idle self, the heir of all the St. Johns. How is your friend, Miss Beauclerc?"

"She is very well," said Henry; and he turned away his head as he answered. Did St. John's heart beat at the name, as his did, he wondered.

"Harry, I must see your gold medal."

"Oh, I'll fetch it out in a minute: it is only in the parlour."

He ran in, and came out with the pretty toy hanging to its blue ribbon. Mr. St. John took it in his hand.

"The dean displayed taste," was his remark. "Westerbury cathedral on one side, and the inscription to you on the other. There; put it up, and be off. I don't want you to be marked late through me."

There was not another minute to be lost, so Henry slipped the medal into his jacket-pocket, flew away,

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and got on to the steps in his surplice one minute before the dean came in.

There was a bad practice prevailing in the college school, chiefly resorted to by the senior boys: it was that of pledging their goods and chattels. Watches, chains, silver pencil-cases, books, or anything else available, were taken to Rutterley, the pawnbroker's, without scruple. Of course this was not known to the masters. A tale was told of Jones tertius having taken his surplice to Rutterley's one Monday morning; and, being unable to redeem it on the Saturday, he had lain in bed all day on the Sunday, and sent word to the head master that he had sprained his ankle. On the Monday, he limped into the school, apparently in excruciating pain, to the sympathy of the masters, and intense admiration of the senior boys. Henry Arkell had never been guilty of this practice, but he was asking himself, all college time, why he should not be, for once, and so relieve the pressure at home. His gold watch, the gift of Mr. Arkell, was worth, at his own calculation, twenty pounds, and he thought there could be no difficulty in pledging it for ten. "It is not an honourable thing, I know," he reasoned with himself; "but the boys do it every day for their own pleasures, and surely I may in this dreadful strait."

Service was over in less than an hour, and he

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left the cathedral by the front entrance. Being Saturday afternoon, there was no school. The streets were crowded; the high sheriff and his procession had already gone out to meet the judges, and many gazers lingered, waiting for their return. Henry hastened through them, on his way to the pawnbroker's. Possessed of that sensitive, refined temperament, had he been going into the place to steal, he could not have felt more shame. The shop was partitioned off into compartments or boxes, so that one customer should not see another. If Henry Arkell could but have known his ill-luck! In the box contiguous to the one he entered, stood Alfred Aultane, the boy next below him in the

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choir, who had stolen down with one of the family table-spoons, which he had just been protesting to the pawnbroker was his own, and that he would have it out on Monday without fail, for his godfather the counsellor was coming in with the judges, and never failed to give him half a sovereign. But that disbelieving pawnbroker obstinately persisted in refusing to have anything to do with the spoon, for he knew the Aultane crest; and Mr. Alfred stood biting his nails in mortification.

"Will you lend me ten pounds on this?" asked Henry, coming in, and not suspecting that anybody was so near.

"Ten pounds!" uttered Rutterley, after examining

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the watch. "You college gentlemen have got a conscience! I could not give more than half."

"That would be of no use: I must have ten. I shall be sure to redeem it, Mr. Rutterley."

"I am not afraid of that. The college boys mostly redeem their pledges; I will say that for them. I will lend you six pounds upon it, not a farthing more. What can you be wanting with so large a sum?"

"That is my business, if you please," returned Henry, civilly.

"Oh, of course. Six pounds: take it, or leave it."

A sudden temptation flashed across Henry's mind. What if he pledged the gold medal? But for his having it in his pocket, the thought would not have occurred to him. "But how can I?" he mentally argued—"the gift of the dean and chapter! But it is my own," temptation whispered again, "and surely this is a righteous cause. Yes: I will risk it: and if I can't redeem it before, it must wait till I get my money from the choir. So he put the watch and the gold medal side by side on the counter, and received two tickets in exchange, and eight sovereigns and four half-sovereigns.

"Be sure keep it close, Mr. Rutterley," he enjoined; "you see my name is on it, and there is no other medal like it in the town. I would not

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have it known that I had done this, for a hundred times its worth."

"All right," answered Mr. Rutterley; "things left with me are never seen." But Alfred Aultane, from the next box, had contrived both to hear and see.

Henry Arkell was speeding to the office of Mr. Fauntleroy, when he heard sounds behind him "Iss—iss—I say! Iss!"

It was Aultane. "What became of you that you were not at college this afternoon?" demanded Henry, who, as senior chorister, had much authority over the nine choristers under him.

"College be jiggered! I stopped out to see the show; and it isn't come yet. If Wilberforce kicks up a row, I shall swear my mother kept me to make calls with her. I say, Arkell, you couldn't do a fellow a service, could you?"

Henry was surprised at the civil, friendly tone—never used by some of the boys to him. "If I can, I will," said he. "What is it?"

"Lend me ten bob, in gold. I *must* get it: it's for something that can't wait. I'll pay you back next week. I know you must have as much about you."

"All the money I have about me is wanted for a specific purpose. I have not a sixpence that I can lend: if I had, you should be welcome to it."

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"Nasty mean wretch!" grunted Aultane, in his heart. "Wont I serve him out!"

The cathedral bells had been for some time ringing merrily, giving token that the procession had met the judges, and was nearing the city, on its return. Just then a blast was heard from the trumpets of the advancing heralds, and Aultane tore away to see the sight.

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CHAPTER V.

ASSIZE SUNDAY.

THE next day was Assize Sunday. A dense crowd collected early round the doors of the cathedral, and, as soon as they were opened, rushed in, and took possession of the edifice, leaving vacant only the pulpit, the bishop's throne, and the locked-up seats. It was the custom for the bishop (if in Westerbury), the dean and chapter, and the forty king's scholars, to assemble just inside the front entrance and receive the judges, who were attended in state to the cathedral, just as they had been attended into Westerbury the previous afternoon, the escort being now augmented by the mayor and corporation, and an overflowing shoal of barristers.

The ten choristers were the first to take up their standing at the front entrance. They were soon followed by the rest of the king's scholars, the surplices of the whole forty being primly starched for the occasion. They had laid in their customary

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supply of pins, for it was the boys' pleasure, during the service on Assize Sunday, to stick pins into people's backs, and pin women's clothes together; the density of the mob permitting full scope to the delightful amusement, and preventing detection.

The thirty king's scholars bustled in from the cloisters two by two, crossed the body of the cathedral to the grand entrance, and placed themselves at the head of the choristers. Which was wrong: they ought to have gone below them. Henry Arkell, as senior chorister, took precedence of all when in the cathedral; but not when out of it, and that was a somewhat curious rule. Out of the cathedral, Arkell was under Prattleton; the latter, as senior boy, being head of all. He told Prattleton to move down.

Prattleton declined. "Then we must move up," observed Henry. "Choristers."

He was understood: and the choristers moved above the king's scholars.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Prattleton. "How dare you disobey me, Mr. Arkell?"

"How dare you disobey me?" was Henry Arkell's retort, but he spoke civilly. "I am senior here, and you know it, Prattleton." It must be understood that this sort of clashing could

only occur on occasions like the present: on ordinary Sundays and on saints' days the choristers and king's scholars did not come in contact in the cathedral.

"I'll let you know who's senior," said Prattleton. "Choristers, move down; you juniors, do you hear me? Move down, or I'll have you hoisted to-morrow."

"If Mr. Arkell tells us, please, sir," responded a timid junior, who fancied Mr. Prattleton looked particularly at him.

The choristers did not stir, and Prattleton was savage. "King's scholars, move up, and shove."

Some of the king's scholars hesitated, especially those of the lower school. It was no light matter to disobey the senior chorister in the cathedral. Others moved up, and proceeded to "shove." Henry Arkell calmly turned to one of his own juniors.

"Hardcast, go into the vestry, and ask Mr. Wilberforce to step here. Should he have gone into college, fetch him out of the chanting-desk."

"Remain where you are, Hardcast," foamed Prattleton. "I dare you to stir."

Hardcast, a little chap of ten, was already off, but he turned round at the word. "I am not

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under your orders, Mr. Prattleton, when the senior chorister's present."

A few minutes, and then the Reverend Mr. Wilberforce, in his surplice and hood, was seen advancing. Hardcast had fetched him out of the chanting-desk.

"What's all this? what hubbub are you boys making? I'll flog you all to-morrow. Arkell, Prattleton, what's the matter?"

"I thought it better to send for you, sir, than to have a disturbance here," said Arkell.

"A disturbance here! You had better not attempt it."

"Don't the king's scholars take precedence of the choristers, sir?" demanded Prattleton.

"No, they don't," returned the master. "If you have not been years enough in the college to know the rules, Mr. Prattleton, you had better return to the bottom of school, and learn them. Arkell, in this place, you have the command. King's scholars move down, and be quick over it: and I'll flog you all round," concluded Mr. Wilberforce, "if you strike up a dispute in college again."

The master turned tail, and strode back as fast as his short legs would carry him: for the dean and chapter, marshalled by a verger and the bedesmen, were crossing the cathedral; and a flourish

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of trumpets, outside, told of the approach of the judges. The Reverend Mr. Wilberforce was going to take the chanting for an old minor canon whose voice was cracked, and he would hardly recover breath to begin.

The choristers all grinned at the master's decision, save Arkell and Aultane, junior: the latter, though second chorister, took part with Prattleton, because he hated Arkell; and as the judges passed in their flowing scarlet robes with the trains held up behind, and their imposing wigs, so terrible to look at, the bows of the choristers were much more gracious than those of the king's scholars. The additional mob, teeming in after the judges' procession, was unlimited; and a rare field had the boys and their pins that day.

The hubbub and the bustle of the morning passed, and the cathedral bell was again tolling out for afternoon service. Save the dust, and there was plenty of that, no trace remained of the morning's scene. The king's scholars were already in their seats in the choir, and the ten choristers stood at the choir entrance, for they always waited there to go in with the dean and chapter. One of them, and it was Mr. Wilberforce's own son, had made a mistake in the morning in fastening his own surplice to a countrywoman's purple stuff gown, instead of two gowns together; and, when they

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came to part company, the surplice proved the weakest. The consequence was an enormous rent, and it had just taken the nine other choristers and three lay-clerks five minutes and seventeen pins, fished out of different pockets, to do it up in any way decent. Young Wilberforce, during the process, rehearsing a tale over in his mind, for home, about that horrid rusty nail that would stick out of the vestry door.

The choristers stood facing each other, five on a side, and the dean and canons would pass between them when they came in. They stood at an equidistance, one from the other, and it was high treason against the college rules for them to move an inch from their places. Arkell headed one line, Aultane the other, the two being face to face. Suddenly a college boy, who was late, came flying from the cloisters and dashed into the choir, to crave the keys of the schoolroom from the senior boy, that he might procure his surplice. It was Lewis junior; so, against the rules, Prattleton condescended to give him the keys; almost any other boy he would have told to whistle for them, and marked him up for punishment as "absent." Prattleton chose to patronise him, on account of his friendship with Lewis senior. Lewis came out again, full pelt, swinging the keys in his hand, rather vain of showing to the choristers that he

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had succeeded in obtaining them, just as two little old gentlemen were advancing from the front entrance.

"Hi, Lewis! stop a moment," called out Aultane, in a loud whisper, as he crossed over and went behind Arkell.

"Return to your place, Aultane," said Arkell.

Mr. Aultane chose to be deaf.

"Aultane, to your place," repeated Henry Arkell, his tone one of hasty authority. "Do you see who are approaching?"
Aultane looked round in a fluster. But not a soul could he see, save a straggler or two making their way to the side aisles; and two insignificant little old men, arm-in-arm, close at hand, in rusty black clothes and brown wigs. Nobody to affect *him*.
"I shall return when I please," said he, commencing a whispered parley with Lewis.
"Return this instant, Aultane. I order you."
"You be—"
The word was not a blessing, but you are at liberty to substitute one. The little old men, to whom each chorister had bowed profoundly as they passed him, turned, and bent their severe yellow faces upon Aultane. Lewis junior crept away petrified; and Aultane, with the red flush of shame on his brow, slunk back to his place. They were the learned judges.
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They positively were. But no wonder Aultane had failed to recognise them, for they bore no more resemblance to the fierce and fiery visions of the morning, than do two old-fashioned black crows to stately peacocks.
"What may your name be, sir?" inquired the yellower of the two. Aultane hung his head in an agony: he was wondering whether they could order him before them on the morrow and transport him. Wilberforce was in another agony, lest those four keen eyes should wander to his damaged surplice and the pins. Somebody else answered: "Aultane, my lord."
The judges passed on. Arkell would not look towards Aultane: he was too noble to add, even by a glance, to the confusion of a fallen enemy: but the other choristers were not so considerate, and Aultane burst into a flow of bad language.
"Be silent," authoritatively interrupted Henry Arkell. "More of this, and I will report you to the dean."
"I shan't be silent," cried Aultane, in his passionate rage. "There! not for you." Beside himself with anger, he crossed over, and raised his hand to strike Arkell. But one of the sextons, happening to come out of the choir, arrested Aultane, and whirled him back.
"Do you know where you are, sir?"
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In another moment they were surrounded. The dean's wife and daughter had come up; and, following them, sneaked Lewis junior, who was settling himself into his surplice. Mrs. Beauclerc passed on, but Georgina stopped. Even as she went into college, she would sometimes stop and chatter to the boys.

"You were quarrelling, young gentlemen! What is the grievance?"

"That beggar threatened to report me to the dean," cried Aultane, too angry to care what he said, or to whom he spoke.

"Then I know you deserved it; as you often do," rejoined Miss Beauclerc; "but I'd keep a civil tongue in my head, if I were you, Aultane. I only wonder he has not reported you before. You should have me for your senior."

"If he does go in and report me, please tell the dean to ask him where his gold medal is," foamed Aultane. "And to make him answer it."

"What do you mean?" she questioned.

"*He* knows. If the dean offered him a thousand half-crowns for his medal, he could not produce it."

"What does he mean?" repeated Miss Beauclerc, looking at Henry Arkell.

He could not answer: he literally could not. Could he have dropped down without life at Georgina's feet, it had been welcome, rather than

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that she should hear of an act, which, to his peculiarly refined temperament, bore an aspect of shame so utter. His face flushed a vivid red, and then grew white as his surplice.

"He can't tell you," said Aultane; "that is, he won't. He has put it into pawn."

"And his watch too," squeaked Lewis, from behind, who had heard of the affair from Aultane.

Henry Arkell raised his eyes for one deprecating moment to Miss Beauclerc's face; she was struck with their look of patient anguish. She cast an annihilating frown at Lewis, and, raising her finger haughtily motioned Aultane to his place. "I believe nothing ill of *you*," she whispered to Henry, as she passed on to the choir.

The next to come in was Mr. St. John. "What's the matter?" he hurriedly said to Henry, who had not a vestige of colour in his cheeks or lips.

"Nothing, thank you, Mr. St. John."

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Mr. St. John went on, and Lewis skulked to his seat, in his wake. Lewis's place was midway on the bench on the decani side, seven boys being above him and seven below him. The choristers were on raised seats in front of the lay-clerks, five on one side the choir, five opposite on the other; Arkell, as senior, heading the five on the decani side.
The dean and canons came in, and the service
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began. While the afternoon psalms were being sung, Mr. Wilberforce pricked the roll, a parchment containing the names of the members of the cathedral, from the dean downwards, marking those who were present. Aultane left his place and took the roll to the dean, continuing his way to the organ-loft, to inquire what anthem had been put up. He brought word back to Arkell, 'The Lord is very great and terrible. Beckwith.' Aultane would as soon have exchanged words with the yellow-faced little man sitting in the stall next the dean, as with Arkell, just then, but his duty was obligatory. He spoke sullenly, and crossed to his seat on the opposite side, and Arkell rose and reported the anthem to the lay-clerks behind him. Mr. Wilberforce was then reading the first lesson.
Now it happened that there was only one bass at service that afternoon, he on the decani side, Mr. Smith; the other had not come; and the moment the words were out of Arkell's mouth, "The Lord is very great. Beckwith," Mr. Smith flew into a temper. He had a first-rate voice, was a good singer, and being inordinately vain, liked to give himself airs. "I have a horrid cold on the chest," he remonstrated, "and I cannot do justice to the solo; I shan't attempt it. The organist knows I'm as hoarse as a raven, and yet he goes and puts up that anthem for to-day!"
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"What is to be done?" whispered Henry.
"I shall send and tell him I can't do it. Hardcast, go up to the organ-loft, and tell—Or I wish you would oblige me by going yourself, Arkell: the juniors are always making mistakes. My compliments to Paul, and the anthem must be done without the bass solo, or he must put up another."
Henry Arkell, ever ready to oblige, left his stall, proceeded to the organ-loft, and delivered the message. The organist was wroth: and but for those two little old gentlemen, whom he knew were present, he would have refused to change the anthem, which had been put up by the dean.

"Where's Cliff, this afternoon?" asked he, sharply, alluding to the other bass.

"I don't know," replied Henry. "He is not at service."

The organist took up one of the anthem books with a jerk, and turned over its leaves. He came to the anthem, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," from *the Messiah*.

"Are you prepared to do justice to this?" he demanded.

"Yes, I believe I am," replied Henry. "But—"

"But me no buts," interrupted the organist, who was always very short with the choristers. " 'I know that my Redeemer liveth. Pitt.' "

As Henry Arkell descended the stairs, Mr. Wilberforce

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was concluding the first lesson. So instead of giving notice of the change of anthem to Mr. Wilberforce and the singers on the cantori side, he left that until later, and made haste to his own stall, to be in time for the soli parts in the Cantate Domino, which was being sung that afternoon in place of the Magnificat. In passing the bench of king's scholars, a foot was suddenly extended out before him, and he fell heavily over it, striking his head on the stone step that led to the stalls of the minor canons. A sexton, a verger, and one or two of the senior boys, surrounded, lifted, and carried him out.

The service proceeded; but his voice was missed in the Cantate; Aultane's proved but a poor substitute.

"I wonder whether the anthem's changed?" debated the bass to the contre tenor.

"Um—no," decided the latter. "Arkell was coming straight to his place. Had there been any change, he would have gone and told Wilberforce and the opposites. Paul is in a pet, and won't alter it."

"Then he'll play the solo without my accompaniment," retorted the bass, loftily.

Henry Arkell was only stunned by the fall, and before the conclusion of the second lesson, he appeared in the choir, to the surprise of many. After

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giving the requisite notice of the change in the anthem to Mr. Wilberforce and Aultane, he entered his stall; but his face was white as the whitest marble. He sang, as usual, in the Deus Misereatur. And when the time for the anthem came, Mr. Wilberforce rose from his knees to give it out.

"The anthem is taken from the burial service."

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The symphony was played, and then Henry Arkell's voice rose soft and clear, filling the old cathedral with its harmony, and the words falling as distinctly on the ear as if they had been spoken. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." The organist could not have told why he put up that particular anthem, but it was a remarkable coincidence, noticed afterwards, that it should have been a funeral one.

But though Henry Arkell's voice never faltered or trembled, his changing face spoke of bodily disease or mental emotion: one moment it was bright as a damask rose, the next of a transparent whiteness. Every eye was on him, wondering at the beauty of his voice, at the marvellous beauty of his countenance: some sympathised with his emotion; some were wrapt in the solemn thoughts

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created by the words. When the solo was concluded, Henry, with an involuntary glance at the pew of Mrs. Beauclerc, fell against the back of his stall for support: he looked exhausted. Only for a moment, however, for the chorus commenced.

He joined in it; his voice rose above all the rest in its sweetness and power; but as the ending approached, and the voices ceased, and the last sound of the organ died upon the ear, his face bent forward, and rested without motion on the choristers' desk.

"Arkell, what are you up to?" whispered one of the lay-clerks from behind, as Mr. Wilberforce recommenced his chanting.

No response.

"Nudge him, Wilberforce; he's going to sleep. There's the dean casting his eyes this way."

Edwin Wilberforce did as he was desired, but Arkell never stirred.

So Mr. Tenor leaned over and grasped him by the arm, and pulled him up with a sudden jerk. But he did not hold him, and the poor head fell forward again upon the desk. Henry Arkell had fainted.

Some confusion ensued: for the four choristers below him had every one to come out of the stall before he could be got out. Mr. Wilberforce momentarily stopped chanting, and directed his

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angry spectacles towards the choristers, not understanding what caused the hubbub, and inwardly vowing to flog the whole five on the morrow. Mr. Smith, a strong man, came out of his stall, lifted the lifeless form in his arms, and carried it out to the side aisle, the head, like a dead weight, hanging down over his shoulder. All the eyes and all the glasses in the cathedral were bent on them; and the next to come out of his stall, by the prebendaries, and follow in the wake, was Mr. St. John, a flush of emotion oil his pale face.

The dean's family, after service, met Mr. St. John in the cloisters. "Is he better?" asked Mrs. Beauclerc. "What was the matter with him the second time?"

"He fainted; but we soon brought him to in the vestry. Young Wilberforce ran and got some water. They are walking home with him now.

"What caused him to fall in the choir?" continued Mrs. Beauclerc. "Giddiness?"

"It was not like giddiness," remarked Mr. St. John. "It was as if he fell over something

"So I thought," interrupted Georgina. "Why did you leave your seat to follow him?" she continued, in a low tone to Mr. St. John, falling behind her mother.

"It was a sudden impulse, I suppose. I was

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unpleasantly struck with, his appearance as I went into college. He was looking ghastly."

"The choristers had been quarrelling: Aultane's fault, I am sure. He lifted his hand to strike Arkell. Aultane reproached him with having"—Georgina Beauclerc hesitated, with an amused look—"disposed of his prize medal."

"Disposed of his prize medal?" echoed Mr. St. John.

"Pawned it."

St. John uttered an exclamation. He remembered the tricks of the college boys, but he could not have believed this of his favourite, Henry Arkell.

"And his watch also, Lewis junior added," continued Georgina. "They gave me the information in a spiteful glow of triumph. Henry did not deny it: he looked as if he could not. But I know he is the soul of honour, and if he has done anything of the sort, those beautiful companions of his have over-persuaded him: possibly to lend the money to them."

"I'll see into this," mentally spoke Mr. St. John.

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CHAPTER VI.

PEACHING TO THE DEAN.

MR. ST. JOHN went at once to Peter Arkell's. Henry was alone, lying on his bed.

"After such a fall as that, how could you be so imprudent as to come back and take the anthem?" was his unceremonious salutation.

"I felt equal to it," replied Henry. "The one, originally put up, could not be done."

"Then they should have put up a third, for me. The cathedral does not lack anthems, I hope. Show me where your head was struck."

Henry put his hand to his ear, then higher up, then to his temple. "It was somewhere here—all about here—I cannot tell the exact spot."

As he spoke, a tribe of college boys was heard to clatter in at the gate. Henry would have risen, but Mr. St. John laid his arm across him.

"You are not going to those boys. I will send them off. Lie still and go to sleep, and dream of pleasant things."

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"Pleasant things!" echoed Henry Arkell, in a tone fall of pain. Mr. St. John leaned over him.

"Henry, I have never had a brother of my own; but I have almost loved you as such. Treat me as one now. "What tale is it those demons of mischief have got hold of, about your watch and medal?"

With a sharp cry, Henry Arkell turned his face to the pillow, hiding its distress.

"I suppose old Rutterley has got them. But that's nothing; it's the fashion in the school: and I expect you had some urgent motive."

"Oh, Mr. St. John, I shall never overget this day's shame: they told Georgina Beauclerc! I would rather die this moment, here, as I lie, than see her face again."

His tone was one of suppressed anguish, and Mr. St. John's heart ached for him: though he chose to appear to make light of the matter.

"Told Georgina Beauclerc: what if they did? She is the very one to glory in such exploits. Had she been the dean's son, instead of his daughter, she would have been in

Rutterley's sanctum three times a week. I don't think she would stand at going, as it is, if she were hard up."

"But why did they tell her! I could not have

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acted so cruelly by them. If I could but go to some far-off desert, and never face her, or the school, again!"

"If you could but work yourself into a brain fever, you had better say! that's what you seem likely to do. As to falling in Georgina Beauclerc's opinion, which you seem to estimate so highly (it's more than I do), if you pledged all you possess in a lump, and yourself into the bargain, she would only think the better of you. Now I tell you so, for I know it."

"I could not help it; I could not, indeed. Money is so badly wanted—"

He stopped in confusion, having said more than he meant: and St. John took up the discourse in a careless tone.

"Money is wanted badly everywhere. I have done worse than you, Harry, for I am pawning my estate, piecemeal. Mind! that's a true confession, and has never been given to another soul: it must lie between us."

"It was yesterday afternoon when college was over," groaned Henry. "I only thought of giving Rutterley my watch: I thought he would be sure to let me have ten pounds upon it. But he would not; only six: and I had the medal in my pocket; I had been showing it to you. I never did such a thing in all my life before."

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"That is more than your companions could say. How did it get to their knowledge?"

"I cannot think."

"Where's the—the exchange?"

"The what?" asked Henry.

"How dull you are!" cried Mr. St. John. "I am trying to be genteel, and you won't let me. The ticket. Let me see it."

"They are in my jacket-pocket. Two." He languidly reached forth the pieces, and Mr. St. John slipped them into his own.

"Why do you do that, Mr. St. John?"

"To study them at leisure. What's the matter?"

"My head is beginning to ache."

"No wonder, with all this talking. I'm off. Good-bye. Get to sleep as fast as you can."

The boys were in the garden and round the gate still, when he went down.

"Oh, if you please, sir, is he half killed? Edwin Wilberforce says so."

"No, he is not half killed," responded Mr. St. John. "But he wants quiet, and you must disperse, that he may have it."

"My brother, the senior boy, says he must have fallen down from vexation, because his tricks came out," cried Prattleton junior.

Mr. St. John ran his eyes over the assemblage. "What tricks?"

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"He has been pawning the gold medal, Mr. St. John," cried Cookesley, the second senior of the school. "Aultane junior has told the dean: Bright Vaughan heard him."

"Oh, he has told the dean, has he?"

"The dean was going into the deanery, sir, and Miss Beauclerc was standing at the door, waiting for him," explained Vaughan to Mr. St. John. "Something she said to Aultane put him in a passion, and he took and told the dean. It was his temper made him do it, sir."

"Such a disgrace, you know, Mr. St. John, to take the dean's medal *there*" rejoined Cookesley. "Anything else wouldn't have signified."

"Oh, been rather meritorious, no doubt," returned Mr. St. John. "Boys!"

"Yes, Mr. St. John."

"You know I was one of yourselves once, and I can make allowance for you in all ways. But when I was in the school, our motto was, Fair play, and no sneaking."

"It's our motto still," cried the flattered boys.

"It does not appear to be. We would rather, any one of us, have pitched ourselves off that tower," pointing to it with his hand, "than have gone sneaking to the dean with a private complaint."

"And so we would still, in cool blood, cried

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Cookesley. "Aultane must have been out of his mind with passion when he did it."

"How does Aultane know that Arkell's medal is in pawn?"

"He does not say how. He says he'll pledge his word to it."

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"Then listen to me, boys: my word will, I believe, go as far with you as Aultane's. Yesterday afternoon I met Henry Arkell at the gate here; I asked to see his medal, and he brought it out of the house to show me. He is in bed now, but perhaps if you ask him to-morrow, he will be able to show it to you. At any rate, do not condemn him until you are sure there's a just reason. If he did pledge his medal, how many things have you pledged? Some of you would pledge your heads if you could. Fair play's a jewel, boys—fair play for ever!"

Off came the trenchers, and a shout was being raised for fair play and Mr. St. John; but the latter put up his hand.

"I thought it was Sunday. Is that the way you keep Sunday in Westerbury? Disperse quietly."

"I'll clear him," thought Mr. St. John, as he walked home. "Aultane's a mean-spirited coward. To tell the dean!"

Indeed, the incautious revelation of Mr. Aultane was exciting some disagreeable consternation in

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the minds of the seniors; and that gentleman himself already wished his passionate tongue had been bitten out before he made it.

The following morning the college boys were astir betimes, and flocked up in a body to the judges' lodgings, according to usage, to beg what was called the judges' holiday. The custom was for the senior judge to send his card out and his compliments to the head master, requesting him to grant it; and the boys' custom was, as they tore back again, bearing the card in triumph, to raise the whole street with their shouts of "Holiday! holiday!"

But there was no such luck on this morning. The judges, instead of the card and the request, sent out a severe message—that from what they had heard the previous day in the cathedral, the school appeared to merit punishment rather than holiday. So the boys went back, dreadfully chop-fallen, kicking as much mud as they could over their trousers and boots, for it had rained in the night, and ready to buffet Aultane junior as the source of the calamity.

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Aultane himself was in an awful state of mind. He felt perfectly certain that the affair in the cathedral must now come out to the head master, who would naturally inquire into the cause of the holiday's being denied; and he wondered how it

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was that judges dared to come abroad without their gowns and wigs, deceiving unsuspicious people to perdition.

Before nine, Mr. St. John was at Henry Arkell's bedside. "Well," said he, "how's the head?"

"It feels light—or heavy. I hardly know which. It does not feel as usual. I shall get up presently."

"All right. Put on this when you do," said Mr. St. John, handing him the watch. "And put up this in your treasure place, wherever that may be," he added, laying the gold medal beside it.

"Oh, Mr. St. John! You have —"

"I shall have some sport to-day. I have wormed it all out of Rutterley; and he tells me who was down there and on what errand. Ah, ah, Mr. Aultane I so you peached to the dean. Wait until your turn comes."

"I wonder Rutterley told you anything," said Henry, very much surprised.

"He knew me, and the name of St. John bears weight in Westerbury," smiled he who owned it. "Harry, mind! you must not attempt to go into school to-day."

"It is the judges' holiday."

"The judges have refused it, and the boys have sneaked back like so many dogs with their tails scorched."

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"Refused it! Refused the holiday!" interrupted Henry. Such a thing had never been heard of in his memory.

"They have refused it. Something must be wrong with the boys, but I am not at the bottom of the mischief yet. Don't you attempt to go near school or college, Harry: it might play tricks with your head. And now I'm going home to breakfast."

Henry caught his arm as he was departing. "How can I ever thank you, Mr. St. John? I do not know when I shall be able to repay you the money; not until—"

"You never will," interrupted Mr. St. John. "I should not take it if you were rolling in gold. I have done this for my own pleasure, and I will not be cheated out of it. I wonder how many of the boys have got their watches in now. Goodbye, old fellow."

When Mr. Wilberforce came to know of the refused holiday, his consternation nearly equalled Aultane's. *What* could the school have been doing that had come to the ears of the judges? He questioned sharply the senior boy, and it was as much as Prattleton's king's scholarship was worth to attempt to disguise by so much as a word, or to soften down, the message sent out from the judges. But the closer the master questioned the rest of the

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boys, the less information he could get; and all he finally obtained was, that some quarrel had taken place between the two head choristers, Arkell and Aultane, on the Sunday afternoon, and that the judges overheard it.

Early school was excused that morning, as a matter of necessity; for the master—relying upon the holiday—did not emerge from his bed-chamber until between eight and nine; and you may be very sure that the boys did not proceed to the college hall of their own accord. But after breakfast they assembled as usual at half-past nine, and the master, uneasy and angry, went in also to the minute. Henry Arkell failed to make his appearance, and it was remarked upon by the masters.

"By the way," said Mr. Wilberforce, "how came he to fall down in college yesterday? Does anybody know?"

"Please, sir, he trod upon a surplice," said Vaughan the bright. "Lewis junior says so."

"Trod upon a surplice!" repeated Mr. Wilberforce. "How could he do that? You were standing. Your surplices are not long enough to be trodden upon. What do you mean by saying that, Lewis junior?"

Lewis junior's face turned red, and he mentally vowed a licking to Bright Vaughan, for being so free with his tongue; but he looked up at the

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master with an expression as innocent as a lamb's.

"I only said he might have trodden on a surplice, sir. Perhaps he was giddy yesterday afternoon, as he fainted afterwards."

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The subject dropped. The choristers went into college for service at ten o'clock, but the master remained in his place. It was not his week for chanting. Before eleven they were back again; and the master had called up the head class, and was again remarking on the absence of Henry Arkell, when the dean and Mr. St. John walked into the hall. Mr. Wilberforce rose, and pushed his spectacles to the top of his brow in his astonishment.
"Have the goodness to call up Aultane," said the dean, after a few words of courtesy, as he stood by the master's desk.
"Senior, or junior, Mr. Dean?"
"The chorister."
"Aultane, junior, walk up," cried the master. And Aultane, junior, walked up, wishing himself and his tongue and the dean, and all the rest of the world within sight and hearing, were safely boxed up in the coffins in the cathedral crypt.
"Now, Aultane," began the dean, regarding him with as much severity as it was in the dean's nature to regard anyone, even a rebellious college boy,
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"you preferred a charge to me yesterday against, the senior chorister; that he had been pledging his gold medal at Rutterley's. Have the goodness to substantiate it."
"Oh, my heart alive, I wish he'd drop through the floor!" groaned Aultane to himself. "What will become of me? What a jackass I was!"
"I did not enter into the matter then," proceeded the dean, for Aultane remained silent. "You had no business to make the complaint to me on a Sunday. What grounds have you for your charge?"
Aultane turned red and white, and green and yellow. The dean eyed him closely. "What proof have you?"
"I have no proof," faltered Aultane.
"No proof! Did you make the charge to me, knowing it was false?"
"No, sir. He *has* pledged his medal."
"Tell me how you know it. Mr. St. John knows he had it in his own house on Saturday."
Aultane shuffled first on one foot, and then on the other; and the dean, failing explanation from him, appealed to the school, but all disclaimed cognizance of the matter. "If you behave in this extraordinary way, you will compel me to conclude that you have made the charge to prejudice

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me against Arkell; who, I hear, had a serious charge to prefer against *you* for ill-behaviour in college," continued the dean to Aultane.

"If you will send to the place, you will find his medal is there, sir," sullenly replied Aultane.

"The shortest plan would be to send to Arkell's, and request him to dispatch his medal here, if the dean approves," interposed Mr. St. John, speaking for the first time.

The dean did approve, and Cooksley was despatched on the errand. He brought back the medal. Henry was not in the way, but Mrs. Arkell had found it and given it to him.

"Now what do you mean by your conduct?" sternly asked the dean of Aultane.

"I know he pledged it on Saturday, if he has got it out to-day," persisted the discomfited Aultane, who was in a terrible state, between wishing to prove his charge true, and the fear of compromising himself.

"I know Henry Arkell could not be guilty of a despicable action," spoke up Mr. St. John; "and, hearing of this charge, I went to Rutterley's to ask him a few questions. He informed me there *was* a college boy at his place on Saturday, endeavouring to pledge a table-spoon, but he knew the crest, and would not take it in—not

wishing, he said, to encourage boys to rob their parents. Perhaps Aultane can tell the dean who that was?"

There was a dead silence in the school, and the look of amazement on the head-master's face was only matched by the confusion of Aultane's. The dean, a kind-hearted man, would not examine further.

"I do not press the matter until I hear the complaint of the senior chorister against Aultane," said he aloud, to Mr. Wilberforce. "It was something that occurred in the cathedral yesterday, in the hearing, unfortunately, of the judges. But a few preliminary tasks, by way of present punishment, will do Aultane no harm."

"I'll give them to him, Mr. Dean," heartily responded the master, whose ears had been so scandalised by the mysterious allusions to Rutterley's, that he would have liked to treat the whole school to "tasks" and to something else, all round. "I'll give them to him."

"You see what a Tom-fool you have made of yourself!" grumbled Prattleton senior to Aultane, as the latter returned to his desk, laden with work. "That's all the good you have got by splitting to the dean."

"I wish the dean was in the sea, I do!" madly cried Aultane, as he savagely watched the retreat

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of that very reverend divine, who went out carrying the gold medal between his fingers, and followed by Mr. St. John. "And I wish that brute, St. John was hung! He —"

Aultane's words and bravery alike faded into silence, for the two were coming back again. The master stood up.

"I forgot to tell you, Mr. Wilberforce, that I have recommended Henry Arkell to take a holiday for a day or two. That was a violent fall yesterday; and his fainting afterwards struck me as not wearing a favourable appearance."

"Have you seen him, Mr. Dean?"

"I saw him an hour ago, just before service. I was going by the house as he came out of it, on his way to college, I suppose. It is a strange thing what it could have been that caused the fall."

"So it is," replied the master. "I was inquiring about it just now, but the school does not seem to know anything."

"Neither does he, so far as I can learn. At any rate, rest will be best for him for a day or two."

"No doubt it will, Mr. Dean. Thank you for thinking of it."

They finally went out, St. John casting a significant look behind him, at the boys in general, at

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Aultane junior in particular. It said as plainly as looks could say, "I'd not peach again, boys, if I were you and Aultane junior, but for the restraining presence of the head master, would assuredly have sent a yell after him.

How much St. John told of the real truth to the dean, that the medal *had* been pledged, we must leave between them. The school never knew, Henry himself never knew. St. John quitted the dean at the deanery, and went on to restore the medal to its owner:

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although Georgina Beauclerc was standing at one of the deanery windows, looking down expectantly, as if she fancied he was going in.
Travice was at that moment at Peter Arkell's, perched upon a side-table, as he talked to them. Henry leaned rather languidly back in an elbow-chair, his fingers pressed upon his head; Lucy was at work near the window; Mrs. Peter, looking very ill, sat at the table. Travice had not been at service on the previous afternoon, and the accident had been news to him this morning.
"But how did you fall?" he was asking with uncompromising plainness, being unable to get any clear information on the point. "What threw you down?"
"Well—I fell," answered Henry.
"Of course you fell. But how? The passage
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is all clear between the seats of the king's scholars and the cross benches; there's nothing for you to strike your foot against; how *did* you fall?"
"There was some confusion at the time, Travice; the first lesson was just over, and the people were rising for the cantate. I was walking very fast, too."
"But something must have thrown you down: unless you turned giddy, and fell of your own accord."
"I felt giddy afterwards," returned Henry, who had been speaking with his hand mostly before his eyes, and seemed to answer the questions with some reluctance. "I feel giddy now."
"I think, Travice, he scarcely remembers how it happened," spoke Mrs. Arkell. "Don't press him; he seems tired. I am so glad the dean gave him holiday."
At this juncture, Mr. St. John came in with the medal. He stayed a few minutes, telling Harry he should take him for a drive in the course of the day, which Mrs. Arkell negatived; she thought it might not be well for the giddiness he complained of in the head. St. John took his leave, and Henry went with him outside, to hear the news in private of what had taken place in the college hall. Mrs. Arkell had left the room then, and Travice took the opportunity to approach Lucy.
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"Does it strike you that there's any mystery about this fall, Lucy?"
"Mystery!" she repeated, raising her eyes. "In what way?"

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"It is one of two things: either that he does not remember how he fell, or that he won't tell. I think it is the latter; there is a restraint in his manner when speaking of it: an evident reluctance to speak."

"But why should he not speak of it?"

"There lies what I call the mystery. A sensational word, you will say, for so slight a matter. I may be wrong—if you have not noticed anything. What's that you are so busy over?"

Lucy held it up to the light, blushing excessively at the same time. It was Harry's rowing jersey, and it was getting the worse for wear. Boating would soon be coming in.

"It wants darning nearly all over, it is so thin," she said. "And the difficulty is to darn it so that the darn shall be neither seen nor suspected on the right side."

"Can't you patch it?" asked Travice.

She laughed out loud. "Would Harry go rowing in a patched jersey? Would you, Travice?"

He laughed too. "I don't think I should much mind it."

"Ah, but you are Travice Arkell," she said, her

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seriousness returning. "A rich man may go about without shoes if he likes; but a poor one must not be seen even in mended ones."

"True: it's the way of the world, Lucy. Well, I should mend that jersey with a new one. Why, you'll be a whole day over it."

"I dare say I shall be two. Travice, there's Mr. St. John looking round for you. He was beckoning. Did you not see him.

"No, I only saw you," answered Travice, in a tone that was rather a significant one. "I see now; he wants me. Good-by, Lucy."

He took her hand in his. There was little necessity for it, seeing that he came in two or three times a day. And he kept it longer than he need have done.

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CHAPTER VII.

CARR VERSUS CARR.

IT was two o'clock in the afternoon, and a crowd of busy idlers was gathered round the Guildhall at Westerbury, for the great cause was being brought on—Carr versus Carr.

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That they could not get inside, you may be very sure, or they would not have been round it. In point of fact, the trial had not been expected to come on before the Tuesday; but in the course of Monday morning two causes had been withdrawn, and the Carr case was called on. The Nisi Prius Court immediately became filled to inconvenience, and at two o'clock the trial began.

It progressed equably for some time, and then there arose a fierce discussion touching the register. Mr. Fauntleroy's counsel, Serjeant Wrangle, declaring the marriage was there up to very recently; and Mynn and Mynn's counsel, Serjeant Siftem, ridiculing the assertion. The judge called for the register.

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It was produced and examined. The marriage was not there, neither was there any sign of its having been abstracted. Lawrence Omer was called by Serjeant Wrangle; and he testified to having searched the register, seen the inscribed marriage, and copied the names of the witnesses to it. In proof of this, he tendered his pocket-book, where the names were written in pencil.

Up rose Serjeant Siftem. "What day was this, pray?"

"It was the 4th of November."

"And so you think you saw, amidst the many marriages entered in the register, that of Robert Carr and Martha Ann Hughes?"

"I am sure I saw it," replied Mr. Omer.

"Were you alone?"

"I looked over the book alone. Hunt, the clerk of the church, was present in the vestry."

"It must appear to the jury as a singular thing that you only, and nobody else, should have seen this mysterious entry," continued Serjeant Siftem.

"Perhaps nobody else looked for it; they'd have seen it if they had," shortly returned the witness, who felt himself an aggrieved man, and spoke like one, since Mynn and Mynn had publicly accused him that day of having gone down to St. James's in his sleep, and seen the entry in a dream alone.

"Does it not strike you, witness, as being extraordinary

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that this one particular entry, professed to have been seen by your eyes, and by yours alone, should have been abstracted from a book safely kept under lock and key?"

pursued Serjeant Siftem. "I am mistaken if it would not strike an intelligent man as being akin to an impossibility."

"No, it does not strike me so. But events, hard of belief, happen sometimes. I swear the marriage was in the book last November: why it is not there now, is the extraordinary part of the affair."

It was no use to cross-examine the witness further; he was cross and obstinate, and persisted in his story. Serjeant Siftem dismissed him; and Hunt was called, the clerk of the church, who came hobbling in.

The old man rambled in his evidence, but the point of it was, that he didn't believe any abstraction had been made, not he; it must be a farce to suppose it; a crotchet of that great lawyer, Fauntleroy; how could the register be touched when he himself kept it sure and sacred, the key of the safe in a hiding-place in the vestry, and the key of the church hanging up in his own house, outside his kitchen door? His rector said it had been robbed, and in course he couldn't stand out to his face as it hadn't, but he were upon his oath now, and must speak the truth without shrinking.

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Serjeant "Wrangle rose. "Did the witness mean to tell the court that he never saw or read the entry of the marriage?"

"No, he never did. He never heard say as it were there, and he never looked."

"But you were present when the witness Omer examined the register?" persisted Serjeant Wrangle.

"Master Omer wouldn't have got to examine it, unless I had been," retorted Hunt to Serjeant Wrangle. "I was a-sitting down in the vestry, a-nursing of my leg, which were worse than usual that day; it always is in damp weather, and —"

"Confine yourself to evidence," interrupted the judge.

"Well, sir, I was a-nursing of my leg whilst Master Omer looked into the book. I don't know what he saw there; he didn't say; and when he had done looking I locked it safe up again."

"Did you see him make an extract from it?" demanded Serjeant Wrangle.

"Yes, I saw him a-writing something down in his pocket-book."

"Have you ever entrusted the key of the safe to strange hands?"

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"I wouldn't do such a thing," angrily replied the witness. "I never gave it to nobody, and never would; there's not a soul knows where it is to be found, but me, and the rector, and the other

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clergyman, Mr. Prattleton, what comes often to do the duty. I couldn't say as much for the key of the church, which sometimes goes beyond my custody, for the rector allows one or two of the young college gents to go in to play the organ. By token, one on 'em—the quietest o' the pair, it were, too—flung in that very key on to our kitchen floor, and shivered our cat's beautiful chaney saucer into seven atoms, and my missis—"

"That is not evidence," again interrupted the judge.

Nothing more, apparently, that was evidence, could be got from the witness, so he was dismissed.

Call the Reverend Mr. Wilberforce.

The Reverend Mr. Wilberforce, rector of St. James the Less, minor canon and sacrist of Westerbury Cathedral, and head-master of the collegiate school, came forward, and was sworn.

"You are the rector of St. James the Less?" said Serjeant Wrangle.

"I am," replied Mr. Wilberforce.

"Did you ever see the entry of Robert Carr's marriage with Martha Ann Hughes in the church's register."

"Yes, I did." Serjeant Siftem pricked up his ears.

"When did you see it?"

"On the 7th of last November."

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"How do you fix the date, Mr. Wilberforce?" inquired the judge, recognising him as the minor canon who had officiated in the chanter's desk the previous day in the cathedral.

"I had been marrying a couple that morning, my lord, the 7th. After I had entered their marriage, I turned back and looked for the registry of Robert Carr's, and I found it and read it."

"What induced you to look for it?" asked the counsel.

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"I had heard that his marriage was discovered to have taken place at St. James's, and that it was recorded in the register;" and Mr. Wilberforce then told how he had heard it. "Curiosity induced me to turn back and read it," he continued.

"You both saw it and read it?" continued Serjeant Wrangle.

"I both saw it and read it," replied Mr. Wilberforce.

"Then you testify that it was undoubtedly there?"

"Most certainly it was."

"The reverend gentleman will have the goodness to remember that he is upon his oath," cried Serjeant Siftem, impudently bobbing up.

"*Sir!*" was the indignant rebuke of the clergyman. "You forget to whom you are speaking," he added, amidst the dead silence of the court.

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"Can you remember the words written?" resumed Serjeant Wrangle.

"The entry was properly made; in the same manner that the others were, of that period. Robert Carr and Martha Ann Hughes had signed it; also her brother and sister as witnesses."

"You have no doubt that the entry was there, then, Mr. Wilberforce?" observed the judge.

"My lord," cried the reverend gentleman, somewhat nettled at the question, "I can believe my own eyes. I am not more certain that I am now giving evidence before your lordship, than I am that the marriage was in the register."

"It is not in now?" said the judge.

"No, my lord; it must have been cleverly abstracted."

"The whole leaf, I presume?" said Serjeant Wrangle.

"Undoubtedly. The marriage entered below Robert Carr's was that of Sir Thomas Ealing: I read that also, with its long string of witnesses: that is also gone."

"Can you account for its disappearance?" asked Serjeant Wrangle.

"Not in the least. I wish I could: and find out the offenders."

"The incumbent of the parish at that time is no longer living, I believe?" observed Serjeant Wrangle.

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"He has been dead many years," replied Mr. Wilberforce. "But it was not the incumbent who married them: it was a strange clergyman who performed the ceremony, a friend of Robert Carr's."

"How do you know that?" snapped Serjeant Siftem, bobbing up again.

"Because he signed the register as having performed it." replied Mr. Wilberforce, confronting the serjeant with a look as undaunted as his own.

What cared Serjeant Siftem for being confronted? "How do you know he was a friend of Robert Carr's?" went on he.

"In that I speak from hearsay. But there are many men of this city, older than I am, who remember that the Reverend Mr. Bell and Robert Carr were upon exceedingly intimate terms: they can testify it to you, if you choose to call them."

Serjeant Siftem growled, and sat down; but was up again in a moment. "Who was clerk of the parish at that time?" asked he.

"There was no clerk," replied the witness. "The office was in abeyance. Some of the parishioners wanted to abolish it; but they did not succeed in doing so."

"Allow me to ask you, sir, resumed Serjeant Wrangle, "whether the entrance of the marriage there is not a proof of its having taken place?"

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"Most assuredly," replied Mr. Wilberforce. "A proof indisputable."

But courts of justice, judges, and jury require ocular and demonstrative proof. It is probable there was not a soul in court, including the judge and Serjeant Siftem, but believed the evidence of the Reverend Mr. Wilberforce, even had they chosen to doubt that of Lawrence Omer; but the register negatively testified that there had been no marriage, and upon the register, in law, must rest the onus of proof. Had there been positive evidence, not negative, of the abstraction of the leaf from the register, had the register itself afforded such, the aspect of affairs would have been very different. Mr. Mynn testified that on the 2nd day of December he had looked and could find no trace of the marriage in the register: it was certainly evident that it was not in now. When the court rose that night, the trial had advanced down to the summing-up of the judge, which was deferred till morning: but it was felt by everybody that that summing-up would be dead against the client of Mr. Fauntleroy, and that Squire Carr had gained the cause.

The squire, and his son Valentine, and Mynn and Mynn, and one or two of the lesser guns of the bar, but not the great gun, Serjeant Siftem, took a late dinner together, and drank toasts, and were

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as merry and uproarious as success could make them: and Westerbury, outside, echoed their sentiments—that 'cute old Fauntleroy had not a leg to stand upon.

'Cute old Fauntleroy—'cute enough, goodness knew, in general—was thinking the same thing, as he took a solitary chop in his own house: for he did not get home until long past the dinner-hour, and his daughters were out. After the meal was finished, he sat over the fire in a dreamy mood, he scarcely knew how long, he was so full of vexation.

The extraordinary revelation, that the disputed marriage had taken place at St. James the Less, and lain recorded all those years unsuspiciously in the register, with the still more extraordinary fact that it had been mysteriously taken out of it, electrified Westerbury. The news flew from one end of the city to the other, and back again, and sideways, and everywhere.

But not until late in the evening was it carried to Peter Arkell's. Cookesley, the second senior of the school, went in to see Henry, and told it; and then, for the first time, Henry found that the abstraction of the leaf had reference to the great cause—Carr versus Carr.

"Will Mrs. Carr lose her verdict through it?" he asked of Cookesley.

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"Of course she will. There's no proof of the leafs having been taken out. If they could only prove that, she'd gain it; and very unjust it will be upon her, poor thing! We had such a game in school!" added Cookesley, passing to private interests. "Wilberforce was at the court all the afternoon, giving evidence; and Roberts wanted to domineer over us upper boys; as if we'd let him! He was so savage."

Cookesley departed. Henry had his head down on the table: Mrs. Arkell supposed it ached, and bade him go to bed. He apparently did not hear her; and presently started up and took his trencher.

"Where are you going?" she asked, in surprise.

"Only to Prattleton's. I want to speak to George."

"But, Henry—"

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Remonstrance was useless. He had already gone. Prattleton senior came to the door to him.

"George? George is at Griffin's; Griffin has got a bachelor's party. Whatever do you want with him? I say, Arkell, have you heard of the row in school this morning? The dean came in about that medal business—what a fool Aultane junior was for splitting!—and St. John spoke about one of the fellows having been at Rutterley's on Saturday, trying to pledge a spoon with the

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Aultane crest upon it: he didn't say actually the crest was the Aultanes', or that the fellow was Aultane, but his manner let us know it. Wasn't Aultane in a way! He said afterwards that if he had had a pistol ready capped and loaded, he should have shot himself, or the dean, or St. John, or somebody else. Serve him right for his false tongue! There'll be an awful row yet. I know I'd shoot myself, before I'd go and peach to the dean!"

But Prattleton was wasting his words on air. Henry had flown on to Griffin's—the house in the grounds formerly occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis. The Reverend Mr. Griffin was the old minor canon, with the cracked voice, and it was his son and heir who was holding the bachelor's party. George Prattleton came out.

There ensued a short, sharp colloquy—Henry insisting upon being released from his promise; George Prattleton, whom the suggestion had startled nearly out of his senses, refusing to allow him to divulge anything.

"She'll not get her cause," said Henry, "unless I speak. It will be awfully unjust."

"You'll just keep your tongue quiet, Arkell. What is it to you? The Carr folks are not your friends or relatives."

"If I were to let the trial go against her, for

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the want of telling the truth, I should have it on my conscience always."

"My word!" cried George Prattleton, "a school-boy with a conscience! I never knew they were troubled with any."

"Will you release me from my promise of not speaking?"

"Not if you go down on your knees for it. What a green fellow you are!"

"Then I shall speak without."

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"You won't," cried Prattleton.
"I will. I gave the promise only conditionally, remember; and, as things are turning out, I am under no obligation to keep it. But I would not speak without asking your consent first, whether I got it or not."
"I have a great mind to carry you by force, and fling you into the river," uttered Prattleton, in a savage tone.
"You know you couldn't do it," returned Henry, quietly: "if I am not your equal in age and strength, I could call those who are. But there's not a moment to be lost. I am off to Mr. Fauntleroy's."
Henry Arkell meant what he said: he was always resolute in *right*: and Prattleton, after a further confabulation, was fain to give in. Indeed he had been expecting nothing less than this for the last hour, and had in a measure prepared himself for it.
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"I'll tell the news myself," said George Prattleton, "if it must be told: and I'll tell it to Mr. Prattleton, not to Fauntleroy, or any of the law set."
"I must go to Mr. Prattleton with you," returned Henry.
"You can wait for me out here, then. We are at whist, and my coming out has stopped the game. I shan't be more than five minutes."
George Prattleton retreated indoors, and Henry paced about, waiting for him. He crossed over towards the deanery, and came upon Miss Beauclerc. She had been spending an hour at a neighbouring house, and was returning home, attended by an old man-servant. Muffled in a shawl and wearing a pink silk hood, few would have known her, except the college boy. His heart beat as if it would burst its bounds.
"Why, it's never you!" she cried. "Thank you, Jacob, that will do," she added to the servant. "Don't stand, or you'll catch your rheumatism; Mr. Arkell will see me indoors."
The old man turned away with a bow, and she partially threw back her pink silk hood to talk to Henry, as they moved slowly on to the deanery door.
"Were you going to call upon us, Harry?"
"No, Miss Beauclerc. I am waiting for George Prattleton. He is at Griffin's."
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"Miss Beauclerc!" she echoed; "how formal you are to-night. I'd not be as cold as you, Henry Arkell, for the whole world!"
"I, cold!"
He said no more in refutation. If Georgina could but have known his real feelings! If she could but have divined how his pulses were beating, his veins coursing! Perhaps she did.
"Are you better? What a fall you had! And to faint after it!"
"Yes, I think I am better, thank you. It hurt my head a little."
"And you had been annoyed with those rebellious school boys! You are not half strict enough with the choristers. I hope Aultane will get a flogging, as Lewis did for locking you up in St. James's Church. I asked Lewis the next day how he liked it: he was so savage. I think he'd murder you if he could: he's jealous, you know."
She laughed as she spoke the last words, and her gay blue eyes were bent on him; he could discern them even in the dark, obscure corner where the deanery door stood. Henry did not answer: he was in wretched spirits.
"Harry, tell me—why is it you so rarely come to the deanery? Do you think any other college boy would dare to set at nought the dean's invitations—and mine?"
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"Remembering what passed between us one night at the deanery—the audit night—can you wonder that I do not oftener come?" he inquired.
"Oh, but you were so stupid."
"Yes, I know. I have been stupid for years past."
Miss Beauclerc laughed. "And you think that stopping away will cure you?"
"It will not cure me; years will not cure me," he passionately broke forth, in a tone whose anguish was irrepressible. "Absence and *you* alone will do that. When I go to the university—" He stopped, unable to proceed.
"When you go to the university you will come back a wise man. Henry," she continued, changing her manner to seriousness, "it was the height of folly to suffer yourself to care for me. If I—if it were reciprocated, and I cared for you, if I were dying of love for you, there are barriers on all sides, and in all ways."
"I am aware of it. There is the barrier between us of disparity of years; there is a wide barrier of station; and there is the greatest barrier of all, want of love on your side. I

know that my loving you has been nothing short of madness, from the first: madness and double madness since I knew where your heart was given."

"So you will retain that crotchet in your head!"

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"It is no crotchet. Do you think my loving eyes—my jealous eyes, if you so will it—have been deceived? You must be happy, now that he has come back to Westerbury."

"Stupid!" echoed Miss Beauclerc.

"But it has been your fault, Georgina," he resumed, reverting to himself. "I must reiterate it. You saw what my feelings were becoming for you, and you did all you could to draw them on; you may have deemed me a child then in years; you knew I was not, in heart. They might have been checked in the onset, and repressed: why did you not do it? why did you do just the contrary, and give me encouragement? You called it flirting; you thought it good sport: but you should have remembered that what is sport to one, may be death to another."

"This estrangement makes me uncomfortable," proceeded Miss Beauclerc, ignoring the rest. "Papa keeps saying, 'What is come to Henry Arkell that he is never at the deanery?' and then I invent white stories, about believing that your studies take up your time. I miss you every day; I do, Henry; I miss your companionship; I miss your voice at the piano; I miss your words in speaking to me. But here comes your friend George Prat, for that's the echo of old Griffin's door. I know the different sounds of the doors

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in the grounds. Good night, Harry: I must go in."

She bent towards him to put her hand in his, and he—he was betrayed out of his propriety and his good manners. He caught her to his heart, and held her there; he kissed her face with his fervent lips.

"Forgive me, Georgina," he murmured, as she released herself. "It is the first and the last time."

"I will forgive you for this once," cried the careless girl; "but only think of the scandal, had anybody come up: my staid mamma would go into a fit. It is what he has never done," she added, in a deeper tone. "And why your head should run upon him I cannot tell. Mine doesn't."

Henry wrung her hand. "But for him, Georgina, I should think you cared for me. Not that the case would be less hopeless."
Miss Beauclerc rang a peal on the door-bell, and was immediately admitted—whilst Henry Arkell walked forward to join George Prattleton, his heart a compound of sweet and bitter, and his brain in a mazy dream.
But we left Mr. Fauntleroy in a dream by the side of his fire, and by no means a pleasant one. He sat there he did not know how long, and was at length interrupted by one of his servants.
"You are wanted, sir, if you please."
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"Wanted now! Who is it?"
"The Rev. Mr. Prattleton, sir, and one or two more. They are in the drawing-room, and the fire's gone out."
"He has come bothering about that tithe case," grumbled Mr. Fauntleroy to himself. "I won't see him: let him come at a proper time. My compliments to Mr. Prattleton, Giles, but I am deep in assize business, and cannot see him."
Giles went out and came in again. "Mr. Prattleton says they must see you, sir, whether or no. He told me to say, sir, that it is about the cause that's on, Carr and Carr."
Mr. Fauntleroy proceeded to his drawing-room, and there he was shut in for some time. Whatever the conference with his visitors may have been, it was evident, when he came out, that for him it had borne the deepest interest, for his whole appearance was changed; his manners were excited, his eyes sparkling, and his face was radiant.
They all left the house together, but the lawyer's road did not lie far with theirs. He stopped at the lodgings occupied by Serjeant Wrangle, and knocked. A servant-maid came to the door.
"I want to see Serjeant Wrangle," said Mr. Fauntleroy, stepping in.
"You can't sir. He is gone to bed."
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"I must see him for all that," returned Mr. Fauntleroy.
"Missis and master's gone to bed too, she added, by way of remonstrance. "I was just a-going."
"With all my heart, said Mr. Fauntleroy. " I must see the serjeant."

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" 'Tain't me, then, sir, that'll go and awaken him," cried the girl. "He's gone to bed dead tired, he said, and I was not to disturb him till eight in the morning."
"Give me your candle," replied Mr. Fauntleroy, taking it from her hand. "He has the same rooms as usual, I suppose; first floor."
Mr. Fauntleroy went up the stairs, and the girl stood at the bottom, and watched and listened. She did not approve of the proceedings, but did not dare to check them; for Mr. Fauntleroy was a great man in Westerbury, and their assize lodger, the serjeant, was a greater.
Tap—tap—tap: at Serjeant Wrangle's door.
No response.
Tap—tap—tap, louder.
"Who the deuce is that?" called out the serjeant, who was only dignified in his wig and gown. "Is it you, Eliza? what do you want? It's not morning, is it?"
" 'Tain't me, sir," screamed out Eliza, who had now followed Mr. Fauntleroy. "I told the gentleman
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as you was dead tired and wasn't to be woke up till eight in the morning, but he took my light and would come up."
"I must see you, serjeant," said Mr. Fauntleroy.
"See me! I'm in bed and asleep. Who the dickens is it?"
"Mr. Fauntleroy. Don't you know my voice? Can I come in?"
"No; the door's bolted."
"Then just come and undo it. For, see you, I must."
"Can't it wait?"
"If it could I should not have disturbed you. Open the door and you shall judge for yourself."
Serjeant Wrangle was heard to tumble out of bed in a lump, and undo the bolt of the door. Eliza concluded that he was in his night attire, and modestly threw her apron over her face. Mr. Fauntleroy entered.
"The most extraordinary thing has turned up in Carr versus Carr," cried he. "Never had such a piece of luck, just in the nick of time, in all my practice."
"Do shut the door," responded Serjeant Wrangle; "I shall catch the shivers."

Mr. Fauntleroy shut the door, shutting out Eliza, who forthwith sat down on the top stair, and wished she had ten ears. “Have you not

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a dressing-gown to put on?” cried he to the serjeant.

“I’ll listen in bed,” replied the serjeant, vaulting into it.

A whole hour did that ill-used Eliza sit on the stairs, and not a syllable could she distinguish, listen as she would, nothing but an eager murmuring of voices. “When Mr. Fauntleroy came out, he put the candle in her hand and she attended him to the door, but not in a gracious mood.

“I thought you were going to stop all night, sir,” she ventured to say. “Dreadful dreary it was, sitting there, a-waiting.”

“Why did you not wait in the kitchen?”

“Because every minute I fancied you must be coming out. Good night, sir.”

“Good night,” returned Mr. Fauntleroy, putting half-a-crown in her hand. “There; that’s in case you have to wait on the stairs for me again.”

Eliza brightened up, and officiously lighted Mr. Fauntleroy some paces down the street, in spite of the gas-lamp at the door, which shone well. “What a good humour the old lawyer’s in!” quoth she. “I wonder what his business was? I heard him say something had arose in Carr and Carr.”

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND DAY.

TUESDAY morning dawned, and before nine o’clock the Nisi Prius court was more densely packed than on the preceding day: all Westerbury—at least, as many as could push in—were anxious to hear his lordship’s summing up. At twenty-eight minutes after nine, the javelins of the sheriff’s men appeared in the outer hall, ushering in the procession of the judges.

The senior judge proceeded to the criminal court; the other, as on the Monday, took his place in the Nisi Prius. His lordship had his notes in his hand, and was turning to the jury, preparatory to entering on his task, when Mr. Serjeant Wrangle rose.

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"My lord—I must crave your lordship's permission to state a fact, bearing on the case, Carr versus Carr. An unexpected witness has arisen; a most important witness; one who will testify to the abstraction from the register; one who was present
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when that abstraction was made. Your lordship will allow him to be heard?"
Serjeant Siftem, and Mynn and Mynn, and Squire Carr and his son Valentine, and all who espoused that side, looked contemptuous daggers of incredulity at Serjeant Wrangle. But the judge allowed the witness to be heard, for all that.
He came forward; a remarkably handsome boy, at the stage between youth and manhood. The judge put his silver glasses across his nose and gazed at him: he thought he recognised those beautiful features.
"Swear the witness," cried some official.
The witness was sworn.
"What is your name?" demanded Serjeant Wrangle.
"Henry Cheveley Arkell."
"Where do you reside?"
"In Westerbury, near the cathedral."
"You are a member of the college school and a chorister, are you not?" interposed the judge, whose remembrance had come to him.
"A king's scholar, my lord, and senior chorister."
"Were you in St. James's Church on a certain night of last November?" resumed Serjeant Wrangle.
"Yes. On the twentieth."
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"For how long? And how came you to be there?"
"I went in to practise on the organ, when afternoon school was over, and some one locked me in. I was there until nearly two in the morning."
"Who locked you in?"
"I did not know then. I afterwards heard that it was one of the senior boys."
"Tell the jury what you saw."

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Henry Arkell, amidst the confused scene, so unfamiliar to him, wondered which was the jury. Not knowing, he stood as he had done before, looking alternately at the examining counsel and the judge.

"I went to sleep on the singers' seat in the organ-gallery, and slept until a noise awoke me. I saw two people stealing up the church with a light; they turned into the vestry, and I went softly downstairs and followed them, and stood at the vestry door looking in."

"Who were those parties?"

"The one was Mr. George Prattleton; the other a stranger, whose name I had heard was Rolls. George Prattleton unlocked the safe and gave Rolls the register, and Rolls sat down and looked through it: he was looking a long while."

"What next did you see?"

"When George Prattleton had his back turned to the table, I saw Rolls blow out the light. He

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pretended it had gone out of itself, and asked George Prattleton to fetch the matches from the bench at the entrance door. As soon as George Prattleton had gone for them, a light reappeared in the vestry, and I saw Rolls place what looked to be a piece of thick pasteboard behind one of the leaves, and then draw a knife down it and cut it out. He put the leaf and the board and the knife into his pocket, and blew out the candle again.

"Did George Prattleton see nothing of this?" "No. He was gone for the matches, and when he came back the vestry was in darkness, as he had left it. 'Nothing risk, nothing win; I thought I could do him,' I heard Rolls say to himself"

"After that?"

"After that, when Mr. George Prattleton came back with the matches, Rolls lighted the candle and continued to look over the register, and George Prattleton grumbled at him for being so long. Presently Rolls shut the book and hurraed, saying that it was not in, and Mr. Prattleton might put it up again."

"Did you understand what he meant by 'it.' Can you repeat the words he used?"

"I believe I can, or nearly so, for I have thought of them often since. 'It's not in the register, Prattleton,' he said. 'Hurrah! It will be thousands of pounds in our pockets. When the other

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side brought forth the lame tale that there was such an entry, we thought it a bag of moonshine.' I think that was it."

"What next happened?"

"I saw Rolls hand the book to George Prattleton, and then I went down the church as quietly as I could, and found the key in the door and got out. I hid behind a tombstone, and I saw them both come from the church, and Mr. George Prattleton locked it and put the key in his pocket. I heard them disputing at the door, when they found it open; Rolls accused George Prattleton of unlocking the door when he went to get the matches; and George Prattleton accused Rolls of having neglected to lock it when they entered the church."

"Meanwhile it was you who had unlocked it, to let yourself out?"

"Yes. And I was in too great a hurry, for fear they should see me, to shut it after me."

"A very nicely concocted tale!" sneered Serjeant Siftem, after several more questions had been asked of Henry, and he rose to cross examine. "You would like the court and jury to believe you, sir?"

"I hope all will believe, who hear me, for it is the truth," he answered, with simplicity. And he had his wish; for all did believe him; and Serjeant Siftem's searching questions, and insinuations that the fancied George Prattleton and Rolls were

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nothing but ghosts, failed to shake his testimony, or their belief.

The next witness called was Roland Carr Lewis, who had just come into court, marshalled by the second master. A messenger, attended by a javelin man, had been despatched in hot haste to the college schoolroom, demanding the attendance of Roland Lewis. Mr. Roberts, confounded by their appearance, and perplexed by the obscure tale of the messenger, that "two of the college gentlemen, Lewis and another, was found to have had som' at to do with the theft from the register, though not, he b'lieved, in the way of thieving it theirselves," left his desk and his duties, and accompanied Lewis. The head master had been in court all the morning.

"You are in the college school," said Serjeant Wrangle, after Lewis was sworn, and had given his name.

"King's scholar, sir, and third senior," replied Lewis, who could scarcely speak for fright; which was not lessened when he caught sight of the Dean of Westerbury on the bench, next the judge.

"Did you shut up a companion, Henry Cheveley Arkell, in the church of St. James the Less, one afternoon last November, when he had gone in to practise on the organ?"

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Lewis wiped his face, and tried to calm his breathing, and glared fearfully towards the bench, but never spoke.

"You have been sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, sir, and you must do so," said the judge, staring at his ugly face, through his glasses. "Answer the question."

"Y—es."

"What was your motive for doing so?" asked Serjeant Wrangle.

"It was only done in fun. I didn't mean to hurt him."

"Pretty fun!" ejaculated one of the jury, who had a timid boy of his own in the college school, and thought how horrible might be the consequences should he get locked up in St. James's Church.

"How long did you leave him there?"

"I don't know. I took back the key to the clerk's, and the next morning, when we went to let him out, he was gone."

"Who is 'we?' Who was with you?" cried Serjeant Wrangle, catching at the word.

"Mr. George Prattleton. He was at the clerk's in the morning, and I told him about it, and asked him to get the key, for Hunt would not let me have it. So he was coming with me to open the church; but Hunt happened to say that

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Arkell had just been to his house. He had got out somehow."

When this witness, after a good deal of badgering, was released, Serjeant Siftem, a bright thought having occurred to him, desired that the Reverend Mr. Wilberforce might get into the witness-box. The Reverend Mr. Wilberforce did so; and the serjeant began, in an insinuating tone:

"The witness, Henry Cheveley Arkell, is under your tuition in the collegiate school, I assume?"

"He is," sternly replied Mr. Wilberforce, who had not forgotten Serjeant Siftem's insult of the previous day.

"Would you believe him on his oath?"

"On his oath, or without it."

"Oh, you would, would you?" retorted the serjeant. "Schoolboys are addicted to romancing, though."

"Henry Arkell is of strict integrity. His word may be implicitly trusted."

"I can bear testimony to Henry Arkell's honourable and truthful nature," spoke up the dean, from his place beside the judge. "His general conduct is exemplary; a pattern to the school,"

"Henry Cheveley Arkell," roared out the undaunted Serjeant Siftem, drowning the dean's voice. "I have done with *you*, Mr. Wilberforce."

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So the master left the witness-box, and Henry re-entered it.

"I omitted to put a question to you, Mr. Chorister," began Serjeant Siftem. "Should you know this fabulous gentleman of your imagination, this Rolls, if you were to see him?"

"Yes," replied Henry. "I saw him this morning as I came into court."

That shut up Serjeant Siftem.

"Where did you see him?" inquired the judge.

"In the outer hall, my lord. He was with Mr. Valentine Carr. But I am not sure that his name is Rolls," added the witness. "When I pointed him out to Mr. Fauntleroy, he was surprised, and said that was Richards, Mynn and Mynn's clerk."

The judge whispered a word to somebody with a white wand, who was standing near him, and that person immediately went hunting about the court to find this Rolls or Richards, and bring him before the judge. But Rolls had made himself scarce ere the conclusion of Henry Arkell's first evidence; and, as it transpired afterwards, decamped from the town. The next witness put into the box was Mr. George Prattleton.

"You are aware, I presume, of the evidence given by Henry Cheveley Arkell," said Serjeant Wrangle. "Can you deny that part of it which relates to yourself?"

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"No, unfortunately I cannot," replied George Prattleton, who was very down in the mouth—as his looks were described by a friend of his in court. "Rolls is a villain."

"That is not evidence, sir," said the judge.

"He is a despicable villain, my lord," returned the witness, giving way to his injured feelings. "He came to Westerbury, pretending to be a stranger, and calling himself Rolls, and I got acquainted with him; that is, he scraped acquaintance with me, and we were soon intimate. Then he began to make use of me; he asked if I would do him a favour. He wanted to get a private sight of the register in St. James's Church. So I consented, I am sorry to say, to get him a private sight; but I made the bargain that he should not copy a single word out of it, and of course I meant to be with him and watch him."

"Did you know that his request had reference to the case of Carr versus Carr?" inquired Serjeant Wrangle.

"No, I'll swear I did not," retorted the witness, in an earnest tone, forgetting, probably, that he was already on his oath. "He never told me why he wanted to look. He would go in at night: if he were seen entering the church in the day, it might be fatal to his client's cause, was the tale he told; and I am ashamed to acknowledge that I

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took him in at night, and suffered him to look at the register. I have heard to-day that his name is Richards."

"You knew where the key of the safe was kept?"

"Yes; I was one day in the church with the Reverend Mr. Prattleton, and saw him take it from its place."

"Did you see Rolls (as we will call him) abstract the leaf?"

"Of course I did not," indignantly retorted the witness. "I suddenly found the vestry in darkness, and he got me to fetch the matches, which were left on the bench at the entrance door. It must have been done then. Soon after I returned he gave me back the register, saying the entry he wanted was not there, and I locked it up again. When we got to the church door we were astonished to find it open, but —"

"But did you not suspect it was opened by one who had watched your proceedings," interrupted the judge.

"No, my lord. Rolls left the town the next morning early; when I went to find him he was gone, and I have never been able to see him since. That's all I know of the

transaction, and I can only publicly repeat my deep regret and shame that I should have been drawn into such a one."

"Drawn, however, without much scruple, as it

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Appears," rebuked the judge, with a severe countenance. "Allow me to ask you, sir, when it was you first became acquainted with the fact that a theft had been perpetrated on the register?"

Mr. George Prattleton did not immediately answer. He would have given much not to be obliged to do so: but the court wore an ominous silence, and the judge waited his reply.

"The day after it took place, Arkell, the college boy, came and told me what he had seen, but—"

"Then, sir, it was your duty to have proclaimed it, and to have had steps taken to arrest your confederate, Rolls," interrupted the stern judge.

"But, my lord, I did not believe Arkell. I did not indeed," he added, endeavouring to impart to his tone an air of veracity, and therefore—as is sure to be the case—imparting to it just the contrary. "I could not believe that Rolls, or any one else in a respectable position, such he appeared to occupy, would be guilty of so felonious an action."

"The less excuse you make upon the point, the better," observed the judge.

For some few minutes Serjeant Siftem and his party had been conferring in whispers. The Serjeant, at this stage, spoke.

"My lord, this revelation has come upon my

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instructors, Mynn and Mynn, with the most utter surprise, and —"

"The man, Rolls, or Richards, is really clerk to Mynn and Mynn, I am informed," interrupted the judge, in as significant a tone as a presiding judge permits himself to assume.

"He was, my lord; but he will not be in future. They discard him from this hour. In fact, should he not make good his escape from the country, which it is more than likely he is already endeavouring to effect, he will probably at the next assizes find himself placed before your lordship for judgment, should you happen to come this circuit, and preside

in the other court. But Mynn and Mynn wish to disclaim, in the most emphatic manner, all cognizance of this man's crime. They —"

"There is no charge to be brought against Mynn and Mynn in connexion with it, is there?" again interposed the judge.

"Most certainly not, my lord," replied the counsel, in a lofty tone, meant to impress the public ear.

"Then, Brother Siftem, it appears to me that you need not take up the time of the court to enter on their defence."

"I bow to your lordship's opinion. Mynn and Mynn and their client, Squire Carr, are not less indignant that so rascally a trick should have been

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perpetrated than the public must be. But this evidence, which has come upon them in so overwhelming a manner, they feel they cannot hope to confute. I am therefore instructed to inform your lordship and the jury, that they withdraw from the suit, and permit a verdict to be entered for the other side."

"Very good," replied the judge.

And thus, after certain technicalities had been observed, the proceedings were concluded, and the court began to empty itself of its spectators. For once the RIGHT had prospered. But Westerbury held its breath with awe when it came to reflect that it was the revengeful act of Roland Carr Lewis, that locking up in the church, which had caused his family to be despoiled of the inheritance they had taken to themselves!

The Reverend Mr. Wilberforce laid hold of Henry Arkell, as he was leaving the Guildhall. "Tell me," said he, but not in an angry tone, "how much more that is incomprehensible are you keeping secret, allowing it to come out to me piecemeal?"

Henry smiled. "I don't think there is any more, sir."

"Yes, there is. It is incomprehensible why you should not have disclosed at the time all you had been a witness to in the church. Why did you not?"

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"I could not speak without compromising George Prattleton, sir; and if I had, he might have been brought to trial for it."

"Serve him right too," said Mr. Wilberforce.

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Presently Henry met the dean, his daughter, Frederick St. John, and Lady Anne. The dean stopped him.

"What do you call yourself? A lion?"

Henry smiled faintly.

"I think you stand a fair chance of being promoted into one. Do you know what I wished to-day, when you were giving your evidence?"

"No, sir."

"That you were my own son."

Henry involuntarily glanced at Georgina, and she glanced at him: her face retained its calmness, but a flush of crimson came over his. No one observed them but Mr. St. John.

"I want you at the deanery to-night," continued the dean, releasing Henry. "No excuse about lessons now: your fall on Sunday has given you holiday. You will come?"

"Yes, sir."

"I mean to dinner—seven o'clock. The judges will be there. The one who tried the cause said he should like to meet you. Go and rest yourself until then."

"Thank yon, sir. I will come."

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Georgina's eyes sparkled, and she nodded to him in triumph a dozen times, as she walked on with the dean.

Following in the wake of the dean's party came the Rev. Mr. Prattleton. Henry approached him timidly.

"I hope you will forgive me, sir. I could not help giving my evidence."

"Forgive you!" echoed Mr. Prattleton; "I wish nobody wanted forgiveness worse than you do. You have acted nobly throughout. I have recommended Mr. George to get out of the town for a while; not to remain in it in idleness and trouble my table any longer. He can join his friend Rolls on the continent if he likes: I understand he is most likely off thither."

The fraud was not brought home to the Carr family. It was indisputably certain that the squire himself had known nothing whatever of it: had never even been aware that the marriage was entered on the register of St. James the Less. Whether his sons Valentine and Benjamin were equally guiltless, was a matter of opinion. Valentine solemnly protested that nothing had ever been told to him; but he did acknowledge that Richards

came to him one evening, and said he thought the cause was likely to be imperilled by "certain proceedings" that the other side were taking, He,

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Valentine Carr, authorized him to do what he could to counteract these proceedings (only intending him to act in a fair manner), and gave him carte blanche in a moderate way for the money that might be required. He acknowledged to no more: and perhaps he had no more to acknowledge: neither did he say *how much* he had paid to Richards. Benjamin treated the whole matter with contempt. The most indignant of all were Mynn and Mynn. Really respectable practitioners, it was in truth a very disagreeable thing to have been forced upon them; and could they have got at their ex-clerk, they would willingly have transported him.

And Mr. Fauntleroy, in the flush of his great victory, in the plenitude of his gratitude to the boy whose singular evidence had caused him to win the battle, went down that same day to Peter Arkell's and forgave him the miserable debt that had so long hampered him. For once in his life, the lawyer showed himself generous. People used to say that such was his nature before the world hardened him.

So, taking one thing with another, it was a satisfactory termination to the renowned cause, Carr versus Carr.

It was a large state dinner at the deanery. But the chief thing that Henry Arkell saw at it was, that Mr. St. John sat by Georgina Beauclerc. The

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judges—who did not appear in their wigs and fiery gowns, to the relief of private country individuals of wide imaginations, that could not usually separate them—were pleasant men, and their faces did not look so yellow by candle-light. They talked to Henry a great deal, and he had to rehearse over, for the general benefit, all the scene of that past night in St. James's Church. Mrs. Beauclerc, usually so indifferent, was aroused to especial interest, and would not quit the theme; neither would Lady Anne St. John, now visiting at the Palmery, and who was present with Mrs. St. John.

But Georgina—oh, the curious wiles of a woman's heart!—took little or no notice of Henry. They had been for some time in the drawing-room before she came near him at all—before she addressed a word to him. At dinner she had been absorbed in Mr. St. John: gay, laughing, animated, her thoughts, her words, were all for him. Sarah

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Beauclerc, conspicuous that night for her beauty, sat opposite to them, but St. John had not the opportunity of speaking to her, beyond a passing word now and again. In the drawing-room, no longer fettered—though perhaps the fetters had been willing ones—St. John went at once to Sarah, and he did not leave her side. Ah! Henry saw it all: both those fair girls loved Frederick St. John! What would be the ending?

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Georgina sat at a table apart, reading a new book, or appearing to read it. Was she covertly watching that sofa at a distance? It was so different, this sitting still, from her usual restless habits of flitting everywhere. Suddenly she closed her book, and went up to them.

"I have come to call you to account, Fred," she began, speaking in her most familiar manner, but in a low tone. "Don't you see whose heart you are breaking?"

He had been sitting with his head slightly bent, as he spoke in a whisper to his beautiful companion. Her eyes were cast down, her fingers unconsciously pulled apart the petals of some geranium she held; her whole attitude bespoke a not unwilling listener. Georgina's salutation surprised both, for they had not seen her approach. They looked up.

"What do you say?" cried St. John. "Breaking somebody's heart? Whose? Yours?"

She laughed in derision, flirting some of the scent out of a golden phial she had taken up. "Sarah, *you* should have more consideration," she continued. "It is all very well when Lady Anne's not present, but when she *is*—There! you need not go into a flaming fever and fling your angry eyes upon me. Look at Sarah's face, Mr. St. John."

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Mr. St. John walked away, as though he had not heard. Sarah caught hold of her cousin.

"There is a limit to endurance, Georgina. If you pursue this style of conversation to me—learnt, as I have repeatedly told you, from the housemaids, unless it is inherent," she added, in deep scorn—"I shall make an appeal to the dean."

"Make it," said Georgina, laughing. "It was too bad of you, Sarah with his future wife present. She'll go to bed and dream of jealousy."

Quitting her cousin, she went straight up to Henry Arkell. "Why do you mope like this?" she cried.

"Mope!" he repeated.

He had been at another table leaning his head upon his hand. It was aching much: and he told her so.

"Oh, Harry, I am sorry; I forgot your fall. Will you sing a song?"

"I don't think I can to-night."

"But papa has been talking to the judges about it. I heard him say your singing was worth listening to. I suppose he had been telling them all about you, and the whole romance, you know, of Mrs. Peter Arkell's marriage, for one of them—it was the old one—said he used to be intimate with her father, Colonel Cheveley. Here comes the dean! that's to ask you to sing."

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He sat down at once, and sang a song of the day. Then he went on to one that I dare say you all know and like—"Shall I, wasting in despair." At its conclusion one of the judges—it was the old one, as Georgina irreverently called him—came to him at the piano, and asked if he could sing Luther's Hymn.

A few chords by way of prelude, lasting some few minutes, probably played to form a break between the worldly song and the sacred one—for if anyone was ever endowed with an innate sense of what was due to sacred things, it was Henry Arkell—and then the grand old hymn, in all its beautiful simplicity, burst upon their ears. Never had it been done greater justice to than it was by that solitary college boy. The room was hushed to stillness; the walls echoed with the sweet sounds; the solemn words thrilled on the listeners' hearts, and the singer's whole soul seemed to go up with them. Oh, how strange it was, that the judge should have called for that particular, sacred song!

The echoes of it died away in the deepest stillness. It was broken by Henry himself; he closed the piano, as if nothing else must be allowed to come after that; and the tacit mandate was accepted, and nobody thought of inquiring how he came to assume the liberty in the dean's house.

Gradually the room resumed its humming and

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its self-absorption, and Georgina Beauclerc, under cover of it, went up to him.

"How could you make the excuse that your head was aching? None, with any sort of sickness upon them, could sing as you have just done."

"Not even with heart sickness," he answered.

"Now you are going to be absurd again! What do you mean?"

"To-night has taught me a great deal, Georgina. If I have been foolish enough—fond enough, I might say—to waver in my doubts before, that's over for ever."

"So much the better; you will be cured now."

She had spoken only lightly, not meaning to be unkind or unfeeling; but she saw what she had done, by his quivering lip. Leaning across him as he stood, under cover of showing him something on the table, she spoke in a deep, earnest tone.

"Henry, you know it could never be. Better that you should see the truth now, than go on in this dream of folly. Stay away for a short while if you will, and overget it; and then we will be fast friends as before."

"And this is to be the final ending?"

She stole a glance round at him, his voice had so strange a sound in it. Every trace of colour had faded from his face.

"Yes; it is the only possible ending. If you

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get on well and become somebody grand, you and I can be as brother and sister in after life."

She moved away as she spoke. It may be that she saw further trifling would not do. But even in the last sentence, thoughtlessly though she had spoken it, there was an implied consciousness of the wide difference in their social standing, all too prominent to that sensitive ear.

A minute afterwards St. John looked round for him, and could not see him,

"Where's Henry Arkell?" he asked of Georgina.

She looked round also.

"He is gone, I suppose," she answered. "He was in one of his stupid moods to-night."

"That's something new for him. Stupid?"

"I used the word in a wide sense. Crazy would have been better."

"What do you mean, Georgina?"

"He is a little crazy at times—to me. There! that's all I am going to tell you: you are not my father confessor."

"True," he said; "but I think I understand without confession. Take care, Georgina."

"Take care of what?"

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"Of—I may as well say it—of exciting hopes that are most unlikely to be realized. Better play a true part than a false one."

She laughed a little saucy laugh.

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"Don't you think I might turn the tables and warn you of that? What false hopes are you exciting, Mr. St. John?"

"None," he answered. "It is not in my nature to be false, even in sport."

Her laugh changed to one of derision; and Mr. St. John, disliking the sound, disliking the words, turned from her, and joined the dean, who was then deep in a discussion with one of the judges.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

THE days went on; and the dull, heavy pain in the head, complained of by Henry Arkell, increased in intensity. At first his absence from his desk at school, his vacant place at college, excited comment, but in time, as the newness of it wore off, it grew to be no longer noticed. It is so with all things.

On the afternoon of the fall, the family surgeon was called in to him: he saw no cause for apprehension, he said; the head only required rest. It might have been better, perhaps, had the head (including the body and brain) been able to take the recommended rest; but it could not. On the Monday morning came the excitement of the medal affair, as related to him by Mr. St. John, and also by many of the school; in the evening there occurred the excitement of that business of the register; the interview with the Prattletons, and subsequently with Mr. Fauntleroy. On the next day he had to appear as a witness; and then

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came the deanery dinner in the evening and Georgina Beauclerc. All sources of great and unwonted excitement, had he been in his usual state of health: what it was to him now, never could be ascertained.

As the days went on, and the pain grew no better, but worse, and the patient more heavy, it dawned into the surgeon's mind that he possibly did not understand the case, and it might be as well to have the advice of a physician. The most clever the city

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afforded was summoned, and he did not appear to understand it either. That there was some internal injury to the head, both agreed; but what it might be, it was not so easy to state. And thus more days crept on, and the doctors paid their regular visits, and the pain still grew worse; and then the half-shadowed doubt glided into a certainty which had little shadow about it, but stern substance—that the injury was rapidly running on to a fatal issue.

He did not take to his bed: he would sit at his chamber window in an easy chair, his poor aching head resting on a pillow. "You would be better in bed," everybody said to him. "No, he thought he was best up," he answered; "it was more change: when he was tired of the chair and the pillow, he could lie down outside the bed." "It is unaccountable his liking to be so much at the

window" Mrs. Peter Arkell remarked to Lucy. To them it might be; for how could they know that a sight of *one* who might pass and cast a glance up to him, made his day's happiness?

That considerable commotion was excited by the opinion of the doctors, however cautiously intimated, was only to be expected. Mr. Arkell heard of it, and brought another physician, without saying anything beforehand at Peter's. But it would seem that this gentleman's opinion did not differ in any material degree from that of his brethren.

The Reverend Mr. Wilberforce sat at the head of his dinner-table, eating his own dinner and carving for his pupils. His face looked hot and angry, and his spectacles were pushed to the top of his brow, for if there was one thing more than another that excited the ire of the master, it was that of the boys being unpunctual at meals, and Cookesley had this day chosen to be absent. The second serving of boiled beef was going round when he made his appearance.

"What sort of behaviour do you call this, sir?" was the master's salutation. "Do you expect to get any dinner?"

"I am very sorry to be so late, sir," replied Cookesley, eyeing the boiled beef wishfully, but not daring to take his seat. "I went to see Arkell, and—"

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"And who is Arkell, pray, or you either, that you must upset the regulations of my house?" retorted the master. "You should choose your visiting times better, Mr. Cookesley."

"Yes, sir. I heard he was worse; that's the reason I went; and when I got there the dean was with him. I waited, and waited, but I had to come away without seeing Arkell, after all."

"The dean with Arkell!" echoed Mr. Wilberforce, in a disbelieving tone.

"He is there still, sir. Arkell is a great deal worse. They say he will never come to school or college again."

"Who says so, pray?"

"Everybody's saying it now," returned Cookesley. "There's something wrong with his head, sir; some internal injury caused by the fall; but they don't know whether it's an abscess, or what it is. It will kill him, they think."

The master's wrath had faded: truth to say, his anger was generally more fierce in show than in reality. "You may take your seat for this once, Cookesley, but if ever you transgress again—Hallo!" broke off the master, as he cast his eyes on another of his pupils, "what's the matter with you, Lewis junior? Are you choking, sir?"

Lewis junior was choking, or gasping, or something of the sort, for his face was distorted, and his

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eyes were round with seeming fright. "What is it?" angrily repeated the master.

"It was the piece of meat, sir," gasped Lewis. A ready excuse.

"No it wasn't," put in Vaughan the bright, who sat next to Lewis junior. "Here's the piece of meat you were going to eat; it dropped off the fork on to your plate again; it couldn't be the meat. He's choking at nothing, sir."

"Then, if you must choke, you had better go and choke outside, and come back when it's over," said the master to Lewis. And away Lewis went; none guessing at the fear and horror which had taken possession of him.

The assize week had passed, and the week following it, and still Henry Arkell had not made his appearance in the cathedral or the school. The master could not make it out. Was it likely that the effects of a fall, which broke no bones, braised no limbs, only told somewhat heavily upon his head, should last all this while, and incapacitate him from

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his duties? Had it been any other of the king's scholars, no matter which of the whole thirty-nine Mr. Wilberforce would have said that he was skulking, and sent a sharp mandate for him to appear in his place; but he thought he knew better things of Henry Arkell. He did not much like what Cookesley said now—that Arkell might never come

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out again, though he received the information with disbelief.

Mr. St. John was a daily visitor to the invalid. On the day before this, when he entered, Henry was at his usual post, the window, but standing up, his head resting against the frame, and his eyes strained after some distant object outside. So absorbed was he, that Mr. St. John had to touch his arm to draw his attention, and Henry drew back with a start.

"How are you to-day, Harry? Better?"

"No, thank you. This curious pain in my head gets worse."

"Why do you call it curious?"

"It is not like an ordinary pain. And I cannot tell exactly where it is. I cannot put my hand on any part of my head and say it is here or it is there. It seems to be in the centre of the inside—as if it could not be got at."

"What were you watching so eagerly?"

"I was looking outside," was Henry's evasive reply. "They had Dr. Ware to me this morning; did you know it?"

"I am glad of that!" exclaimed Mr. St. John. "What does he say?"

"I did not hear him say much. He asked me where my head was struck when I fell, but I could not tell him—I did not know at the time, you remember. He and Mr. —"

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Henry's voice faltered. A sudden, almost imperceptible, movement of the head nearer the window, and a wild accession of colour to his feverish cheek, betrayed to Mr. St. John that something was passing which bore for him a deep interest. He raised his own head and caught a sufficient glimpse: *Georgina Beauclerc*,

It told Mr. St. John all: though he had not needed to be told; and Miss Beauclerc's mysterious words, and Henry's past conduct became clear to him. So! the boy's heart had been thus early awakened—and crushed.

"The heart that is soonest awake to the flowers

Is always the first to be touched by the thorns,"

whistled Mr. St. John to himself.

Ay, crushing is as sure to follow that *early* awaking, as that thorns grow on certain rose-trees. But Mr. St. John said nothing more that day.

On the following day, upon going in, he found Henry in bed.

"Like a sensible man as you are," quoth Mr. St. John, by way of salutation. "Now don't rise from it again until you are better."

Henry looked at him, an expression in his eyes that Mr. St. John did not like, and did not understand. "Did they tell you anything downstairs, Mr. St. John?" he inquired.

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"I did not see anyone but the servant. I came straight up."

"Mamma is lying down, I dare say; she has been sitting with me part of the night. Then I will tell it you. I shall not be here many days," he whispered, putting his hand within Mr. St. John's.

Mr. St. John did not take the meaning: that the case would have a fatal termination had not yet crossed his mind. "Where shall you be?" cried he, gaily, "up in the moon?"

Henry sighed. "Up somewhere. I am going to die."

"Going to what?" was the angry response.

"I am dying, Mr. St. John."

Mr. St. Johns pulses stood still. "Who has been putting that rubbish in your head?" cried he, when he recovered them sufficiently to speak.

"The doctors told my father yesterday evening, that as I went on, like this, from bad to worse, without their being able to discover the true nature of the case, they saw that it must terminate fatally. He knew that they had feared it before. Afterwards mamma came and broke it to me."

"Why did she do so?" involuntarily uttered Mr. St. John, in an accent of reproach. "Though their opinion may be unfavourable—which I don't believe,

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mind—they had no right to frighten you with it."

"It does not frighten me. Just at first I shrank from the news, but I am quite reconciled to it now. A faint idea that this might be the ending, has been running through my own mind for some days past, though I would not dwell on it sufficiently to give it a form."

"I am *astonished* that Mrs. Arkell should have imparted it to you!" emphatically repeated Mr. St. John. "What could she have been thinking of?"

"Oh, Mr. St. John! mamma has striven to bring us up not to fear death. What would have been the use of her lessons, had she thought I should run in terror from it when it came?"

"She ought not to have told you—she ought not to have told you!" was the continued burden of Mr. St. John's song. "You may get well yet."

"Then there is no harm done. But, with death near, would you have had me, the only one it concerns, left in ignorance to meet it, not knowing it was there? Mamma has not waited herself for death—as she has done, you know, for years—without learning a better creed than that."

Mr. St. John made no reply, and Henry went on: "I have had such a pleasant night with

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mamma. She read to me parts of the Revelation; and in talking of the glories which I may soon see, will you believe that I almost forgot my pain? She says how thankful she is now, that she has been enabled to train me up more carefully than many boys are trained—to think more of God."

"You are a strange boy," interrupted Mr. St. John.

"In what way am I strange?"

"To anticipate death in that tone of cool ease. Have you no regrets to leave behind you?"

"Many regrets; but they seemed to fade into insignificance last night, while mamma was talking with me. It is best that they should."

"Harry, it strikes me that you have had your griefs and troubles, inexperienced as you are," resumed Mr. St. John.

"Oh yes, I have," he answered, betrayed into an earnestness, incompatible with cautious reserve. "Some of the college boys have not suffered me to lead a pleasant life with them," he continued, more calmly; "and then there has been my father's gradually straitening income."

"I think there must have been some other grief than these," was Mr. St. John's remark.

"What other grief could there have been?"

"I know but of one. And you are over young for that."

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"Of course I am; too young," was the eager answer.

"That is enough," quietly returned Mr. St. John; "I did not *tell* you to betray yourself. Nay, Henry, don't shrink from me; let me hear it: it will be better and happier for you that I should."

"There is nothing—I don't know what you mean—what are you talking of, Mr. St. John?" was the incoherent answer.

"Harry, my poor boy, I know almost as much as you," he whispered. "I know what it is, and who it is. Georgie Beauclerc. There; you cannot tell me much, you see."

Henry Arkell laid his hand across his face and aching eyes; his chest was heaving with emotion. Mr. St. John leaned over him, not less tenderly than a mother.

"You should not have wasted your love upon *her*: she is a heartless girl. I expect she drew you on, and then turned round and said she did not mean it."

"Oh yes, she did draw me on," he replied, in a tone full of anguish; "otherwise, I never—But it was my fault also. I ought to have remembered the many barriers that divided us; the—"

"You ought to have remembered that she is an incorrigible flirt, that is what you ought to have remembered," interrupted Mr. St. John.

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"Well, well," sighed Henry, "I cannot speak of these things to you: less to you than to any one."

"Is that an enigma? I should think you could best speak of them to me, because I have guessed your secret, and the ice is broken."

Again Henry Arkell sighed. "Speaking of them at all will do no good; and I would now rather think of the future than of the past. My future lies there," he added, pointing to the blue sky, which, as seen from his window, formed a canopy over the cathedral tower. "She has, in all probability, many years before her here: Mr. St. John, if she and you spend those years together, will you sometimes talk of me? I should not like to be quite forgotten by you—or by her."

"Spend them together!" he echoed. "Another enigma. What should bring me spending my years with Georgina Beauclerc?"

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Henry withdrew his hands from his eyes, and turned them on Mr. St. John. "Do you think she will never be your wife?"

"She! Georgina Beauclerc! No, thank you."

Henry Arkell's face wore an expression that Mr. St. John understood not. "It was for your sake she treated me so ill. She loves you, Mr. St. John. And I think you know it."

"She is a little simpleton. I would not marry Georgie Beauclerc if there were not another English

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girl extant. And as to loving her—Harry, I only wish, if we are to lose you, that I loved you but one tenth part as little."

"Sorrow in store for her! sorrow in store for her!" he murmured, as he turned his face to the pillow. "I must send her a message before I die: you will deliver it for me?"

"I won't have you talk about dying," retorted Mr. St. John. "You may get well yet, I tell you."

Henry opened his eyes again to reply, and the calm peace had returned to them. "It may be *very* soon; and it is better to talk of death than to shrink from it." And Mr. St. John grumbled an ungracious acquiescence.

"And there is another thing I wish you would do for me: get Lewis junior here to-day. If I send to him, I know he will not come; but I must see him. Tell him, please, that it is only to shake hands and make friends; that I will not say a word to grieve him. He will understand."

"It's more than I do," said Mr. St. John. "He shall come."

"I should like to see Aultane—but I don't think my head will stand it all. Tell him from me, not to be harsh with the choristers now he is senior—"

"He is not senior yet," interposed Mr. St. John in a husky tone.

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"It will not be long first. Give him my love, and tell him, when I sent it, I meant it fully; and that I have no angry feeling towards him."

"Your love?"

"Yes. It is not an ordinary message from one college boy to another," panted the lad, "but I am dying."

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After Mr. St. John left the house, he encountered the dean. "Dr. Beauclerc, Henry Arkell is dying."

The dean stared at Mr. St. John. "Dying! Henry Arkell!"

"The inward injury to the head is now pronounced by the doctors to be a fatal one. They told the family last night there was little, if any, more hope. The boy knows it, and seems quite reconciled."

The dean, without another word or question, turned immediately off to Mr. Arkell's, and Westerbury as immediately turned its aristocratic nose up. "The idea of his condescending to enter the house of those poor Arkells! had it been the other branch of the Arkell family, it would not have been quite so lowering. But Dr. Beauclerc never did display the dignity properly pertaining to a dean."

Dr. Beauclerc, forgetful as usual of a dean's dignity, was shown into Mrs. Arkell's parlour, and from thence into Henry Arkell's chamber. The

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boy's ever lovely face flushed crimson, from its white pillow, when he saw the dean. "Oh, sir! you to come here! how kind!"

"I am sorry for this, my poor lad," said the dean, as he sat down. "I hear you are not so well: I have just met Mr. St. John."

"I shall never be well again, sir. But do not be sorry. I shall be better off; far, far happier than I could be here."

"Do you feel this, genuinely, heartily?" questioned the dean.

"Oh yes, how can I do otherwise than feel it? If it is God's will to take me, I know it must be for my good."

"Say that again," said the dean. "I do not know that I fully caught your meaning."

"I am in God's hands: and if He takes me to Him earlier than I thought to have gone, I know it must be for the best."

"How long have you reposed so firm a trust in God?"

"All my life," answered Henry, with simplicity: "mamma taught me that with my letters. She taught me to take God for my guide; to strive to please Him; implicitly to trust in Him."

"And you have done this?"

"Oh no, sir, I have only tried to do it. But I know that there is One to intercede for me."

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"Have you sure and certain trust in Christ?" returned the dean, after a pause.
"I have sure and certain trust in Him," was the boy's reply, spoken fervently: "if I had not, I should not dare to die. I wish I might have received the Sacrament," he whispered; "but I have not been confirmed."
"Henry," said the dean, in his quick manner, "I do believe you are more fitted for it than are some who take it. Would it be a comfort to you?"
"It would indeed, sir."
"Then I will come and administer it. At seven to-night, if that hour will suit your friends. I will ascertain when I go down."
"Oh, sir, you are too good," he exclaimed, in his surprise: "mamma thought of asking Mr. Prattleton. I am but a poor college boy, and you are the Dean of Westerbury."
"Just so. But when the great King of Terrors approaches, as he is now approaching you, it makes us remember that in Christ's kingdom the poor college boy may stand higher than the Dean of Westerbury. Henry, I have watched your conduct more than you are aware of, and I believe you to have been as truly good a boy as it is in human nature to be: I believe that you have continuously striven to please God, in little things as in great."

"If I could but have done it more than I have!" thought the boy.
It was during this interview that Mr. Cookesley arrived; and, as you have seen, nearly lost his dinner. As soon as the boys rose from table, they, full of consternation, trooped down to Arkell's, picking up several more of the king's scholars on their way, who were not boarders at the house of Mr. Wilberforce. The dean had gone then, but Mr. St. John was at the door, having called again to inquire whether there was any change. He cast his eyes on the noisy boys, as they approached the gate, and discerned amongst them Lewis junior. Mr. St. John stepped outside, and pounced upon him, with a view to marshal him in. But Lewis resisted violently; ay, and shook and trembled like a girl.
"I will not go into Arkell's, sir," he panted. "You have no right to force me. I won't! I won't!"

He struggled on to his knees, and clasped a deep-seated stone in the Arkells' garden for support. Mr. St. John, not releasing his collar, looked at him with amazement, and the troop of boys watched the scene over the iron railings.
"Lewis, what is the meaning of this?" cried Mr. St. John, "You are panting like a coward; and a guilty one: "What are you afraid of?"
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"I'm afraid of nothing, but I won't go into Arkell's. I don't want to see him. Let me go, sir. Though you are Mr. St. John, that's no reason why you should set up for master over the college boys."
"I am master over you just now," was the significant answer. "Listen: I have promised Arkell to take you to him, and I will do it: you may have heard, possibly, that the St. Johns never break their word. But Arkell has sent for you in kindness: he appeared to expect this opposition, and bade me tell it you: he wants to clasp your hand in friendship before he dies. Walk on, Lewis."
"You are not master over us boys," shrieked Lewis again, whose opposition had increased to sobs.
But Mr. St. John proved his mastership. Partly by coaxing, partly by authoritative force, he conducted Mr. Lewis to the door of Henry's chamber. There Lewis seized his arm in abject terror; he had turned ghastly white, and his teeth chattered.
"I cannot fathom this," said Mr. St. John, wondering much. "Have I not told you there is nothing to fear? What is it that you do fear?"
"No; but does he look very frightful?" chattered Lewis.
"What should make him look frightful? He
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looks as he has always looked. Be off in; and I'll keep the door, if you want to talk secrets."
Mr. St. John pushed him in, and closed the door upon them. Henry held out his hand, and spoke a few hearty words of love and forgiveness; and Lewis put his face down on the counterpane and began to howl.
"Lewis, take comfort. It was done, I know, in the impulse of the moment, and you never thought it would hurt me seriously. I freely forgive you."
"Are you sure to die?" sobbed Lewis.

"I think I am. The doctors say so."

"O-o-o-o-o-o-h!" howled Lewis; "then I know you'll come back and haunt me with being your murderer: Prattleton junior says you will. He saw it done, so he knows about it. I shall never be able to sleep at night, for fear."

"Now, Lewis, don't be foolish. I shall be too happy where I am, to come back to earth. No one knows how it happened: you say Prattleton does, but he is your friend, and it is safe with him. Take comfort."

"Some of us have been so wicked and malicious to you!" blubbered Lewis. "I, and my brother, and Aultane, and a lot of them."

"It is all over now," sighed Henry, closing his heavy eyes. "You would not, had you foreseen that I should leave you so soon."

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"Oh, what a horrid wretch I have been!" sobbed Lewis, rubbing his smeared face on the white bedclothes, in an agony. "And, if it's found out, they might try me next assizes and hang me. And it is such a dreadful thing for you to die!"

"It is a *happy* thing, Lewis; I feel it is, and I have told the dean I feel it. Say good-bye to the fellows for me, Lewis; I am too ill to see them. Tell them how sorry I am to leave them; but we shall meet again in heaven."

Lewis grasped his offered hand, and, with a hasty, sheepish movement, leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek: then turned and burst out of the room, nearly upsetting Mr. St. John, and tore down the stairs. Mr. St. John entered the chamber.

"Well, is the conference satisfactorily over?"

Again Henry reopened his heavy eyes. "Is that you, Mr. St. John?"

"Yes, I am here."

"The dean is coming here this evening at seven, for the sacrament. He said my not being confirmed was no matter in a case like this. Will you come?"

"Henry, no," was the grave answer. "I am not good enough."

"Oh, Mr. St. John!" The ready tears filled his

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eyes. "I wish you could!" he beseechingly whispered.

"I wish so too. Are you distressed for me, Henry? Do not look upon me as a monster of iniquity: I did not mean to imply it. But I do not yet think sufficiently of serious things to be justified in partaking of that ordinance without preparation."

"It would have seemed like a bond of union between us—a promise that you will some time join me where I am going," pleaded the dying boy.

"I hope I shall: I trust I shall: I will not forget that you are there."

As Mr. St. John left the house, he made his way to the grounds, in a reflective mood: the cathedral bell was then ringing for afternoon service, and, somewhat to his surprise, he saw the dean hurrying from the college; not to it.

"I'm on my way back to Arkell's! I'm on my way back to Arkell's!" he exclaimed, in an impetuous manner; and forthwith he began recounting a history to Mr. St. John; a history of wrong, which filled him, the dean, with indignation.

"I suspected something of the sort," was Mr. St. John's quiet answer; and the dean strode on his way, and Mr. St. John stood looking after him, in painful thought. When the dean came out of

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Mr. Peter Arkell's again, he was too late for service that afternoon. Although he was in residence!

Just in the unprepared and sudden manner that the news of Henry Arkell's approaching death must have fallen upon my readers, so did it fall upon the town. People could not believe it: his friends could not believe it: the doctors scarcely believed it. The day wore on; and whether there may have lingered any hope in the morning, the evening closed it, for it brought additional agony to his injured head, and the most sanguine saw that he was dying.

All things were prepared for the service, about to take place, and Henry lay flushed, feverish, and restless, lest he should become delirous ere the hour should arrive: he had become so rapidly worse since the forepart of the day. Precisely as the cathedral clock struck seven, the house door was thrown open, and the dean placed his foot on the threshold:

"PEACE BE UNTO THIS HOUSE, AND TO ALL THAT DWELL WITHIN IT!"

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The dean was attended to the chamber, and there he commenced the office for the Visitation of the Sick, omitting part of the exhortation, but reading the prayer for a soul on the point of departure. Then he proceeded with the Communion.

When the service was over, all, save Mrs. Arkell and the dean, quitted the room. Henry's mind was tranquil now.

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"I will not forget your request," whispered the dean.

"Near to the college door, as we enter," was Henry's response.

"It shall be done as you wish, my dear."

"And, sir, you have *promised* to forgive them."

"For your sake. You are suffering much just now," added the dean, as he watched his countenance.

"It gets more intense with every hour. I cannot bear it much longer. Oh, I hope I shall not suffer beyond my strength!" he panted; "I hope I shall be able to bear the agony!"

"Do not fear it. You know where to look for help," whispered the dean; "you cannot look in vain. Henry, my dear boy, I leave you in peace, do I not?"

"Oh yes, sir, in perfect peace. Thank you greatly for all."

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CHAPTER X.

THE GRAVESTONE IN THE CLOISTERS.

IT was the brightest day, though March was not yet out, the first warm, lovely day of spring. Men passed each other in the streets, with a congratulation that the winter weather had gone, and the college boys, penned up in their large schoolroom, gazed aloft through the high windows at the blue sky and the sunshine, and thought what a shame it was that they should be held prisoners on such a day, instead of galloping over the country at "Hare and Hounds."

"Third Latin class walk up," cried Mr. Wilberforce.

The third Latin class walked up, and ranged itself in front of the master's desk. "Who's top of this class?" asked he.

"Me, sir," replied the gentleman who owned that distinction.

"Who's 'me,' sir?"

"Me, sir."

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"Who *is* 'me,' sir?" angrily repeated the master, his spectacles bearing full on his wondering pupil.

"Charles Van Brummel, sir," returned that renowned scholar.

"Then go down to the bottom for saying 'me.' "

Mr. Van Brummel went down, considerably chopfallen, and the master was proceeding to work, when the cathedral bell tolled out heavily, for a soul recently departed.

"What's that?" abruptly ejaculated the master.

"It's the college death-bell, sir," called out the up class, simultaneously, Van Brummel excepted, who had not yet recovered his equanimity.

"I hear what it is as well as you," were all the thanks they got. "But what can it be tolling for? Nobody was ill."

"Nobody," echoed the boys.

"Can it be a member of the Royal Family?" wondered the master—the bishop and the dean he knew were well. "If not, it must be one of the canons."

Of course it must! for the college bell never condescended to toll for any of the profane vulgar. The Royal Family, the bishop, dean, and prebendaries, were the only defunct lights, honoured by the notice of the passing-bell of Westerbury Cathedral.

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"Lewis junior," said the master, "go into college, and ask the bedesmen who it is that is dead."

Lewis junior clattered out. When he came back he walked very softly, and looked as white as a sheet.

"Well?" cried Mr. Wilberforce—for Lewis did not speak.

"It's tolling for Henry Arkell, sir."

"Henry Arkell!" uttered the master. "Is he really dead? Are you ill, Lewis junior? What's the matter?"

"Nothing, sir."

"But it is an entirely unprecedented proceeding for the cathedral bell to toll for a college boy," repeated Mr. Wilberforce, revolving the news. "The old bedesmen must be making some mistake. Half of them are deaf, and the other half are stupid. I shall send to inquire: we must have no irregularity about these things. Lewis junior."

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"Yes, sir."
"Lewis junior, you are ill, sir," repeated the master, sharply. "Don't say you are not. Sit down, sir."
Lewis junior humbly sat down. He appeared to have the ague.
"Van Brummel, you'll do," continued Mr. Wilberforce. "Go and inquire of the bedesmen
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whether they have received orders; and, if so, from whom: and whether it is really Arkell that the bell is tolling for."
Van Brummel opened the door and clattered down the stairs, as Lewis junior had done; and *he* clattered back again.
"The men say, sir, that the dean sent them the orders by his servant. And they think Arkell is to-be buried in the cathedral."
"In—deed!" was the master's comment, in a tone of doubt. "Poor fellow!" he added, after a pause, "his has been a sudden and melancholy ending. Boys, if you want to do well, you should imitate Henry Arkell. I can tell you that the best boy who ever trod these boards, as a foundation scholar, has now gone from among us."
"Please, sir, I'm senior of the choir now," interposed Aultane junior, as if fearing the master might not sufficiently remember that important fact.
"And a fine senior you'll make," scornfully retorted Mr. Wilberforce.
It was Mr. St. John who had taken the news of his death to the dean, and the latter immediately sent to order the bell to be tolled. St. John left the deanery, and was passing through the cloisters on his way to Hall-street, when he saw in the distance Mrs. and Miss Beauclerc, just as the cathedral bell
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rang out. Mrs. Beauclerc was startled, as the head master had been: her fears flew towards her aristocratic clergy friends. She tried the college door, and, finding it open, entered to make inquiries of the bedesmen. Georgina stopped to chatter to Mr. St. John.
"Fancy, if it should be old Ferraday gone off!" cried she. "Won't the boys crow? He has got the influenza, and was sitting by his study fire yesterday in a flannel nightcap."
"It is the death-bell for Henry Arkell, Georgina."

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A vivid emotion dyed her face. She was vexed that it should be apparent to Mr. St. John, and would have carried it off under an assumption of indifference.

"When did he die? Did he suffer much?"

"He died at a quarter past eleven; about twenty minutes ago. And he did not suffer so much at the last as was anticipated."

"Well, poor fellow, I hope he is happy."

"That he is," warmly responded Mr. St. John. "He died in perfect peace. May you and I be as peaceful, Georgina, when our time shall come."

"What a blow it must be to Mrs. Arkell!"

"I saw her as I came out of the house just now, and I could not help venturing on a word of entreaty, that she would not grieve his loss too deeply.

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She raised her beautiful eyes to me, and I cannot describe to you the light, the faith, that shone in them. 'Not lost,' she gently whispered, 'only gone before.' "

Georgina had kept her face turned from the view of Mr. St. John. She was gazing through her glistening eyes at the graveyard, which was enclosed by the cloisters.

"What possesses the college bell to toll for him?" she exclaimed, carelessly, to cover her emotion. "I thought," she added, with a spice of satire in her tone, "that there was an old curfew law, or something as stringent, against its troubling itself for anybody less exalted than a sleek old prebendary."

Mr. St. John saw through the artifice: he approached her, and lowered his voice. "Georgina, he sent you his forgiveness for any unkindness that may have passed. He sent you his love: and he hopes you will sometimes recal him to your remembrance, when you walk over his grave, as you go into college."

Surprise made her turn to Mr. St. John: but she wilfully ignored the first part of the sentence, "Over his grave! I do not understand."

"He is to be buried in the cloisters, near to this entrance-door, near to where we are now standing. There appears to be a vacant space here," cried Mr.

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St. John, looking down at his feet: "I dare say it will be in this very spot."

"By whose decision is he to be buried in the cloisters?" quickly asked Georgina.

"The dean's, of course. Henry craved it of him."

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"I wonder papa did not tell me! What a singular fancy of Henry's!"

"I do not think so. It was natural that he should wish his last resting-place to be amidst old associations, amidst his old companions; and near to *you*, Georgina."

"There! I knew what you were driving at," returned Georgina, in a pouting, wilful tone. "You are going to accuse me of breaking his heart, or some such obsolete nonsense: I assure you I never—"

"Stay, Georgina; I do not care to hear this. I have delivered his message to you, and there let it end."

"You are as stupid and fanciful as he was," retorted Miss Beauclerc.

"Not quite so stupid in one respect, for he was blind to your faults; I am not. And never shall be," he added, in a tone of significance which caused the life-blood at Georgina's heart to stand still.

But she could not keep it up—the assumption

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of indifference, the apparent levity. The death was telling upon her, and she burst into hysterical tears. At that moment, Lewis junior passed them, and swung in at the cathedral door, on the master's errand, meeting Mrs. Beauclerc, who was coming out.

"Tell mamma I'm gone home," whispered Georgina to Mr. St. John, as she disappeared in the opposite direction.

"Arkell is dead, Mr. St. John," observed Mrs. Beauclerc. "The bell is tolling for him. I wonder the dean ordered the bell to toll for him: it will cause quite a commotion in the city to hear the college death-bell."

"He is to be buried here, in the cloisters, Mrs. Beauclerc."

"Really! Will the dean allow it?"

"The dean has decided it."

"Oh, indeed. I never understand half the dean does."

"So your companion is gone, Lewis junior," observed Mr. St. John, as the boy came stealing out of the college with his information. But Lewis never answered: and though he touched his forehead (he had no cap on) to the dean's wife, he never raised his eyes; but sneaked on, with his ghastly face, and his head bent down.

Those of the college boys who wished it went to

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see him in his coffin. Georgina Beauclerc also went. She told the dean, in a straightforward manner, that she should like to see Henry Arkell now he lay dead; and the dean saw no reason for refusing. The death had sobered Miss Beauclerc; but whatever feeling of remorse she might be conscious of, was hidden within her.

"You will not be frightened, I suppose, Georgina?" said the dean, in some indecision. "Did you ever see anybody dead?"

"I saw that old gardener of ours that died at the rectory, papa. I was frightened at him; a frightful old yellow scarecrow he looked. Henry Arkell won't look like that. Papa, I wish those wicked college boys who were his enemies could be hung!"

"Do you, Georgina?" gravely returned the dean. "*He* did not wish it; he forgave and prayed for them."

"They were so very—"

She could not finish the sentence. The reference to the schoolboys brought too vividly the past before her, and she rushed away to her own room, bursting with the tears she had to suppress until she got there.

It seemed that her whole heart must burst with grief, too, as she stood in the presence of the corpse. She had asked St. John to go with her; and the

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two were alone in the room. Save for the ashy paleness, Henry looked just as beautiful as he had been in life: the marble lids were closed over the brilliant eyes, never to open again in this life; the once warm hands lay cold and useless now. Some one—perhaps his mother—had placed in one of the hands a sprig of pink hyacinth; some was also strewed on the breast of the flannel shroud. The perfume came ail-powerfully to their senses; and never afterwards did Georgina Beauclerc come near the scent of that flower, death-like enough in itself, but it brought all-forcibly to her memory the death-chamber of Henry Arkell.

She stood, leaning over the side of the coffin, sobbing painfully. The trestles were very low, so that it was much beneath her as she stood. St. John stood opposite, still and calm.

"He loved you very much, Georgina—as few can love in this world. You best know how you requited him."

Perhaps it was a harsh word to say in the midst of her grief; but St. John could not forgive her for the past, whatever Henry had done. She bent her brow down on the coffin, and sobbed wildly.

"Still, you made the sunshine of his life. He would have lived it over again, if he could, because you had been in it. You had become part of his very being; his whole heart was bound up in you.

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Better, therefore, that he should be lying there, than have lived on to the future, to the pain that it must, of necessity, have brought."

"Don't!" she wailed, amid her choking sobs.

Not another word was spoken. When she grew calm, Mr. St. John quitted the room to descend—for she motioned to him to pass out first. Then—alone—she bent down her lips to the face that could no longer respond; and she felt, in the moment's emotion, as if her heart must break.

"Oh! Henry—my darling! I was very cruel to you! Forgive—forgive me! But I did love you—though not as I love *him*"

Mr. St. John was waiting for her below, on the landing, near the drawing-room door. "You must pardon the family for not receiving you, Georgina. Mrs. Arkell mentioned it to me this morning; but they are overwhelmed with grief. It has been so unexpected, you see. Lucy is the worst. Mrs. Arkell"—he compelled his voice to a lower whisper —"has an idea that she will not be long behind him."

The burial day of Henry Arkell arrived. The dean had commanded a holiday from study, and that the king's scholars should attend the funeral. Just before the hour appointed for it, half-past eleven, some of them took up their station in the cloisters, in silent order, waiting to join the procession

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when it should come, a bow of black crape being attached to the left shoulder of their surplices. Sixteen of the king's scholars had gone down to the house, as they were appointed to do. Mrs. Beauclerc, her daughter, and the families of the prebendaries were already in the cathedral; with some other spectators, who had got in under the pretext of attending morning prayers, and who, when the prayers were over, had refused to quit their seats again: of course the sextons could not decently turn them out. Half a dozen

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ladies took up their station in the organ-loft, to the inward wrath of the organist, who, however, had to submit to the invasion with suavity, for one of them was the dean's daughter. It was the best viewing place, commanding full sight of the cathedral body and the nave on one side, and of the choir on the other. The bell tolled at intervals, sending its deep, gloomy boom over the town; and the spectators patiently waited. At length the first slow and solemn note of the organ was sounded, and Georgina Beauclerc shrank into a corner, contriving to see, and yet not be seen.

From the small door, never used but upon the rare occasion of a funeral, at the extremity of the long body of the cathedral, the procession advanced at last. It was headed by the choristers, two and two, the lay clerks, and the masters of the college

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school. The clean and one of the canons walked next before the coffin, which was borne by eight of the king's scholars, and the pall by eight more. Four mourners followed the coffin—Peter Arkell, his cousin William, Travice, and Mr. St. John; and the long line was brought up by the remainder of the king's scholars. So slow was their advance, as to be almost imperceptible to the spectators, the choir singing:

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

The last time those words were sung in that cathedral, but some three weeks past, it was by him over whom they were now being sung; the thought flashed upon many a mind. At length the choir was reached, and the coffin placed on the trestles; Georgina Beauclerc's eyes—she had now come round to the front of the organ—being blinded with tears as she looked down upon it. Mr. St. John glanced up, from his place by the coffin, and

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saw her. Both the psalms were sung, and the dean himself read the lessons; and it may as well be here remarked, that at afternoon service the dean desired that Luther's hymn should be sung in place of the usual anthem; some association with the last evening Henry had spent at his house no doubt inducing it.

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The procession took its way back to the cloisters, to the grave, Mr. Wilberforce officiating. The spectators followed in the wake. As the coffin was lowered to its final resting-place—earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust—the boys bowed their heads upon their clasped hands, and some of them sobbed audibly; they felt all the worth of Henry Arkell now that he was gone. The grave was made close to the cloister entrance to the cathedral, in the spot where had stood Mr. St. John and Georgina Beauclerc; where had once stood Georgina and Henry Arkell, the day that wretched Lewis had wished him buried there. An awful sort of feeling was upon Lewis now, as he remembered it.

A few minutes, and it was over. The dean turned into the chapter-house, the mourners moved away, and the old bedesmen, in their black gowns, began to shovel in the earth upon the coffin. Mr. Wilberforce, before moving, put up his finger to Aultane, and the latter advanced.

"You choristers are not to go back to the

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vestry now, but to come into the hall in your surplices."

Aultane wondered at the order, but communicated it to those under him. When they entered the college hall, they found the king's scholars ranged in a semicircle, and they fell in with them according to their respective places in the school. The boys' white surplices and the bows of crape presenting a curious contrast.

"What are we stuck out like this for?" whispered one to the other. "For show? What does Wilberforce want? He's sitting still, as if he waited for somebody."

"Be blest if I know," said Lewis junior, whose teeth were chattering. "Unless it is to wind up with a funeral lecture."

However, they soon did know. The dean entered the hall, wearing his surplice, and carrying his official four-cornered cap. Mr. Wilberforce rose to bow the dean into his own seat, but the dean preferred to stand. He looked steadily at the circle before he spoke; sternly, some of them thought; and they did not feel altogether at ease.

"Boys!" began the dean. And there he stopped; and the boys lifted their heads to listen to what might be coming.

"Boys, our doings in this world bear a bias generally to good or to evil, and they bring their

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consequences with them. "Well-doing brings contentment and inward satisfaction; but ill-doing as certainty brings its day of retribution. The present day must be one of retribution to some of you, unless you are so hardened in wickedness as to be callous to conscience. How have—"

The dean was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. St. John and Travice Arkell. They took off their hats; and their streaming hatbands swept the ground, as they advanced and stood by the dean.

"Boys," he resumed, "how have you treated Henry Arkell? I do not speak to all; I speak to some. Lewis senior, does your conscience prick you for having fastened him in St. James's Church, in the dark and lonely night? Aultane junior, does yours sting you for your insubordination to him on Assize Sunday, when you exposed yourself so disgracefully to two of the judges of the land, and for your malicious accusation of him to Miss Beauclerc, followed by your pitiful complaint to me? Prattleton, have you, as senior of the school, winked at the cabal against him?"

The three boys hung their heads and their red ears: to judge by their looks, their consciences were pricking them very sharply.

"Lewis junior," resumed the dean, in a sudden manner, "of what does your conscience accuse you?"

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Lewis junior turned sick, and his hair stood on end. He could not have replied, had it been to save him from hanging.

"Do you know that you are the cause of Henry Arkell's death?" continued the dean, in a low but distinct accent, which penetrated the room. "And that you might, in justice, be taken up as a murderer?"

Lewis junior burst into a dismal howl, and fell down on his knees and face, burying his forehead on the ground, and sticking up his surpliced back; something after the manner of an ostrich.

"It was the fall in the choir on Assize Sunday that killed Henry Arkell," said the dean, looking round the hall; "that is, he has died from the effects of the fall. You gentlemen are aware of it, I believe?"

"Certainly they are, Mr. Dean," said the head master, wondering on his own account, and answering the dean because the "gentlemen" did not.
"He was thrown down," resumed the dean; "wilfully thrown down. And that is the one who did it," pointing with his finger at Lewis junior.
Two or three of the boys had been cognisant of the fact, as might be seen from their scarlet faces; the rest wore a look of timid curiosity; while Mr. Wilberforce's amazed spectacles wandered from
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the dean's finger to the prostrate and howling Lewis.
"Yes," said the dean, answering the various looks, "the author of Henry Arkell's death is Lewis junior. You had better get up, sir."
Lewis junior remained where he was, shaking his back as if it had been a feather-bed, and emitting the most extraordinary groans.
"Get up," cried the dean, sternly.
There was no disobeying the tone, and Lewis raised himself. A pretty object he looked, for the dye from his new black gloves had been washed on to his face.
"He told me he forgave me the day before he died; he said he had never told any one, and never would," howled Lewis. "I didn't mean to hurt him."
"He never did tell," replied the dean: "he *bore* his injuries, bore them without retaliation. Is there another boy in the school who would do that?"
"No, that there is not," put in Mr. Wilberforce.
"When you locked him in the church, Lewis senior, did he inform against you? When you came to me with your cruel accusation, Aultane, did he revenge himself by telling me of a far worse misdemeanour, which you had been guilty of? Did he ever inform against any who injured him?
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No; insults, annoyances, he bore all in silence, because he would not bring trouble and punishment upon you. He was a noble boy," warmly continued the dean: "and, what's more, he was a Christian one."
"He said he would not tell of me," choked Lewis junior, "and now he has gone and done it. O-o-o-o-o-h!"

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"He never told," quietly repeated the dean. "During the last afternoon of his life, it came to my knowledge, subsequent to an interview I had had with him, that Lewis junior had wilfully thrown him down, and I went back to Arkell and taxed him with its being the fact. He could not deny it, but the whole burden of his admission was, 'Oh, sir, forgive him! do not punish him! I am dying, and I pray you to forgive him for my sake! Forgive them all!' Do you think you deserve such clemency?" asked the dean, in an altered tone.
Lewis only howled the louder.
"On his part, I offer you all his full and free forgiveness: Lewis junior, do you hear? his full and free forgiveness. And I believe you have also that of his parents." The dean looked at Travice Arkell, and waited for him to speak.
"A few hours only before Henry died, it came to Mr. Peter Arkell's knowledge—"
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"I informed him," interrupted the dean.
"Yes," resumed Travice. "The dean informed Mr. Arkell that Henry's fall had not been accidental. But—as he had prayed the dean, so he prayed his father, to forgive the culprit. Lewis junior, I am here on the part of Mr. Arkell to offer his forgiveness to you."
"I wish I could as easily accord mine," said the dean. "No punishment will be inflicted on you, Lewis junior: not because no punishment, that I or Mr. Wilberforce could command, is adequate to the crime, but that his dying request, for your pardon, shall be complied with. If you have any conscience at all, his fate will lie upon it for the remainder of your life, and you will bear its remembrance about with you."
Lewis bent down his head on the shoulder nearest to him, and his howls changed into sobs.
"One word more, boys," said the dean. "I have observed that not one in the whole school— at least such is my belief—would be capable of acting as Henry Arkell did, in returning good for evil. The ruling principle of his life, and he strove to carry it out in little things as in great, was to do as he would be done by. Now what could have made him so different from you?"
The dean obtained no reply.
"I will tell you. *He loved and feared God*. He
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lived always as though God were near him, watching over his words and his actions; he took God for his guide, and strove to do His will: and now God has taken him to his reward. Do you know that his death was a remarkably peaceful one? Yes, I think you have heard so. Holy living, boys, makes holy dying; and it made his dying holy and peaceful. Allow me to ask, if you, who are selfish and wicked and malignant, could meet death so calmly?"

"Arkell's mother is often so ill, sir, that she doesn't know she'll live from one day to another," a senior ventured to remark in the general desperation. "Of course that makes her learn to try not to fear death, and she taught him not to."

"And she now finds her recompense," observed the dean. "A happy thing for you, if your mothers had so taught you. Dismiss the school, Mr. Wilberforce. And I hope," he added, turning round to the boys, as he and the other two gentlemen left the hall, "that you will, every one, go home, not to riot on this solemn holiday, but to meditate on these important thoughts, and resolve to endeavour to become more like Henry Arkell. You will attend service this afternoon."

And that was the ending. And the boy, with his talents, his beauty, and his goodness, was

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gone; and nothing of him remained but what was mouldering under the cloister gravestone.

HENRY CHEVELEY ARKELL.

Died March 24th, 18—,

Aged 16.

Not lost, but gone before.

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CHAPTER XI.

THOUGHTLESS WORDS.

THIS is the last part of our history, and you must be prepared for changes, although but little time—not very much more than a year—has gone by.

Death has been busy during that period. Mrs. Peter Arkell survived her son so short a time, that it is already twelve months since she was laid in the churchyard of St. James

the Less. It is a twelve-month also since Mr. Fauntleroy died, and his daughters are the great heiresses of Westerbury.

Westerbury had need of heiresses, or something else substantial, to keep up its consequence; for it was dwindling down lower (speaking of its commercial importance) day by day. The clerical party (in contradistinction to the commercial) rose and flourished; the other fell.

Amidst those with whom it was beginning to be a struggle to keep their heads above water was Mr. Arkell. The hope that times would mend; a

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hope that had buoyed up for years and years other large manufacturers in Westerbury, was beginning to show itself what it really was—a delusive one. A deplorable gloom hung over the brow of Mr. Arkell, and he most bitterly repented that he had not thrown this hope to the winds long ago, and given up business before so much of his good property was sacrificed. He had in the past year made those retrenchments in his expenditure, which, in point of prudence, ought to have been made before; but his wife had set her face determinately against it, and to a peaceable-dispositioned man like Mr. Arkell, the letting the ruin come is almost preferable to the contention the change involves. Those of my readers who may have had experience of this, will know that I only state what is true. But necessity has no law: and when Mr. Arkell could no longer drain himself to meet these superfluous expenses, the change was made. The close carriage was laid down; the household was reduced to what it had been in his father's time—two maids, and a man for the horse and garden, and he admonished his wife and daughters that they must spend in dress just half what they had spent. But with all the retrenchment, Mr. Arkell saw himself slowly drifting downwards. His manufactory was still kept on; but it had been far better given up. It must

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surely come to it, and Travice would have to seek a different channel of obtaining a living. Not only Travice: the men who had grown old in William Arkell's service, they must be turned adrift. There's not the least doubt that this last thought helped, more than all else, to keep Mr. Arkell's decision on the balance.

And Peter Arkell? Peter was in worse plight than his cousin. As it had been all their lives, the contrast in their fortunes marked, so it was still; so it would be to the end.

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William still lived well, and as a gentleman; he had but lopped off superfluities; Peter was a poor, bowed, broken man, obliged to be careful how he laid out money for even the common necessaries of life. But for Mildred's never-ceasing forethought, those necessaries might not always have been bought. The death of his wife, the death of his gifted son, had told seriously upon Peter Arkell: and his health, never too good, had since been ominously breaking up.

His good and gentle daughter, Lucy, had care upon her in many ways. The little petty household economies it was necessary to practise unceasingly, wearied her spirit; the uncertainty of how they were to live, now that her father could no longer teach or write—and his learned books had brough him in a trifle from time to time—chilled her hope

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Not yet had she recovered the shock, the terrible heart-blow brought to her by the death of Henry; and her mother's death had followed close upon it. It seemed to have cast a blight upon her young spirit: and there were times when Lucy, good and trusting girl though she was, felt tempted to think that God was making her path one of needless sorrow. The sad, thoughtful look was ever in her countenance now, in her sweet brown eyes; and her fair features, not strictly beautiful, but pleasant to look upon, grew more like what Mildred's were after the blight had fallen upon her. But no heart-blight had as yet come to Lucy.

One evening an old and confidential friend of Peter Arkell's dropped in to sit an hour with him. It was Mr. Palmer, the manager and cashier of the Westerbury bank, and the brother to Mr. Palmer of Heath Hall. As the two friends talked confidentially on this evening, deploring the commercial state of the city, and saying that it would never rise again from its distress, Mr. Palmer dropped a hint that the firm of George Arkell and Son had been effecting another mortgage on their property. Mr. Peter Arkell said nothing then; but Lucy, who went into the room on the departure of their guest, noticed that he remained sunk in melancholy silence; and she could not arouse him from it.

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Travice Arkell came in. Travice was in the habit of coming in a great deal more than one of the ruling powers at home had any idea of. Travice would very much have liked to make Lucy his wife; but there were serious impediments in more ways than one, and

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he was condemned to silence, and to wait and see what an uncertain future might bring forth.

The romance that had been enacted in the early days of William Arkell and Mildred was being re-enacted now. But with a difference. For whereas William, as you have seen, forsook the companion of his boyhood, and cast his love upon a stranger, Travice's whole hopes were concentrated upon Lucy. And Lucy loved him with all the impassioned ideality of a first and powerful passion, with all the fervour of an imaginative and reticent nature. It was impossible but that each should detect, in a degree, the feelings of the other, though they might not be, and had not been, spoken of openly.

Travice reached the chess-board from a side-table where it was kept, took his seat opposite Peter, and began to set out the men. Of the same kind, considerate nature that his father was before him, he compassionated the lonely man's solitary days, and was wont to play a game at chess with him sometimes in an evening, to while

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away one of his weary hours. But Peter, on this night, put up his hand in token of refusal.

"Not this evening, Travice. I am not equal to it. My spirits are low."

"Do you feel ill?" asked Travice, beginning to put the pieces in the box again.

"I feel low; out of sorts. Mr. Palmer has been here talking of things, and he gives so deplorable a state of private affairs generally, consequent upon the long-continued commercial depression, that it's hard to say who's safe and whose tottering. He has especial means of ascertaining, you know, so there's no doubt he's right."

"Well, what of that?" returned Travice. "It cannot affect you; you are not in business."

"True. I was not thinking of myself."

"A game at chess will divert your thoughts."

"Not to-night, Travice; I'd rather not play to-night."

"Will you have a game, Lucy?"

She looked up from her sewing to smile a negative. "That would be leaving papa quite to his thoughts. I think we had better talk to him."

"Travice," Peter Arkell suddenly said, "I am sure this depression must seriously affect your father."

"Of course it does," was the ready answer. "He has just now had to borrow more money again."
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"Then Palmer was right," thought Peter Arkell. "Will he keep on the business?" he asked aloud.
"I should not, were I in his place," said Travice. "He would have given up long ago, I believe, but for thinking what's to become of me. Of course if he does give up, I am thrown on the world, a wandering Arab."
His tone was as much one of jest as of gravity. The young do not see things in the same light as the old. To his father and to Peter Arkell, his being thrown out of the business he had embraced as his own, appeared an almost irrecoverable blight in life; to Travice himself it seemed but a very slight misfortune. The world was before him, and he had honour, education, health, and brains; surely he could win his way in it!
"It is not well to throw down one calling and take up another," observed Peter, thoughtfully. "It does not always answer."
"But if you are forced to it!" argued Travice. "There's no help for it then, and you must do the best you can."
"It is a pity but you had gone to Oxford, Travice, and entered into some profession!"
"I suppose it is, as things seem to be turning out. Thrown out of the manufactory, I should seem a sort of luckless adventurer, not knowing which way to turn to prey upon the public."
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"It would be just beginning life again," said Peter, his grave tone bearing in it a sound of reproach to the lighter one.
He rose, and went to the next room—the "Peter's study" of the old days—to get something from his desk there. Travice happened to look at Lucy, and saw her eyes fixed upon him with a troubled, earnest expression. She blushed as he caught their gaze.
"What's the matter, Lucy?"
"I was wondering whatever you would do, if Mr. Arkell does give up."
"I think I should be rather glad of it. I could turn astronomer."
"Turn astronomer! But you don't really mean that, Travice?"
He laughed.

"I should mean it, but for one thing."

"What is that one thing?"

"That it might not find me in bread and cheese. Perhaps they'd make me honorary star-gazer at the observatory royal. The worst is, one must eat and drink; and the essentials necessary for that don't drop from the clouds, as the manna once did of old. Very convenient for some of us if it did."

"I wish you'd be serious," she rejoined, the momentary tears rising to her eyes. She was feeling

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wretchedly troubled, she could not tell why, and his light mood jarred upon her.

It changed now as he looked at her. Travice Arkell's face changed to an expression of deep, grave meaning, of troubled meaning, and he dropped his voice to a low tone as he rose and stood near Lucy, looking down upon her.

"I wish I could be serious; I have wished it, Lucy, this long while past. Other men at my age are thinking of forming those social ties that man naturally expects to form; of gathering about him a home, and a wife, and children. I must not; for what I can see at present, they must be denied to me for good and all; unless—unless —"

He broke off abruptly. Lucy, suppressing the emotion that had arisen, glanced up at him, as she waited for the conclusion. But the conclusion did not come.

"You see now, Lucy, why I cannot be serious. Perhaps you have seen why before. In the uncertain state that our business is, not knowing but the end of it may be bankruptcy—"

"Oh, Travice!" she involuntarily exclaimed, in the shock that the word brought to her.

"I do assure you it has crossed my mind now and then, that such may be the final ending. It would break my father's heart, I know, and it would half break mine for his sake; but others in

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the town have succumbed, who were once nearly as rich as we were, and the fate may overtake us. I wish I could be serious; serious to a purpose; but I cannot."

"I wanted to show you a prospectus, Travice, that was left here to-day," interrupted Peter Arkell, coming back to the room. "I wonder what next they'll be getting up a company over? I put it into my desk, but I can't find it. Lucy, look about for it, will you?"

She got up to obey, and Travice caught a sight of the raised face, whose blushes had been hidden from him; blushes called forth by his words and their implied meaning. She had understood it.

But she had not understood the sentence at whose conclusion Travice Arkell had broken down. "That the ties of wife and children must be denied to him for good and all, unless—"

Unless what? Unless he let them sacrifice him, would be the real answer. Unless he sacrificed himself, his dearest hopes, every better feeling that his heart possessed, at a golden shrine. But Travice Arkell would have a desperate fight first.

The Miss Fauntleroys, co-heiresses of the wealthy old lawyer—who might have died worth more but for his own entanglements in early life—had become intimate and more intimate at the house of

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William Arkell. Ten thousand pounds were settled on each, and there was other money to divide between them, which was not settled. How Lawyer Fauntleroy had scraped together so much, Westerbury could not imagine, considering he had been so hampered with old claims. Strapping, vulgar, good-humoured damsels, these two, as you have before heard; with as little refinement in looks, words, and manner as their father had possessed before them. Their intimacy had grown, I say, with the Arkell family. Mrs. Arkell courted them to her house; the young ladies were quite eager to frequent it without courting; and it had come to be whispered all over the gossiping town, that Mr. Arkell's son and heir might have either of them for the asking.

Perhaps not quite true this, as to the "either," perhaps yes. It was indisputable that both liked him very much; but any hope the younger might have felt disposed to cherish had long been merged in the more recognised claim to him of the elder; recognised by the young ladies only, mind you, in the right, it may be, of her seniorship. Nothing in the world could have been more satisfactory to Mrs. Arkell than this union. She overlooked their want of refinement, and their many other wants of a similar nature—of refinement, indeed, she may have deemed that Travice possessed enough for

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himself and for a wife too—she thought of the golden hoard in the bank, the firm securities in the three per cent consols, and she pertinaciously cherished the hope and the resolve that Barbara Fauntleroy should become Barbara Arkell.

It is well to say "pertinaciously." That Travice had set his resolve against it, she tacitly understood; and once when she went so far as to put her project before him in a cautious hint, Travice had broken out with the ungallant assertion that he would "as soon marry the deuce." But he might have to give in at last. The constant dropping of water on a stone will wear it away; and the constant, unceasing tongue of a woman has been known to break the iron walls of man's will.

Another suitor had recently sprung up for Miss Lizzie Fauntleroy. No less a personage than Benjamin Carr. The reappearance of Mr. Dundyke upon the scene of the living world had considerably astonished many people; possibly, amidst others, Ben Carr himself. In the great relief it brought to the mind of Mr. Arkell, distorted, you may remember, with a certain unpleasant doubt, he almost forgot to suspect him at all; and he buried the past in silence, and in a measure, took luckless Ben into favour again; that is, he did not forbid him his house.

Ben, in fact, had come out apparently flourishing

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from all past escapades suspected and unsuspected, and was residing with his father, and dressing like a gentleman. No more was heard of his wish to go abroad. Squire Carr had made him a half promise to put him into a farm; and while Ben waited for this, he paid court to Lizzie Fauntleroy. At first she laughed in his face for an old fool, next she began to giggle at his soft speeches, and now she listened to him. Ben Carr had some attraction yet, in spite of his four-and-forty years.

In the course of the following morning, Peter Arkell suddenly anounced his intention of going out, to the great surprise of Lucy. It was a most unfit day, rainy, and bleak for the season; and he had not stepped over the threshold for weeks and weeks.

"Papa! You cannot go out to-day. It is not fit for you."

"Yes, I shall go. I want particularly to speak to my cousin William: you can help me thither with your arm, Lucy. Get my old cloak down, and air it at the fire; I can wrap myself in that."

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Lucy ventured no further remonstrance. When her papa took a thing into his head, there was no turning him.
They started together through the bad weather to the house of William Arkell. The dear old house! where Peter had spent so many pleasant
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evenings in his youthful days. He crossed the yard at once to the manufactory, telling Lucy to go indoors and wait for him. William Arkell was alone in his private room, and was not a little surprised at the visit.
“Why Peter!” he exclaimed, rising from his desk, and placing an arm-chair by the fire, “What has brought you out such a day as this? Sit down.”
Before Peter did so, he closed the door, so that they should be quite alone. He then turned and clasped his cousin by the hand.
“William,” he began, emotion mingling with his utterance, “I have come to you, a poor unhappy man. Conscious of my want of power to do what I ought—fearing that there is less chance of my doing it, day by day.”
“What do you mean?” inquired Mr. Arkell.
“Amidst the ruin that has almost universally fallen on the city, you have not escaped, I fear your property is being seriously drawn upon?”
“And, unless things mend, it will soon be drawn to an end, Peter.”
“Heaven help me!” exclaimed Peter. “And to know that I am in your debt, and cannot liquidate it! It is to speak of this, that I am come out to-day.”
“Nay, now you are foolish!” exclaimed Mr.
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Arkell. “What matters a hundred pounds or two, more or less, to me? The sum would cut but a poor figure by the side of what I am now habituated to losing. Never think of it, Peter: I never shall. Besides, you had it from me in driblets, so that I did not miss it.”
“When I had used to come to you for assistance in my illnesses, for I was ashamed to draw too much upon Mildred,” proceeded the poor man, “I never thought but that I should, in time, regain permanent strength, and be able to return it. I never meant to cheat you, William.”
“Don’t talk like that, Peter!” interrupted Mr. Arkell. “If the money were returned to me now, it would only go the way that the rest is going. I have always felt glad that it was

in my power to render you assistance in your necessities: and if I stood this moment without a shilling to turn to, I should not regret it any more than I do now."

They continued in converse, but we need not follow it. Lucy meanwhile had entered the house, and went about, looking for some signs of its inhabitants. The general sitting-room was empty, and she crossed the hall and opened the door of the drawing-room. A bouncing lady in fine attire was coming forth from it, talking and laughing loudly with Mr. Arkell; it was Barbara Fauntleroy.

Shaking hands with Lucy in her good-humoured

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manner as she passed her, she talked and laughed her way out of the house. Lucy was in black silk and crape still; Miss Fauntleroy was in the gayest of colours; and Mrs. Peter Arkell had been dead longer than Mr. Fauntleroy. They had worn their black a twelvemonth and then quitted it. It was not fashionable to wear mourning long now, said the Miss Fauntleroys.

Charlotte Arkell, with scant ceremony, sat down to the piano, giving Lucy only a nod. Nothing could exceed the slighting contempt in which she and her sister held Lucy. They had been trained in it. And they were highly accomplished young ladies besides, had learnt everything there was to be taught, from the harp and oriental tinting, down to Spanish, German, and chenille embroidery. Lucy's education had been solid, rather than ornamental: she spoke French well, and played a little; and she was more skilled in plain sewing than in fancy. They never allowed their guarded fingers to come into contact with plain work, and had just as much idea of how anything useful was done, as of how the moon was made. So these two fine young ladies despised Lucy Arkell, after the fashion of the fine young ladies of the present day. Charlotte also was great in the consciousness of other self-importance, for she was soon to be a wife. That Captain Anderson whom you once

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saw at a concert, had paid a more recent visit to Westerbury; and he left it, engaged to Charlotte Arkell.

Charlotte played a few bars, and then remembered to become curious on the subject of Lucy's visit. She whirled herself round on the music stool: it had been a favourite motion of her mother's in the old days.

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"What have you come for, Lucy?"
"Papa wanted to see Mr. Arkell, and I walked with him. He is gone into the manufactory."
"I thought your papa was too ill to go out."
"He is very ailing. I think he ought not to have come out on a day like this. Do not let me interrupt your practising, Charlotte."
"Practising! I have no heart to practise!" exclaimed Charlotte. "Papa is always talking in so gloomy a way. He was in here just now: I was deep in this sonata of Beethoven's, and did not hear him enter, and he began saying it would be better if I and Sophy were to accustom ourselves to spend some of our time *usefully*, for that he did not know how soon we might be obliged to do it. He has laid down the carriage; he has made fearful retrenchments in the household: I wonder what he would have! And as to our buying anything new, or subscribing to a concert, or anything of that sort, mamma says she cannot get the
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money from him. I wish I was married, and gone from Westerbury! I am thankful my future home is to be far away from it!"
"Things may brighten here," was all the consolation that Lucy could offer.
"I don't believe they ever will," returned Charlotte. "I see no hope of it. Papa looks sometimes as if his heart were breaking."
"How soon the Miss Fauntleroys have gone out of mourning!" observed Lucy.
"Oh, I don't know. They wore it twelve months; that's long enough for anything. Let me give you a caution, Lucy," added Charlotte, laughing: "don't hint at such a thing as that Barbara Fauntleroy's not immaculate perfection: it would not do in this house."
"Why?" exclaimed Lucy, wondering at her words and manner.
"She is intended for its future head, you know, when the present generation of heads shall—shall have passed away. I'm afraid that's being poetical; I didn't mean to be."
Lucy sat as one in a maze, wondering WHAT she might understand by the words. And Charlotte whirled round on her stool again to the sonata, with as little ceremony as she had whirled from it.
While Miss Fauntleroy was there, Mrs. Arkell had sent a private message to Travice that she

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wanted him; but Travice did not obey the summons until the young lady was gone. He came then: and Mrs. Arkell attacked him for not coming before; she was attacking him now, while Charlotte and Lucy were talking.

"Why did you not come in at once?" asked Mrs. Arkell, in the cross tone which had latterly become habitual; "Barbara Fauntleroy was here."

"That was just the reason," returned Travice, in his usual candid manner; "I waited until she should be gone."

If there was one thing that vexed Mrs. Arkell worse than the fact itself, it was the open way in which her son steadily resisted the hints to him on the subject of Miss Fauntleroy. She felt at times that she could have beaten him; she was feeling so now. Her temper turned acrid, her face flushed, her voice rose.

"Travice, if you persist in this systematic rudeness —"

"Pardon me, mother. I wish you would refrain from bringing up the subject of Miss Fauntleroy to me. I do not care to hear of her in any way; she—Who's that? Why, I do believe it's Lucy's voice!"

The colloquy with Mrs. Arkell had taken place in the hall. Travice made one bound to the drawing-room. The sudden flush on the pale face, the

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glad eagerness of the tone, struck dismay to the heart of Mrs. Arkell. She quickly followed him, and saw that he had taken both of Lucy's hands in greeting.

"Oh, Lucy! are you here this morning? I know you have come to stay the day! Take your things off."

Lucy laughed—and Mrs. Arkell had the pleasure of seeing that her cheeks wore an answering flush. She shook her head and drew her hands from Travice, who seemed as if he could have kept them for ever.

"Do I spend a day here so often that you think I can come for nothing else? I only came with papa, and I am going back with him soon."

But Travice pressed the point of staying. Charlotte also—feeling, perhaps, that even Lucy was a welcome break to the monotony the house had fallen into—urged it. Mrs. Arkell maintained a marked silence; and in the midst of it the two gentlemen came in. Mr. Arkell kissed Lucy, and said she had better stop.

But Peter settled it the other way. Lucy must go home with him then, he said; but if she liked to come down in the afternoon, and stay for the rest of the day, she could. It was so settled, and they took their departure. Mr. Arkell walked with Peter across the courtyard, talking. Travice, in

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the very face and eyes of his mother, gave his arm to Lucy.

"Why did you not stay?" he whispered, as they arrived at the gates. "Lucy, do you know that to part with you is to part with my life's sunshine?"

Mrs. Arkell was standing at the door as he turned, and beckoned to him from the distance.

"I wish to speak with you," she said, as he approached.

She led the way into the dining-room, and closed the door on them, as if for some formidable interview. Travice saw that she was in a scarcely irrepressible state of anger, and he perched himself on a vacant side-table—rather a favourite way of his. He began humming a tune; gaily, but not disrespectfully.

"What possesses you to behave in this absurd manner to Lucy Arkell?" she began, in passion.

"What have I done now?" asked Travice.

"You are continually, in some way or other, contriving to thrust that girl's company upon us! I will not permit it, Travice; I have borne with it too long. I —"

"Why, she is not here twice in a twelvemonth," interrupted Travice.

"Don't say absurd things. She is. And she is not fit society for your sisters."

"If they were only half as worthy of her society

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as she is superior to them, they would be very different girls from what they are," spoke Travice, with a touch of his father's old heat. "If there's one thing that Lucy is, pre-eminently, it's a gentlewoman. Her mother was one before her."

Mrs. Arkell grew nearly black in the face. While she was trying to speak, Travice went on.

"Ask my father what his opinion of Lucy is. *He* does not say she is here too much."

"Your father is a fool in some things, and so are you!" retorted Mrs. Arkell, a sort of scream in her voice. "How dare you oppose me in this way, Travice?"

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"I am very sorry to do so," returned the young man; "and I beg your pardon if I say more than you think I ought. But I cannot join in your unjust feeling against Lucy, and I will not tolerate it. I wish you would not bring up this subject at all: it is one we never can agree upon."

"You requested me just now not to 'bring up' the subject of Miss Fauntleroy to you," said Mrs. Arkell, in a tone of irony. "How many other subjects would you be pleased to interdict?"

"I don't want to hear even the name of those Fauntleroys!" burst out Travice, losing for a moment his equanimity. "Great brazen milkmaids!"

"No! you'd rather hear Lucy's!" screamed Mrs. Arkell. "You'd—"

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"Lucy! Don't name them with Lucy, my dear mother. They are not fit to tie Lucy's shoes! She has more sense of propriety in her little finger, than they have in all their great overgrown bodies!"

This was the climax. And Mrs. Arkell, suppressing the passion that shook her as she stood, spoke with that forced calmness that is worse than the loudest fury. Her face had turned white.

"Continue your familiar intercourse with that girl, if you will; but, listen!—you shall never make a wife of anyone so paltry and so pitiful! I would pray Heaven to let me follow you to your grave, Travice, rather than see you marry Lucy Arkell."

She spoke the words in her blind rage, never reflecting on their full import; never dreaming that a day was soon to come, when their memory would return to her in her extremity of vain and hopeless repentance.

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CHAPTER XII.

MISCONCEPTION.

"IT shall be put a stop to! it shall be put a stop to!" murmured Mrs. Arkell to herself, as she sat alone when Travice had left her, trying to recover her equanimity. "Once separated from that wretched Lucy, he would soon find charms in Barbara Fauntleroy."

There was no time to be lost; and that same afternoon, when Lucy arrived, according to promise, crafty Mrs. Arkell began to lay the foundation stone. Lucy found her in the drawing-room alone.

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"I will take my bonnet upstairs," said Lucy. "Shall I find Charlotte and Sophy anywhere?"

"No," replied Mrs. Arkell, in a very uncompromising tone. "They have gone out with the Miss Fauntleroys."

"I was unwilling to come this afternoon," observed Lucy, as she returned and sat down, "for papa does not seem so well. I fear he may have

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taken cold to-day; but he got to his books and writing after dinner, as usual."

"Does he think of bringing out a new book?" asked Mrs. Arkell; and Lucy did not detect the irony of the question.

"Not yet. He is about half through one. Is there any meeting to-day, do you know, Mrs. Arkell?" she resumed. "I met several gentlemen hurrying up the street as I came along."

"I thought everybody knew of it," replied Mrs. Arkell. "A meeting of the manufacturers was convened at the Guildhall for this afternoon. Mr. Arkell and Travice have gone to it."

"Their meetings seem to bring them no redress," returned Lucy, sadly. "The English manufacturers have no chance against the French now."

"I don't know what is to become of us," ejaculated Mrs. Arkell. "Charlotte, thank goodness, will soon be married and away; but there's Sophy! Travice will have enough to live upon, without business."

"Will be?" exclaimed Lucy, looking brightly up. "I am so glad to hear it! I thought your property had diminished until it was but small."

"Our property is diminishing daily," replied Mrs. Arkell. "Which makes it the more necessary that Travice should secure himself by his marriage."

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Lucy did not answer; but her heart throbbed violently, and the faint colour on her cheek forsook it. Mrs. Arkell, without looking towards her, rose to poke the fire, and continued talking as she leaned over the grate, with her back to Lucy.

"It is intended that Travice shall marry Barbara Fauntleroy."

The sense of the words was very decided, carrying painful conviction to Lucy's startled ear. She could not have answered, had her life depended on it.

"Lucy, my dear," proceeded Mrs. Arkell, speaking with unwonted affection, and looking Lucy full in the face, "I am speaking to you in entire confidence, and I desire you will respect it as such. Do not drop a hint to Travice or the girls; they would not like my speaking of it."

Lucy sat quiet; and Mrs. Arkell quite devoured the pale face with her eyes.

"At first he did not care much for Barbara; and in truth he does not care for her now, as one we intend to marry ought to be cared for. But that will all come in time. Travice, like many other young men, may have indulged in a little carved-out romance of his own—I don't know that he did, but he *may*—and he has the good sense to see that his romance must yield to reality."

"Yes!" ejaculated Lucy, feeling that she was expected to say something in answer.

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"There is our property dwindling down to little; there's the business dwindling down to nothing; and suppose Travice took it into his head to marry a portionless girl, what prospect would there be before him? Why, nothing but poverty and self-reproach; nothing but misery. And in time he would hate her for having brought him to it."

"True! true!" murmured Lucy.

"And now," added Mrs. Arkell, "that he is on the point of consenting to marry Miss Fauntleroy, it is the duty of all of us, if we care for his future happiness and welfare, to urge his hopes to that point. You see it, Lucy, I should think, as well as we do."

There was no outward emotion to be observed in Lucy. A transiently white cheek, a momentary quiver of the lip, and all that could be seen was over. Like her aunt Mildred, it was her nature to bear in silence; but some of us know too well that that is the grief which tells. There was a slight shiver of the frame, visible to those keen eyes watching her, and she compelled herself to speak as with indifference.

"Has he consented?"

"My dear Lucy, I said he was on the point of consenting. And there's no doubt he is. I had an explanation with Travice this morning; he seemed inclined to shun Miss Fauntleroy, for I

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sent for him while she was here, and he did not come. After you left, I spoke to him; I pointed out the state of the case, and said what a sweet girl Miss Fauntleroy was, what a

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charming wife she would make him; and I hope I brought him to reason. You see, Lucy, how advantageous it will be in all ways, their union. Not only does it provide for Travice, but it will remove the worst of the great care hanging over the head of Mr. Arkell, and which I am sure, if not removed, will shorten his life. Do you understand?"

"I—think so," replied Lucy, whose brain was whirling in spite of her calm manner.

Mrs. Arkell drew her chair nearer to Lucy, and dropped her voice.

"Our position is this, my dear. A very great portion of Mr. Arkell's property is locked up in his stock, which is immense. *I* should not have kept on manufacturing as he has done; and I believe it has been partly for the sake of those rubbishing workmen. Unless he can get some extraneous help, some temporary assistance, he will have to force his stock to sale at a loss, and it would just be ruin. Miss Fauntleroy proposes to advance any sum he may require, as soon as the marriage has taken place, and there's no doubt he will accept it. It will be only a temporary loan, you know; but it will save us a great, a ruinous loss."

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"*She* proposes to advance it?" echoed Lucy, struck with the words, in the midst of her pain.

"She does. She is as good hearted a girl as ever lived, and proposed it freely. In fact, she would be ready and willing to advance it at once, for of course she knows it would be a safe loan, but Mr. Arkell will not hear of it. She knows what our wishes are upon the subject of the marriage, and she sees that Travice has been holding back; and but for her very good-natured disposition she might not have tolerated it. However, I hope all will soon be settled now, and she and Travice married. Lucy, my dear, I *rely* upon you for Mr. Arkell's sake, of whom you are so fond, for Travice's own sake, to forward on this by any little means in your power. And, remember, the confidence I have reposed in you must not be broken."

Lucy sat cold and still. In honour she must no longer think of a possible union with Travice—must never more allow word or look from him seeming to point to it.

"For Mr. Arkell's sake," she kept repeating to herself, as if she were in a dream; "for Travice's own sake!" She saw the future as clearly as though it had been mapped out before her eyes in some prophetic vision: Travice would marry Barbara Fauntleroy and her riches. She almost wished

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she might never see him more; it could only bring to her additional misery.
Charlotte Arkell came in with Barbara Fauntleroy. Sophy had gone home with the other one for the rest of the day. An old aunt, bed-ridden three parts of her time, had lived with the young ladies since the death of their father. But they were not so very young; and they were naturally independent. Barbara was quite as old as Travice Arkell.
"How shall I bear to see them together?" thought Lucy, as Barbara Fauntleroy sat down opposite to her, in her rustling silk of many colours, and no end of gold trinkets jingling about her. "I wonder why I was born? But for papa, I could wish I had died as Harry did!"
For that first evening, however, she was spared. Their little maid arrived in much commotion, asking to see Miss Lucy. Her papa was feeling worse than when she left home, was the word she brought, and he thought if Lucy did not mind it, he should like her to go back to him at once.
Lucy hastened home. She found her father very poorly; feverish, and coughing a great deal. It was the foreshadowing of an illness from which he was destined never to recover.
"Whether his allotted span of life had indeed run out, or whether his exposure to the weather that
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unlucky morning helped to shorten it, Lucy never knew. A week or two of uncertain sickness—now a little better, now a little worse, and it became too evident that hope of recovery for Peter Arkell was over. A bowed, broken man in frame and spirit, but comparatively young in years, Peter was passing from the world he had found little else than trouble in. Lucy wrote in haste and distress for her Aunt Mildred, but a telegram was received in reply, announcing the death of Lady Dewsbury. She had died somewhat suddenly, Mildred said, when a letter came by the next morning's post, in which she gave particulars.
It was nearly impossible for her to come away before the funeral: nothing short of imminent danger in her brother's state would bring her. She had for a long while been almost sole mistress of the household; Lady Dewsbury was ever her kind friend and protectress; and she could not reconcile it to her feelings to abandon the house while she

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lay dead in it, unless her brother's state absolutely demanded that she should. Lucy was to write, or telegraph, as necessity should require.

There was no immediate necessity for her to come, and Lucy wrote accordingly. Lucy stayed on alone with the invalid, shunning as much as was possible the presence of Travice, when he made his frequent visits: that presence which had

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hitherto been to her as a light from heaven. Mrs. Arkell, paying a ceremonious call of condolence one day, whispered to Lucy that Travice was becoming quite "reconciled," quite "fond" of Barbara Fauntleroy.

On the evening of the day after Lady Dewsbury was interred, Mildred arrived in Westerbury. Lucy did not know she was coming, and no one was at the station to meet her. Leaving her luggage to be sent after her, she made her way to her brother's house on foot: it was but a quarter of an hour's walk, and Mildred felt cramped with sitting in the train.

She trembled as she came in sight of it, the old home of her youth, fearing that its windows might be closed, as those had been in the house just quitted. As she stood before the door, waiting to be admitted, remembrances of her childhood came painfully across her—of her happy girlhood, when those blissful dreams of William Arkell were mingled with every thought of her existence.

"And oh! what did they end in!" she cried, clasping her hands tightly together and speaking aloud in her anguish. "What am I now? Chilled in feeling; worn in heart; old before my time."

A middle-aged woman, with a light in her hand, opened the door. Mildred stepped softly over the threshold.

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"How is Mr. Arkell?"

The woman—she was the night nurse—stared at the handsomely attired strange lady, whose deep mourning looked so fresh and new, coming in that unceremonious manner at the night-hour.

"He is very ill, ma'am; nearly as bad as he can be," she replied, dropping a low curtsey. "What did you please to want?"

"He is in his old chamber, I suppose," said Mildred, turning towards the staircase. The woman, quite taken aback at this unceremonious proceeding, interposed her person.

"Goodness, ma'am, you can't go up to his chamber!" she cried out in amazement. "The poor gentleman's dying. I'll call Miss Lucy."

"I am Miss Arkell," said Mildred quietly, passing on up the staircase.

She laid aside her sombre bonnet, with its deep crape veil, her heavy shawl, and entered the chamber softly. Lucy was at a table, measuring some medicine into a tea-cup. A pale, handsome young man stood by the fire, his elbow resting on the mantel-piece. Mildred glanced at his face, and did not need to ask who he was.

Near the bed was Mr. William Arkell; but oh! how different from the lover of Mildred's youth! Now he was a grey-haired man, stooping slightly, looking older than his actual years—then tall,

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handsome, attractive, as Travice was now. And did William Arkell, at the first view, recognise his cousin? No. For that care-worn, middle-aged woman, whose hair was braided under a white net cap, bore little resemblance to the once happy Mildred Arkell. But the dying man, lying panting on the raised pillows, knew her instantaneously, and held out his feeble hands with a glad cry.

It was a painful meeting, and one into which we have little right to penetrate. Soon, very soon, Peter spoke out the one great care that was lying at his heart. He had not touched upon it till then.

"I am leaving my poor child alone in the world," he panted. "I know not who will afford her shelter—where she will find a home?"

"I would willingly promise you to take her to mine, Peter," said Mr. Arkell. "Poor Lucy should be as welcome to a shelter under my roof as are my own girls; but, heaven help me! I know not how long I may have a home for any of them."

"Leave Lucy to me, Peter," interposed Miss Arkell. "I shall make a home for myself now, and that home shall be Lucy's. Let no fear of her welfare disturb your peace."

Travice listened half resentfully. He was standing against the mantel-piece still, and Lucy, just then stirring something over the fire, was close to him.

"*They* need not think about a home for you,

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Lucy," he whispered, taking the one disengaged hand into his. "That shall be my care."

Lucy coldly drew her hand away. Her head was full of Barbara Fauntleroy—of the certainty that that lady would be his wife—for she believed no earthly event would be allowed to set aside the marriage: her spirit rebelled against the words. What right had he to breathe such to her—he, the engaged husband of another?

"I shall never have my home with you," she said, in the same low whisper. "Nothing should induce me to it."

"But, Lucy—"

"I will not hear you. You have no right so to speak to me. Aunt! aunt!"—and the tears gushed forth in all their bitter anguish—"let me find a home with you!"

Mildred turned and clasped fondly the appealing form as it approached her. Travice, hurt and resentful, quitted the room.

The death came, and then the funeral. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Arkell condescended to pay a stately visit of ceremony to Mildred, who received her in the formerly almost-unused drawing-room. Lucy did not appear. Miss Arkell, her heart softened by grief, by much trial, was more cordial than perhaps she had ever been to Mrs. Arkell, before her marriage or after it.

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"What a fine young man Travice is!" she observed, in a pause of their conversation.

"The finest in Westerbury," said Mrs. Arkell, with all the partiality of a mother. "I expect he will be thinking of getting married shortly."

"Of getting married! Travice! To whom? To Lucy?"

The question had broken from her in her surprise, in association with an idea that had for long and long floated through her brain—that Travice and Lucy were attached to each other. Mildred knew not whence it had its origin, unless it was in the frequent mention of Travice in Lucy's letters. Mrs. Arkell heard, and tossed her head indignantly.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Arkell—to *Lucy*, did you say? Travice would scarcely think of wedding a portionless bride, under present circumstances. You must have heard of the rich Fauntleroy girls? It is one of them."

Mildred—calm, composed, quiet Mildred—could very nearly have boxed her own ears. Never, perhaps, had she been more vexed with herself—never said an inadvertent thing

that she so much wished recalled. How entirety Lucy was despised, Mrs. Arkell's manner and words proclaimed; and the fact carried its sting to Mildred's heart.

"I had no reason to put the question," she said, only caring how she could mend the matter; "I

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dare say Lucy would not thank me for the idea. Indeed, I should fancy her hopes may lie in quite a different direction. Young Palmer, the lawyer, the son of her father's old friend, has been here several times this past week, inquiring after our health. His motives may be more interested ones."

This was a little romance of Mildred's, called forth by the annoyance and vexation of the moment. It is true that Tom Palmer frequently did call; he and Lucy had been brought up more like brother and sister than anything else; but Miss Arkell had certainly no foundation for the supposition she had expressed. And Mrs. Arkell knew she could have none; but she chose to believe it.

"It would be a very good match for Lucy," she replied. "Tom Palmer has a fine practice for so young a man; there are whispers, too, that he will be made town-clerk whenever the vacancy occurs."

Home went Mrs. Arkell; and the first of the family she happened to come across was Travice.

"Travice, come to me for an instant," she said, taking his arm to pace the court-yard; "I have been hearing news at Peter Arkell's. Lucy's a sly girl; she might have told us, I think. She is engaged—but I don't know how long since. Perhaps only in these few days, since the funeral."

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"Engaged in what?"

"To be married. She marries Tom Palmer."

"It is not true," broke forth Travice. "Who in the world has been telling you that falsehood?"

"Not true!" repeated Mrs. Arkell. "Why don't you say it is not true that I am talking to you—not true that this is Monday—not true that you are Travice Arkell? Upon my word! You are very polite, sir."

"Who told it you?" reiterated Travice.

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"*They* told me. Mildred Arkell told me. I have been sitting there for the last hour, and we have been talking that and other affairs over. I can tell you what, Travice—it will be an excellent match for Lucy; a far superior one to anything she could have expected—and they seem to know it."

Even as she spoke, there shot a remembrance through Travice Arkell's heart, as an icebolt, of the night he had stood with Lucy in the chamber of her dying father, and her slighting words, in answer to his offer of a home: "I shall never have my home with you; nothing should induce me to it." She would not hear him; she told him he had no right so to speak to her. She had been singularly changed to him during the whole period of her father's illness; had shunned him by every means in her power; had been cold and distant when they

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were brought into contact. Before that, she was open and candid as the day. This fresh conduct had been altogether inexplicable to Travice, and he now asked himself whether it could have arisen from any engagement to marry Tom Palmer. If so, the change was in a degree accounted for; and it was certainly not impossible, if Tom Palmer had previously been wishing to woo her, that Mr. Peter Arkell, surprised by his dangerous illness, should have hurried matters to an engagement.

The more Travice Arkell reflected on this phase of probabilities, the more he became impressed with it: he grew to look upon it as a certainty; he felt that all chance for himself with Lucy was over. Could he blame her? As things were with him and his father, he saw no chance of his marrying her; and, in a worldly point of view, Lucy had done well—had done right. It's true he had never thought her worldly, and he had thought that she loved him; he believed that Tom Palmer had never been more to her than a wind that passes: but why should not Lucy have grown self-interested, as most other girls were? And to Travice it was pretty plain she had.

He grew to look upon it as a positive certainty; he believed, without a shadow of doubt, that it must be the fact: and how bitterly and resentfully he all at once hated Tom Palmer, that gentleman himself

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would have been surprised to find. It was only natural that Travice should feel it as a personal injury inflicted on himself—a slight, an insult; you all know, perhaps, what

this feeling is: and in his temper he would not for some days go near Lucy. It was only when he heard the news that Mildred was returning to London, and would take her niece with her, that he came to his senses.

That same evening he took his way to the house. Mildred, it should be observed, was equally at cross-purposes. She hastened to speak to Lucy the day of Mrs. Arkell's visit, asking her if *she* had heard that Travice was engaged to Miss Fauntleroy; and Lucy answered after the manner of a reticent, self-possessed maiden, and made light of the thing, and was altogether a little hypocrite.

"Known *that*! O dear, yes! for some time," she said. "It would be a very good thing for Travice."

And so Mildred put aside any slight romance she had carved out for them, as wholly emanating from her imagination; but the sore feeling—that Lucy was despised by the mother, perhaps by the son—clung to her still.

She was sitting alone when Travice entered. He spoke for some time on indifferent subjects—of the news of the town; of her journey to London; of her future plans. They were to depart on the morrow.

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"Where's Lucy?" he suddenly asked; and there was a restlessness in his manner throughout the interview that Mildred had never observed before.

"She is gone to spend the evening with Mrs. Palmer. I declined. Visiting seems quite out of my way now."

"I should have thought it would just now be out of Lucy's," spoke Travice, in a glow of resentment.

"Ordinary visiting would be," returned Miss Arkell, speaking with unnecessary coldness, and conscious of it. "Mrs. Palmer was here this afternoon; and, seeing how ill Lucy looked, she insisted on taking her home for an hour or two. Lucy will see no one there, except the family."

"What makes her look ill?"

Miss Arkell raised her eyes at the tone. "She is not really ill in body, I trust; but the loss of her father has been a bitter grief to her, and it is telling upon her spirits and looks. He was all she had in the world; for I—comparatively speaking—am a stranger."

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There was a pause. Travice was leaning idly against the mantel-piece, in his favourite position, twirling the seals about that hung to his chain, his whole manner bespeaking indifference and almost contemptuous unconcern. Had anyone

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been there who knew him better than Mildred did, they could have told that it was only done to cover his real agitation. Mildred stole a glance at the fine young man, and thought that if he resembled his father in person, he scarcely resembled him in courtesy.

"Does Lucy really mean to have that precious fool of a Tom Palmer?" he abruptly asked.

Miss Arkell felt indignant. She wondered how he dared to speak in that way; and she answered sharply.

"Tom Palmer is a most superior young man. I have not perceived that he has any thing of the fool about him, and I don't think many others have. Whenever he marries, he will make an excellent husband. Why should you wish to set me against him? Let me urge you not to interfere with Lucy's affairs, Travice; she is under my protection now."

Oh, if Mildred could but have read Travice Arkell's heart that night!—if she had but read Lucy's! How different things might have been! Travice moved to shake hands with her.

"I must wish you good evening," he said. "I hope you and Lucy will have a pleasant journey to-morrow. We shall see you both again some time, I suppose."

He went out with the cold words upon his

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lips. He went out with the conviction, that Lucy was to marry Tom Palmer, irrevocably seated on his heart. And Travice Arkell thought the world was a miserable world, no longer worth living in.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

MILDRED had to go back for a time to Lady Dewsbury's. That lady's house and effects now lapsed to Sir Edward; but Sir Edward was abroad with his wife and children, and he begged Miss Arkell to remain in it, its mistress, until they could return. This was convenient for Mildred's plans. It afforded a change of scene for Lucy; and it

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gave the opportunity and time for the house in "Westerbury to be renovated; in which she intended now to take up her abode. The house was Mildred's now: it came to her on the death of her brother, their father having so settled it; but for this settlement, poor Peter had disposed of it in his necessities long ago.

Charlotte Arkell married, and departed with her husband, Captain Anderson, for India, taking Sophy with her. The paying over her marriage portion of a thousand pounds—a very poor portion beside what she once might have expected—further

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crippled the resources of Mr. Arkell; and things seemed to be coming to a crisis.

And Travice? Travice succumbed. Hardly caring what became of him, he allowed himself to be baited—badgered—by his mother into offering himself to one of the "great brazen milkmaids." From the hour of Lucy's departure from the city, she let him have no peace, no rest.

One day—and it was the last feather in the scale, the little balance necessary to weigh it down—Mr. Arkell summoned his son to a private interview. It was only what Travice had been expecting.

"Travice, what is your objection to Miss Fauntleroy?"

"I can't bear the sight of her," returned Travice, curling his lips contemptuously. "Can you, sir?"

Mr. Arkell smiled. "There are some who would call her a fine woman, Travice: she is one."

"A fine *vulgar* woman," corrected Travice, with a marked stress upon the word. "I always had an instinctive dread of vulgar people myself. I certainly never could have believed I should voluntarily ally myself with one."

"Never marry for looks, my boy," said Mr. Arkell in an eager whisper. "Some, who have done so before you, have awoke to find they had made a cruel mistake."

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"Most likely, sir, if they married for looks alone."

Mr. Arkell glanced keenly at his son. "Travice, have I your full confidence? I wish you would give it me."

"In what way?" inquired Travice. "Why do you ask that?"

"Am I right in suspecting that you have cherished a different attachment?"

The tell-tale blood dyed Travice Arkell's brow. Mr. Arkell little needed other answer.

"My boy, let there be no secrets between us. You know that your welfare and *happiness*—your happiness, Travice—lie nearest to my heart. Have you learnt to love Lucy Arkell?"

"Yes," said Travice; and there was a whole world of pain in the simple answer.

"I thought so. I thought I saw the signs of it a long while ago; but, Travice, it would never do."

"You would object to her?"

"Object to her!—to Lucy!—to Peter's child! No. She is one of the sweetest girls living; I am not sure but I love her more than I do my own: and I wish she could be my real daughter and your wife. But it cannot be, Travice. There are impediments in the way, on her side and on yours; and your own sense must tell you this as well as I can."

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He could not gainsay it. The impediments were all too present to Travice every hour of his life.

"You cannot take a portionless wife. Lucy has nothing now, or in prospect, beyond any little trifle that may come to her hereafter at Mildred's death; but I don't suppose Mildred can have saved much. It is said, too, that Lucy is likely to marry Tom Palmer."

"I know she is," bitterly acquiesced Travice.

"Lucy, then, for both these reasons, is out of the question. Have you not realized to your own mind the fact that she is?"

"Oh yes."

"Then, Travice, the matter resolves itself into a very small compass. It stands alone; it has no extraneous drawbacks; it can rest upon its own merits or demerits. Will you, or will you not, marry Miss Fauntleroy?"

Travice remained silent.

"It will be well for me that you should, for the temporary use of money that would then be yours would save us, as you know, from a ruinous loss; but, Travice, I would not, for the wealth of worlds, put that consideration against your happiness; but there is another consideration that I cannot put away from me, and that is, that the marriage

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will make you independent. For your sake, I should like to see you marry Miss Fauntleroy."

"She—"

"Wait one moment while I tell you why I speak. I do not think you are doing quite the right thing by Miss Fauntleroy, in thus, as it were, trifling with her. She expects you to propose to her, and you are keeping her in suspense unwarrantably long. You should either make her an offer, or let it be unmistakably known that there exists no such intention on your part. It would be a good thing in all ways, if you can only make up your mind to it; but do as you please: *I* do not urge you either way."

"I may as well do it," muttered Travice to himself. "*She* has chosen another, and it little matters what becomes of me: look which way I will, there's nothing but darkness. As well go through life with Bab Fauntleroy at my side, like an incubus, as go through it without her."

And Travice Arkell—as if he feared his resolution might desert him—went out forthwith and offered himself to Miss Fauntleroy. Never, surely, did any similar proposal betray so much *hauteur*, so much indifference, so little courtesy in the offering. Barbara happened to be alone; she was sitting in a white muslin dress, looking as big as a house, and waiting in state for any visitors who

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might call. He spoke out immediately. She probably knew, he said, that he was a sort of bankrupt in self, purse, and heart; little worth the acceptance of any one; but if she would like to take him, such as he was, he would try and do his duty by her.

The offer was really couched in those terms; and he did not take shame to himself as he spoke them. Travice Arkell *could* not be a hypocrite: he knew that the girl was aware of the state of things and of his indifference; he believed she saw through his love for Lucy; and he hated her with a sort of resentful hatred for having fixed her liking and her hopes upon him. He had been an indulged son all his life—a sort of fortune's pet—and the turn that things had taken was an awful blow.

"Will she say she'll have me?" he thought as he concluded. "I don't believe any other woman would." But Barbara Fauntleroy did say she would have him; and she put out her hand to him in her hearty good-natured way, and told him she thought they should get on very well together when once they had "shaken down." Travice touched the

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hand; he shook it in a gingerly manner, and then dropped it; but he never kissed her—he never said a warmer word than "thank you." Perhaps Miss Fauntleroy did not look for it: sentiment is little understood by these matter-of-fact, unrefined
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natures, with their loud voices, and their demonstrative temperaments. Travice would have to kiss her some time, he supposed; but he was content to put off the evil until that time came.

"How odd that you should have come and made me an offer this morning, Mr. Travice," she said, with a laugh. "Lizzie has just had one."

"Has she?" languidly returned Travice. His mind was so absorbed in the thought just mentioned, that he had no idea whether the lady meant an offer or a kiss that her sister had received, and he did not trouble himself to ask. It was quite the same to Travice Arkell.

"It's from Ben Carr," proceeded Miss Fauntleroy. "He came over here this morning, bringing a great big nosegay from their hothouse, and he made Liz an offer. Liz was taken all of a heap; and I think, but for me, she'd have said yes then."

"I dare say she would," returned Travice, and then wished the words recalled. They and their haughty tone had certainly been prompted by the remembrance of the "yes," just said to him by another.

"Liz came flying into the next room to me, asking what she should do; he was very pressing, she said, and wanted her answer then. I'm certain she'd have given it, Mr. Travice, if I had not been there to stop her. I went into the room with her
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to Ben Carr, and I said, 'Mr. Ben, Liz won't say anything decided now, but she'll think of it for a few days; if you'll look in on Saturday, she'll give you her answer, yes or no.' Ben Carr stared at me angry enough; but Liz backed up what I had said, and he had to take it."

"Does she mean to accept him?" asked Travice.

"Well, she's on the waver. She does not dislike him, and she does not particularly like him. He's too old for her; he's twenty years older than Liz; but it's her first offer, and young women are apt to think when they get *that*, they had better accept it, lest they may never get another."

"You sister need not fear that. Her money will get her offers, if nothing else does."

He spoke in the impulse of the moment; but it occurred to him instantly that it was not generous to say it.

"Perhaps so," said Miss Fauntleroy. "But Lizzie and I have always dreaded that. We would like to be married for ourselves, not for our money. Sometimes we say in joke to one another we wish we could bury it, or could have passed ourselves off to the world as being poor until the day after we were married, and then surprised our husbands by the news, and made them a present of the money."

She spoke the truth; Travice knew she did. Whatever were the failings of the Miss Fauntleroys,

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genuine good nature was with both a pre-eminent virtue.

"Ben Carr is not the choice I should make," remarked Travice. "Of course, it's no business of mine."

"Nor I. I don't much like Ben Carr. Liz thinks him handsome. "Well, she has got till Saturday to make up her mind—thanks to me."

Travice rose, and gingerly touched the band again. The thought struck him again that he ought to kiss her; that he ought to put an engagement-ring on one of those fair and substantial fingers; ought to do many other things. But he went out, and did none of them.

"I'll not deceive her," he said to himself, as he walked down the street, more intensely wretched than he had ever in his life felt. "I'll not play the hypocrite; I couldn't do it if it were to save myself from hanging. She shall see my feeling for her exactly as it is, and then she'll not reproach me afterwards with coldness. It is impossible that I can ever like her; it seems to me now impossible that I can ever *endure* her; but if she does marry me in the face of such evident feelings, I'll do my best for her. Duty she shall have, but there'll be no love."

A very satisfactory state in prospective! Others, however, besides Travice Arkell, have married to enter on the same.

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Some few months insensibly passed away in London for Miss Arkell and Lucy, and when they returned to Westerbury the earth was glowing with the tints of autumn. They

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did not return alone. Mrs. Dundyke, a real widow now beyond dispute, came with them. Poor David Dundyke, never quite himself after his return, never again indulging in the yearning for the civic chair, which had made the day-dream of his industrious life, had died calmly and peacefully, attended to the last by those loving hands that would fain have kept him, shattered though he was. He was lying now in Nunhead Cemetery, from whence he would certainly never be resuscitated as he had been from his supposed grave in Switzerland. Mrs. Dundyke grieved after him still, and Mildred pressed her to go back with them to Westerbury, for a little change. She consented gladly.

But Mrs. Dundyke did not go down in the humble fashion that she had once gone as Betsey Travice. She sent on her carriage and her two men servants. That there was a little natural feeling of retaliation in this, cannot be denied. Charlotte had despised her all her life; but she should at least no longer despise her on the score of poverty. "I shall do it," she said to Mildred, "and the carriage will be useful to us. It can be kept at an inn, with the horses and coachman;

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and John will be useful in helping your two maids."

It was late when they arrived at Westerbury; Miss Arkell did not number herself amid those who like to start upon a journey at daybreak; and Lucy looked twice to see whether the old house was really her home: it was so entirely renovated inside and out, as to create the doubt. Miss Arkell had given her private orders, saying nothing to Lucy, and the change was great. Various embellishments had been added; every part of it put into ornamental repair; a great deal of the furniture had been replaced by new; and, for its size, it was now one of the most charming residences in Westerbury.

"Do you like the change, Lucy?" asked Miss Arkell, when they had gone through the house together, with Mrs. Dundyke.

"Of course I do, Aunt Mildred;" but the answer was given in a somewhat apathetic tone, as Lucy mostly spoke now. It must have cost a great deal."

"Well, is it not the better for it? I may not remain in Westerbury for good, and I could let my house to greater advantage now than I could have done before."

"That's true," listlessly answered Lucy.

"Lucy," suddenly exclaimed Miss Arkell, "what

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is it that makes you appear so dispirited?" I could account for it after your father's death; it was only reasonable then; but it seems to me quite unreasonable that it should continue. I begin to think it must be your natural manner."

Lucy's heart gave a bound of something like terror at the question. "I was always quiet, aunt," she said.

None had looked on with more wonder at the expense being lavished on the house than Mrs. Arkell. "So absurd!" she exclaimed, loftily. "But Mildred Arkell was always pretentious, for a lady's maid."

William Arkell called to see Mildred the morning after her arrival. Very much surprised indeed, was he, to see also Mrs. Dundyke. He carried the news home to his wife.

"*Betsey* down here!" she answered. "Why, what has brought her?"

"She told me she had accompanied Mildred for a little change. She is coming in to see you by-and-by, Charlotte."

"I hope she's not coming begging!" tartly responded Mrs. Arkell.

"Begging?"

"Yes; begging. It's a question whether she's left with enough to live upon. I'm sure we have none to spare, for her or for anybody else; and

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so I shall plainly tell her if she attempts to ask."

That they had none to spare, was an indisputable fact. Mrs. Arkell had done all in her power to hurry the marriage on with Miss Fauntleroy, but Travice held back unpardonably. His cheek grew bright with hectic, his whole time was spent in what his mother called "moping;" and he entered but upon rare occasions the house of his bride elect. Mr. Arkell would not urge him by a single word; but, in the delay, he had had to sacrifice another remnant of his property.

The first use that Mrs. Dundyke put her carriage to in Westerbury, was that of going in it to William Arkell's. Mildred declined to accompany her, and Lucy was obliged to go with her; Lucy, who would have given the whole world not to go. But she could not say so.

Mrs. Arkell was in the dining-room, when the carriage drove in at the court-yard gates. She wondered whose it was. A nice close carriage, the servants attending it in mourning. She did not recognise it as one she knew.

She heard the visitors shown into the drawing-room, and waited for the cards with some curiosity. But no cards came in. Mrs. Dundyke, the servant brought word, and she was with Miss Lucy Arkell.

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Mrs. Dundyke! "Wondering what on earth brought Betsey in that carriage, and where she had picked it up, Mrs. Arkell took a closer view of it through the window. It was too good a carriage to be anything but a private one, and those horses were never hired; and there were the servants. She looked at the crest. But it was not a crest. Only an enclosed cipher, D.D.

It did not lessen her curiosity, and she went to the drawing-room, wondering still; but she never once glanced at the possibility that it could be Mrs. Dundyke's; the thought occurred to her that it must belong to some member of the Dewsbury family, and had been lent to Mildred.

It was a stiff meeting. Mrs. Arkell, fully imbued with the persuasion that her sister was left badly off, that she was the same poor sister of other days, was less cordial than she might have been. She shook hands with her sister; she shook hands with Lucy; but in her manner there was a restraint that told. They spoke of general subjects, of Mr. Dundyke's strange adventure in Switzerland, and his subsequent real death; of Lucy's sojourn in London; of Charlotte's recent marriage; of the departure of Sophy with her for India—just, in fact, as might have been the case with ordinary guests.

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"Travice is soon to be married, I hear," said Mrs. Dundyke.

"Yes; but he holds back unpardonably."

Had Mrs. Arkell not been thinking of something else, she had never given that tart, but true answer. She happened just then to be calculating the cost of Mrs. Dundyke's handsome mourning, and wondering how she got it.

"Why does he hold back?" quickly asked Mrs. Dundyke.

"Oh, I don't know," said Mrs. Arkell, with a gay, slighting laugh. "I suppose young men like to retain their bachelor liberty as long as they can. Does your aunt purpose to settle down in Westerbury, Lucy?"

"For the present."

"Does she think of going out again?"

"Oh no."

"Perhaps she has saved enough to keep herself without? She could not expect to find another such place as Lady Dewsbury's."

It was not a pleasant visit, and Mrs. Dundyke did not prolong it. As they were going out they met Travice.

"Oh, Aunt Betsey! How glad I am to see you!"

But he turned coldly enough to shake hands with Lucy. He cherished resentment against her in his

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heart. She saw he did not look well; but she was cold as he was. As he walked across the hall with his aunt, Mrs. Arkell drew Lucy back into the drawing-room. Her curiosity had been on the rack all the time.

"Whose carriage is that, Lucy? One belonging to the Dewsburys'?"

"It is Mrs. Dundyke's."

"Mrs.—what did you say? I asked whose carriage that is that you came in," added Mrs. Arkell, believing that Lucy had not heard aright.

"Yes, I understood. It is Mrs. Dundyke's. She sent it on, the day before yesterday, with her servants and horses."

"But—does—she—keep a carnage and servants?" reiterated Mrs. Arkell, hardly able to bring out the words in her perplexed amazement.

"Oh, yes."

"Then she must be left well off?"

"Very well. She is very rich. I believe her income is close upon two thousand a year."

"Two thou—" Mrs. Arkell wound up with a shriek of astonishment. Lucy had to leave her to recover it in the best way she could, for Mrs. Dundyke had got into the carriage and was waiting for her.

The poor, humble Betsey, whom she had so despised

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and slighted through life! Come to this fortune! While hers and her husband's was going down. How the tables were turned!

Yes, Mrs. Arkell. Tables always are on the turn in this life.

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CHAPTER XIV.

A RECOGNITION.

WHEN the first vexation was overcome, the most prominent thought that remained to Mrs. Arkell was, what a fool she had been, not to treat Betsey better—one never knew what would turn up. All that could be done was, to begin to treat her well now: but it required diplomacy.

Mrs. Arkell began by being gracious to Mildred, by being quite motherly in her behaviour to Lucy; this took her often to Miss Arkell's, and consequently into the society of Mrs. Dundyke. Sisterly affection must not be displayed all at once; it should come by degrees.

As a preliminary, Mrs. Arkell introduced to her sister and Mildred as many of her influential friends in Westerbury as she could prevail upon them to receive. This was not many. Gentle at heart as both were, neither of them felt inclined to be patronized by Mrs. Arkell now, after her lifetime of neglect. They therefore declined the introductions,

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allowing an exception only in the persons of the Miss Fauntleroys, who were so soon, through the marriage of Travice and Barbara, to be allied to the family. Mrs. Dundyke was glad to renew her acquaintance? with Mr. Prattleton and his daughter.

Both the Miss Fauntleroys were making preparations for their marriage, for the younger one had accepted Mr. Benjamin Carr. The old squire, so fond of money, was in an ecstacy at the match his fortunate son was going to make, and Ben had just now taken a run up to Birmingham to look at some furniture he had seen advertised. Ben had a good deal of the rover in his nature still, and was glad of an excuse for taking a run anywhere.

The Miss Fauntleroys grew rather intimate at Mildred's. Their bouncing forms and broad good-natured faces, were often to be seen at the door. They began rather to be liked there; their vulgarity lessened with custom, their well-meaning good humour won its own way. They invited Miss Arkell, her niece, and guest, to spend a long afternoon with them and help them with some plain work they were doing for the poor sewing-club—for they were adepts in useful sewing, were the Miss Fauntleroys—and to remain to dinner after-wards. Lucy would have given the whole world to refuse: but she had no ready plea; and she had

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not the courage to make one. So she went with the rest.

She was sitting at one of the windows of the large drawing-room with Lizzie Fauntleroy, both of them at work at the same article, a child's frock, when Travice Arkell entered. Lucy's was the first face he saw: and so entirely unexpected was the sight of it to him, that, for once in his life, he nearly lost his self-possession. No wonder; with the consciousness upon him of the tardy errand that had taken him there—that of asking his future bride to appoint a time for their union. Once more Mr. Arkell had spoken to his son: "You must not continue to act in this way, Travice; it is not right; it is not manly. Marry Miss Fauntleroy, or give her up; do which you decide to do, but it must be one or the other." And he came straight from the conference, as he had on the former occasion, to ask her when the wedding day should be. He could not sully his honour by choosing the other alternative.

A hesitating pause, he looking like one who has been caught in some guilty act, and then he walked on and shook hands with Miss Fauntleroy. He shook hands with them all in succession; with Lucy last: that is, he touched the tips of her fingers, turning his conscious face the other way.

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"Have you brought me any message from Mrs. Arkell?" asked Miss Fauntleroy, for it was so unusual a thing for Travice to call in the day that she concluded he had come for some specific purpose.

"No. I—I came to speak to you myself," he answered. And his words were so hesitating, his manner so uncertain, that they looked at him in surprise; he who was usually self-possessed to a fault. Miss Fauntleroy rose and left the room with him.

She came back in about a quarter of an hour, giggling, laughing, her face more flushed than ordinary, her manner inviting inquiry. Lizzie Fauntleroy, with one of those unladylike, broad allusions she was given to use, said to the company that by the looks of Bab, she should think Mr. Travice Arkell had been asking her to name the day. There ensued a loud laugh on Barbara's part, some skirmishing with her sister, and then a tacit acknowledgment that the surmise was correct, and that she *had* named it. Lucy sat perfectly still: her head apparently as intent upon her work as were her hands.

"Liz may as well name it for herself," retorted Barbara. "Ben Carr has wanted her to do it before now."

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"There's no hurry," said Lizzie. "For me, at
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any rate. "When one's going to many a man so much older than oneself, one is apt not to be over ardent for it."

They continued to work, an industrious party. Accidentally, as it seemed, the conversation turned upon the strange events which had occurred at Geneva: it was through Mrs. Dundyke's mentioning some embroidery she had just given to Mary Prattleton. The Miss Fauntleroys, who had only, as they phrased it, heard the story at second-hand, besought her to tell it to them. And she complied with the request.

They suspended their work as they listened. It is probable that not a single incident was mentioned that the Miss Fauntleroys had not heard before; but the circumstances altogether were of that nature that bear hearing—ay, and telling—over and over again, as most mysteries do. Their chief curiosity turned—it was only natural it should—on Mr. Hardcastle, and they asked a great many questions.

"I would have scoured the whole country but what I'd have found him," cried Barbara. "Genoa! Rely upon it, he and his wife turned their faces in just the contrary direction as soon as they left Geneva. A nice pair."

"Do you think," asked Lucy, in her quiet manner, raising her eyes to Mrs. Dundyke, "that Mr.
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Hardcastle followed him for the purpose of attacking and robbing him?"

"Ah, my dear, I cannot tell. It is a question that I often ask myself. I feel inclined to think that he did not. One thing I seem nearly sure of—that he did not intend to injure him. I have not the least doubt that Mr. Hardcastle was at his wit's end for money to pay his hotel bill, and that the thirty pounds my poor husband mentioned as having received that morning, was an almost irresistible temptation. There's no doubt he followed him to the borders of the lake; that he induced him, by some argument, to walk away with him, across the country; but whether he did this with the intention of —"

"Did Mr. Dundyke not clear this up after his return?" interrupted Lizzie Fauntleroy.

"Never clearly; his recollections remained so confused. I have thought at times, that the crime only came with the opportunity," continued Mrs. Dundyke, reverting to what she was saying. "It is possible that the heat of the day and the long walk, though why Mr.

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Hardcastle should have caused him to take that long walk, unless he had ulterior designs, I cannot tell—may have overpowered my husband with a faintness, and Mr. Hardcastle seized the opportunity to rifle his pocket-book."

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"You seem to be more lenient in your judgment of Mr. Hardcastle than I should be," observed Lizzie Fauntleroy.

"I have thought of it so long and so often, that I believe I have grown to judge of the past impartially," was Mrs. Dundyke's answer. "At first I was very much incensed against the man; I am not sure but I thought hanging too good for him; but I grew by degrees to look at it more reasonably."

"And the pencil?"

"He must have taken it from the pocket-book in his hurry, when he took the money. That he did it all in haste, the not finding the two half-notes for fifty pounds proves."

"Suppose Mr. Dundyke had returned to Geneva the next day and confronted him. What then?"

"Ah, I don't know. Mr. Hardcastle relied, perhaps, upon being able to make good his own story, and he knew that David had the most unbounded faith in him."

"Well, take it in it's best light—that Mr. Dundyke fainted from the heat of the sun—the man must have been a brute to leave him alone," concluded Lizzie Fauntleroy.

"Yes," was the answer, as a faint colour rose to Mrs. Dundyke's cheek; "*that* I can never forgive."

The afternoon and the work progressed satisfactorily,

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and dinner time arrived. Miss Fauntleroy had invited Travice to come and partake of it, but he said he had an engagement—which she did not half believe. The nearly bed-ridden old aunt came down to it, and was propped up to the table in an invalid chair. Miss Fauntleroy took the head; Miss Lizzie the foot. It was a well-spread board: Lawyer Fauntleroy's daughters liked good dinners. Their manners were more free at home than abroad, rather scaring Mildred. "How could Travice have chosen *here*?" she mentally asked.

"There's no gentlemen present, so I don't see why I should not give you a toast," suddenly exclaimed Lizzie Fauntleroy, as the servant was pouring out the first glass of champagne. "The bridegroom and bride elect. Mr. Travice Ar—"

Lizzie stopped in surprise. Peeping in at the door, in a half-jocular, half-deprecatory manner, as if he would ask pardon for entering at the unseasonable hour, was Mr. Benjamin Carr. His somewhat dusty appearance, and his overcoat on his arm, showed that he had then come from the station after his Birmingham journey. Lizzie, too hearty to be troubled with superfluous reticence or ceremony of any kind, started up with a shout of welcome.

Of course everything was dis-arranged. The visitors looked up with surprise; Barbara turned

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round and gave him her hand. Ben began an apology for sitting down in the state he was, and had handed his coat to a servant, when lie found a firm hand laid upon his arm. He wheeled round, wondering who it was, and saw a widow's cap, and a face he did not in the first moment recognise.

"*Mr. Hardcastle*!"

With the words, the voice, the recognition came to him, and the past scenes at Geneva rose before his startled memory as a vivid dream. He might have brazened it out had he been taken less utterly by surprise, but that unnerved him: his face turned ashy white, his whole manner faltered. He looked to the door as if he would have bolted out of it; but somebody had closed it again.

Mrs. Dundyke turned her face to the amazed listeners, who had risen from their seats. But that it had lost its colour also, there was no trace in it of agitation: it was firm, rigid, earnest; and her voice was calm even to solemnity.

"Before heaven, I assert that this is the man who in Geneva called himself Mr. Hardcastle, who did that injury—much or little, *he* best knows—to my husband! He—"

"But this is Benjamin Carr!" interrupted the wondering Miss Fauntleroy.

"Yes; just so; Benjamin Carr," assented Mrs.

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Dundyke, in a tone that seemed to say she expected the words. "I recognised you, Benjamin Carr, on the last day of your stay in Geneva, when you were giving me that

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false order on Leadenhall Street. From the moment I first saw you, the morning after we arrived at Geneva, your eyes puzzled me. I *knew* I had seen them somewhere before, and I told my poor husband so; but I could not recollect where. In the hour of your leaving, the recollection came to me; and I knew that the eyes were those of Benjamin Carr, or eyes precisely similar to his. I thought it must be the latter; I could not suppose that Squire Carr's son, a gentleman born and reared—"

But here a startling interruption intervened. It suddenly occurred to Miss Lizzie Fauntleroy, amidst the general confusion outward and inward, that the Mr. Hardcastle who had figured in the dark and disgraceful story, was said to have been accompanied by a wife. Considering that he was now designing to confer that honour upon her, the reflection was not agreeable. Miss Lizzie came to a hasty conclusion, that the real Mrs. Carr must be lying *perdue* somewhere, while he prosecuted his designs upon herself and her money, conveniently ignoring the result of what he might be running his head wholesale into—a prosecution for bigamy. She went butting at him, her voice

raised to a shriek, her nails out, alarmingly near to his face.

"You false, desperate, designing villain! You dare to come courting me as a single man! You nearly drew me into a marriage! Where's your wife? Where's your wife, villain?"

This charge was a mistaken one, and Ben Carr somewhat rallied his scared senses. "It is false," he said. "I swear on my honour that I have no wife; I swear that I never have had one."

"You had your wife with you in Geneva," said Mrs. Dundyke.

"She was not my wife. Lizzie Fauntleroy, can't you believe me? I have never married yet. I never thought of marrying until I saw you."

"It's all the same now," said Lizzie, with equanimity. "I don't like tricks played me. Better that I should have discovered this before marriage than after."

"It is false, on my honour. You will not allow it to make any difference to our—"

"Not allow it to make any difference," interposed Lizzie, imperiously cutting short his words. "Do you take me for a fool, Ben Carr? *You've* seen the last of me, I can tell you that; and if pa were living still, he should prosecute you for getting my consent to a marriage under false pretences."

"If I do not prosecute you, Benjamin Carr," resumed

Mrs. Dundyke, "you owe it partly to my consideration for your family, partly to the unhappy fact that it could not bring my poor husband back to life. It could not restore to him the mental power he lost, the faculties that were destroyed. It could not bring back to me my lost happiness. How far you may have been guilty, I know not. It must rest with your conscience, and so shall your punishment."

He stood something like a stag at bay—half doubting whether to slink away, whether to turn and beard his pursuers. Barbara Fauntleroy threw wide the door.

"You had better quit us, I think, Mr. Carr."

"I see what it is," said he, at length, to the Miss Fauntleroys. "You are just now too prejudiced to listen to reason. The tale that woman has been telling you of me is a mistaken one; and when you are calm, I will endeavour to convince you of it."

"Calm, man!" cried Barbara, with a laugh. "*I*'m calm enough. It isn't such an interlude, as this, that could take any calmness away from me. It has been as good to me as a scene at the play."

But the gentleman did not wait to hear the conclusion. He had escaped through the open door. Those left stared at one another.

"Come along," said Lizzie, with unruffled composure;

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"don't let the dinner get colder than it is. I dare say I'm well rid of him. Where's our glasses of champagne? A drop will do us all good. Oh dear, Mrs. Dundyke! *Pray* don't suffer it to trouble you!"

She had sat down in a far corner, poor woman, with her face hidden, drowned in a storm of silent tears.

The event, quickly though it had transpired—over, as it were, in a moment—exercised a powerful influence on the spirits of Mrs. Dundyke. It brought the old trouble so vividly before her, that she could not rally again as the days went on; and she told Mildred that she should go back to London, but would come to her again at a future time. The resolution was a sudden one. Mrs. Arkell happened to call the same day, and was told of it.

"Going back to London to-morrow!" repeated Mrs. Arkell in consternation; and she hastened to her sister's room.

Mrs. Dundyke had her drawers all out, and her travelling trunk open, beginning to put things together. Mrs. Arkell went in, and closed the door.

"Betsey, you are going back, I hear; therefore I must at once ask the question that I have been intending to ask before your departure. It may sound to you somewhat premature: I don't know. Will you forget and forgive?"

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"Forget and forgive what?"

"My coldness during the past years."

"I am willing to forgive it, Charlotte, if that will do you any good. To forget it is an impossibility."

Mrs. Dundyke spoke with civil indifference. She was wrapping different toilet articles in paper, and she continued her occupation, Mrs. Arkell, in a state of bitter vexation at the turn things had taken, terribly self-repentant that she should have pursued a line of conduct so inimical to her own interests, sat down on a low chair, and fairly burst into tears.

"Why, what's the matter, Charlotte?"

"You are a rich woman now, and therefore you despise us. We are growing poor."

"How can you talk such nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Dundyke, screwing down the silver stopper of a scent-bottle. "If I became as rich and as grand as a duke, it could never cause me to make the slightest difference in my conduct to anybody, high or low."

"Our intercourse has been so cold, so estranged, during this visit!"

"And, but that you find I am a little better off than you thought for, would you have allowed it to be otherwise than cold and estranged?" returned Mrs. Dundyke, putting down the scent-bottle, and facing her sister.

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There was no reply. What, indeed, could there be?

"Charlotte," said Mrs. Dundyke, dropping her voice to earnestness, as she went close to her sister, "the past wore me out. Ask yourself what your treatment of me was—for years, and years, and years. You know how I loved you—how I tried to conciliate you by every means in my power—to be to you a sister; and you would not. You threw my affection back upon myself; you prevented Mr. Arkell and your children coming to me; you heaped unnecessary scorn upon my husband. I bore it; I strove against it; but my

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patience and my love gave way at last, and I am sorry to say resentment grew in its place. Those feelings of affection, worn out by slow degrees, can never grow again."

"It is as much as to say that you hate me!"

"Not so. We can be civil when we meet; and that can be as often as circumstances bring us into the same locality. But I do not think there can ever be cordiality between us again."

"I had thought you were of a forgiving disposition, Betsey."

"So I am."

"I had thought—" Mrs. Arkell paused a moment, as if half ashamed of what she was about

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to say—"I had thought to enlist your sisterly feelings for me; that is, for my daughters. You are rich now; you have plenty of money to spare; and their patrimony has dwindled down to nothing—nothing compared to what it ought to have been. They —"

"Stay, Charlotte. We may as well come to an understanding on this point at once; it will serve for always. Your daughters have never condescended to recognise me in their lives; it was perhaps your fault, perhaps theirs: I don't know. But the effect upon me has not been a pleasant one. I shall decline to help them."

Mrs. Arkell's proud spirit was rising. What it had cost thus to bend herself to her life-despised sister, she alone knew. She beat her foot upon the hearth-rug.

"I don't know how they'll get along. But for Mr. Arkell's having kept on the business for Travice, we should be rich still. He has always been a fool in some things."

"Don't disparage your husband before me, Charlotte; I shall not listen calmly; you were never worthy of him. I love Mr. Arkell for his goodness, and I love your son. If you asked me for help for Travice, you should have it; never for your daughters."

"Very kind, I'm sure! when you know he does

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not want it," was the provoking and angry answer. "Travice is placed above requiring your help, by marriage with Miss Fauntleroy."

And Mrs. Arkell gave her head a scornful toss as she went out, and banged the chamber-door after her.

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CHAPTER XV.

MILDRED'S RECOMPENSE.

THE consent of Travice once obtained, the necessary word spoken to Miss Fauntleroy, Mrs. Arkell hurried the marriage on in earnest. So long as Travice had only made the offer, and given no signs of wishing for the ceremony to take place, not much could be done; but he had now said to Barbara, "Fix your own day."

There was no trouble needed in regard to a house; at least, there had not hitherto been. The house that the Miss Fauntleroys lived in was their own, and Barbara wished to continue in it. It was supposed that her sister would be moving to a farm in the parish of Eckford. That was now frustrated. "Never mind," said Barbara, in her easy way, "Lizzie can stop on with us; Travice won't mind it, and I shall like it. If we find afterwards that it does not answer, different arrangements can be made."

The Miss Fauntleroys were generous in the

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matter of Benjamin Carr. Those others who had been present were generous, even Mrs. Dundyke. The identification of the gentleman with the Mr. Hardcastle, of Geneva memory, was not allowed to transpire: they all had regard to the feelings of the squire and his family. It was fortunate that the only servant in the room had gone from it with Benjamin Carr's over-coat, and Barbara had had the presence of mind to slip the bolt of the door. Mr. Ben Carr, however, thought it well to take a tour just at this time, and he did not show his face in Westerbury previous to his departure.

Lucy Arkell was solicited to be one of the bridesmaids; but Lucy declined. Mildred remembered a wedding which *she* had declined to attend as bridesmaid. How little, how little did she think that the same cruel pain was swaying the motives of Lucy!

Lucy and her aunt saw but little now of the Arkells. Travice never called; Mr. Arkell, full of trouble, confined himself to his home; and Mrs. Arkell had not entered the house since the rebuff given her by Mrs. Dundyke. Lucy held aloof from them; and Mildred certainly did not go there of her own accord. It therefore came to pass that they heard little news of the doings there, except what might be dropped by chance callers-in.

And now, as if Mildred had really been gifted with prevision, Tom Palmer made an offer of his

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hand and heart to Lucy. Lucy's response was by no means a dignified one—she burst out crying. Mildred, in surprise, asked what was the matter, and Lucy said she had not thought her old friend Tom could have been so unkind. Unkind! But the result was, that Lucy refused him in the most positive manner, then and for always. Mildred began to think that she could not understand Lucy.

There was a grand party given one night at Mrs. Arkell's, and they went to that. Mildred accepted the invitation without consulting Lucy. The Palmers were there; and Travice treated Tom very cavalierly. In fact, that word is an appropriate one to characterise his general behaviour to everybody throughout the evening. And, so far as anybody saw, he never once went near Miss Fauntleroy, with the exception that he took her into the supper room. Mr. Arkell did not appear until quite late in the evening. It was said he had an engagement. So he had, with men of business; while the revelry was going on in doors, he was in his counting-house, endeavouring to negotiate for a loan of money, in which he was not-successful. Little heart had he at ten o'clock to go in and dress himself and enter upon that scene of gaiety. Mildred exchanged but a few sentences with him, but she thought he was in remarkably low spirits.

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"Are you not well, William?" she asked.

"I have a headache, Mildred."

It was a day or two after this, and but a few days previous to the completion of the wedding, when unpleasant rumours, touching the solvency of the good old house of George Arkell and Son, reached the ears of Miss Arkell. They were whispered to her by Mr. Palmer, the old friend of the family.

"It is said their names will be in the Gazette the day after to-morrow, unless some foreign help can come to them."

Miss Arkell sat, deeply shocked; and poor Lucy's colour went and came, showing the effect the news had upon her.

"I had no idea that they were in embarrassment," said Mildred.

"It is so. You see, this wedding of young Travice Arkell's, that is to bring so much money into the family, has been delayed too long," observed Mr. Palmer. "It is said now that Travice, poor fellow, has an unconquerable antipathy to his bride, and though he

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consented to the alliance to save his family, he has been unable to bring his mind to conclude it. While the grass grows, the steed starves, you know."

"Miss Fauntleroy was willing that her money should be sacrificed."

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"It would not have been sacrificed, not a penny of it; but the use of it would have enabled the house to redeem, its own money, and bring its affairs to a satisfactory close. Had there been any risk to the money, William Arkell would not have agreed to touch it: you know his honourable nature. However, through the protracted delay—which Travice will no doubt reflect sharply upon himself for—the marriage and the money will come too late to save them."

Mr. Palmer departed, and Lucy sat like one in a dream. Her aunt glanced at her, and mused, and glanced again. "What are you thinking of, Lucy," she asked?

Lucy burst into tears. "Aunt, I was thinking what a blight it is to be poor! If I had thousands, I would willingly devote them all to save Mr. Arkell. Papa told me, when he lay dying, how his cousin William had helped him from time to time; had saved his home more than once; and had never been paid back again."

"And suppose you *had* money—attend to me, Lucy, for I wish a serious answer—suppose you were in possession of money, would you be really willing to sacrifice a portion of it, to save this good friend, William Arkell?"

"All, aunt, all!" she answered, eagerly, "and think it no sacrifice."

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"Then put on your bonnet, Lucy, child," returned Miss Arkell, "and come with me."

They went forth to the house of Mr. Arkell; and as it turned out, the visit was opportune, for Mrs. Arkell was away, dining from home. Mr. Arkell was in a little back parlour, looking over accounts and papers, with his son. The old man—and he was looking an old man that evening, with trouble, not with years—rose in surprise when he saw who were his visitors, and Travice's hectic colour went and came. Mildred had never been in the room since she was a young woman, and it called up painful recollections. It was the twilight hour of the evening: that best hour, of all the twenty-four, for any embarrassing communication.

"William," began Miss Arkell, seating herself by her cousin, and speaking in a low tone, "we have heard it whispered that your affairs are temporarily involved. Is it so?"

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"The world will soon know it, Mildred, above a whisper."

"It is even so then! What has led to it?"

"Oh, Mildred! can you ask what has led to it, when you look at the misery and distress everywhere around us? Search the *Gazette* for the past years, and see how many names you will find in it, who once stood as high as ours! The only wonder is, that we have not yet gone with the

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stream. It is a hard case, Mildred, when we have toiled all our lives, that the labour should come to nothing at last," he continued; "that our closing years, which ought to be given to thoughts of another world, must be distracted with the anxious cares of this."

"Is your difficulty serious, or only temporary?" resumed Miss Arkell.

"It ought to be only temporary," he replied; "but the worst is, I cannot, at the present moment, command my resources. We have kept on manufacturing, hoping for better times; and, to tell you the truth, Mildred, I could not reconcile it to my conscience to turn off my old workmen to beggary. There was Travice, too. I have a heavy stock of goods on hand; to the amount of some thousands; and this locks up my diminished capital. I am still worth what would cover my business liabilities twice over—and I have no others—but I cannot avail myself of it for present emergencies. I have turned every stone, Mildred, to keep my head above water: and I believe I can struggle no longer."

"What amount of money would effectually relieve you?" asked Miss Arkell.

"About three thousand pounds," he replied, answering the question without any apparent interest.

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"Then to-morrow morning vouchers for that sum shall be placed in the Westerbury bank at your disposal. *And for double that sum, if you require it."*

Mr. Arkell looked up in astonishment; and finally addressed to her the very words which he had once before done, in early life, upon a far different subject.

"You are dreaming, Mildred She remembered them; had she ever forgotten one word said to her on that eventful night? and sighed as she replied:

"This money is mine. I enjoyed, as you know, a most liberal salary for seven or eight-and-twenty years; and the money, as it came in, was placed out from the first to good

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interest; later, a part of it to good use. Lady Dewsbury also bequeathed me a munificent sum by her will; so that altogether I am worth—"

His excessive surprise could not let her continue. That Mildred had saved just sufficient to live upon, he had deemed probable; but not more. She had been always assisting Peter. He interrupted her with words to this effect.

Mildred smiled. "I could place at your disposal twelve thousand pounds, if needs must," she said. "I had a friend who helped me to lay out my money to advantage. It was Mr. Dundyke.

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William, *how* can I better use part of this money than by serving you?"

William Ark ell shook his head in deprecation. Not all at once, in the suddenness of the surprise, could he accept the idea of being assisted by Mildred. Peter had taken enough from her.

"Peter did not take enough from me," she firmly said. "It is only since Peter's death that I have learnt how straitened he always was—he kept it from me. I have been taking great blame to myself, for it seems to me that I ought to have guessed it—and I did not. But Peter is gone, and you are left. Oh, William, let me help you!"

"Mildred, I have no right to it from *you*."

She laid her hand upon his arm in her eagerness. She bent her gentle face, with its still sweet expression, near to him, and spoke in a whisper.

"*Let* me help you. It will be a recompense for the past pain of my lonely life."

His eyes looked straight into hers for the moment. "I have had my pain, too, Mildred."

"But this loan? you will take it. Lucy, speak up," added Miss Arkell, turning to her niece. "This money is willed to you, and will be yours sometime. Is it not at your wish that I come this evening, as well as at my own?"

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"Oh, sir," sobbed Lucy to Mr. Arkell, "take it all. Let my aunt retain what will be sufficient for her life, but keep none for me; I am young and healthy, and can go out and work for my living, as she has done. Take all the rest, and save the credit of the family."

William Arkell turned to Lucy, the tears trickling down his cheeks. She had taken off her bonnet on entering, and he laid his hand fondly on her head.

"Lucy, child, were this money exclusively your aunt's, I would not hesitate to make use of sufficient of it now to save my good name. In that case, I should wind up my affairs as soon as would be conveniently possible, retire from business, and see how far what is left to me would go towards a living. It would be enough; and my wife would have to bring her mind to think it so. But this sum that your aunt offers me—that you second—may be the very money she has been intending to hand over with you as a marriage portion. And what would your husband say at its being thus temporarily appropriated?"

"My husband!" exclaimed Lucy, in amazement; "a marriage portion for me! When I take the one, it will be time enough to think of the other." Miss Arkell, too, looked up with a questioning gaze, for she had quite forgotten the

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little romance—her romance—concerning young Mr. Palmer.

"I shall never marry," continued Lucy, in answer to Mr. Arkell's puzzled look. "I think I am better as I am."

"But, Lucy, you are going to marry. You are going to marry Tom Palmer."

Lucy laughed. She could not help it, she said, apologetically. She had laughed ever since he asked her, except just at the time, at the very idea of her marrying Tom Palmer, the little friend of her girlhood. Tom laughed at it himself now; and they were as good friends as before. "But how *did* you hear of it?" she exclaimed.

Travice came forward, his cheek pale, his lip quivering. He laid his fevered hand on Lucy's shoulder.

"Is this true, Lucy?" he whispered. "Is it true that you do not love Tom Palmer?"

"Love him!" cried Lucy, indignantly, sad reproach in her eye, as she turned it on Travice. "You have seen us together hundreds of times; did you ever detect anything in my manner to induce you to think I 'loved' him?"

"*I* loved *you*" murmured Travice, for he read that reproach aright, and the scales which had obscured his eyes fell from them, as by magic. "I have long loved you—deeply, passionately. My

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brightest hopes were fixed oil you; the heyday visions of all my future existence represented you by my side, my wife. But these misfortunes and losses came thick and fast upon my father. They told me at home here, *he* told me, that I was poor and that

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you were poor, and that it would be madness in us to think of marrying then, as it would have been. So I said to myself that I would be patient, and wait—would be content with loving you in secret, as I had done—with seeing you daily as a relative. And then the news burst upon me that you were to marry Tom Palmer; and I thought what a fool I had been to fancy you cared for me; for I knew that you were not one to marry where you did not love."

The tears were coursing down her cheeks. "But I don't understand," she said. "It is but just, as it were, that Tom has asked me; and you must be speaking of sometime ago."

The fault was Mildred's. Not quite all at once could they understand it; not until later.

"I shall never marry; indeed I shall never marry," murmured Lucy, as she yielded for the moment to the passionate embrace in which Travice clasped her, and kissed away her tears of anguish. "My lot in life must be like my aunt's now, unloving and unloved."

"Oh, is there no escape for us!" exclaimed

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Travice, wildly, as all the painful embarrassment of his position rushed over his mind. "Can we not fly together, Lucy—fly to some remote desert place, and leave care and sorrow behind us? Ere the lapse of many days, another woman expects to be my wife! Is there no way of escape for us?"

None; none. The misery of Travice Arkell and his cousin was sealed: their prospects, so far as this world went, were blighted. There were no means by which he could escape the marriage that was rushing on to him with the speed of wings: no means known in the code of honour. And for Lucy, what was left but to live on unwedded, burying her crushed affections within herself, as her aunt had done?—live on, and, by the help of time, strive to subdue that love which was burning in her heart for the husband of another, rendering every moment of the years that would pass, one continued, silent agony!

"The same fate—the same fate!" moaned Mildred Arkell to herself, whilst Lucy sunk into a chair and covered her pale face with her trembling hands. "I might have guessed it! Like aunt, like niece. She must go through life as I have done—and bear—and bear! Strange, that the younger brother's family, throughout two generations, should have cast their shadow for evil upon that of the elder! A blight must have fallen upon my father's race;

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but, perhaps in mercy, Lucy is the last of it. If I could have foreseen this, years ago, the same atmosphere in which lived Travice Arkell should not have been breathed by Lucy. The same fate! the same fate!"

Lucy was sobbing silently behind her hands. Travice stood, the image of despair. Mildred turned to him.

"Then you do not love Miss Fauntleroy?"

"Love her! I *hate* her!" was the answer that burst from him in his misery. "May Heaven forgive me for the false part I shall have to play!"

But there was no escape for him. Mildred knew there was not; Mr. Arkell knew it; and his heart ached for the fate of this, his dearly-loved son.

"My boy," he said, "I would willingly die to save you—die to secure your happiness. I did not know this sacrifice was so very bitter;"

Travice cast back a look of love. "You have done all you could for me; do not *you* take it to heart. I may get to bear it in time."

"Get to *bear* it!" What a volume of expression was in the words! Mildred rose and approached Mr. Arkell.

"We had better be going, William. But oh! why did you let it come to this? Why did you not make a confidante of me?"

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"I did not know you could help me, Mildred; indeed I did not."

"I will tell you who would have been as thankful to help you as I am—and that is your sister-in-law, Betsey Dundyke. She could have helped you more largely than I can."

"But not more lovingly. God bless you, Mildred!" he whispered, detaining her for a moment as she was following Travice and Lucy out.

Her eyes swam with tears as she looked up at him; her hands rested confidingly in his.

"If you knew what the happiness of serving you is, William! If you knew what a recompence this moment is for the bitter past!"

"God bless you, Mildred!" he repeated, "God bless you for ever."

She drew her veil over her face to pass out, just as she had drawn it after that interview, following his marriage, in the years gone by.

And so the credit of the good and respected old house was saved; saved by Mildred. Had it taken every farthing she had amassed; so that she must have gone forth again, in her middle age, and laboured for a living, she had rejoiced to do it! William Arkell had not waited until now, to know the value of the heart he had thrown away.

And the marriage day drew on. But before it dawned, Westerbury knew that it would bring

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no marriage with it. Miss Fauntleroy knew it. For the bridegroom was lying between life and death.

Of a sensitive, nervous, excitable temperament, the explanation of that evening, taken in conjunction with the dreadful tension to which his mind had been latterly subjected, far greater than any one had suspected, was too much for Travice Arkell. Conscious that Lucy Arkell passionately loved him; knowing now that she had the money, without which he could not marry, and that part of that money was actually advanced to save his father's credit; knowing also, that he must never more think of her, but must tie himself to one whom he abhorred; that he and Lucy must never again see each other in life, but as friends, and not too much of that, he became ill. Reflection preyed upon him: remorse for doubting Lucy, and hastening to offer himself to Miss Fauntleroy, seated itself in his mind, and ere the day fixed for his marriage arrived, he was laid up with brain fever.

With brain fever! In vain they tried their remedies: their ice to his head; their cooling medicines; their blisters to his feet. His unconscious ravings were, at moments, distressing to hear: his deep love for Lucy; his impassioned adjurations to her to fly with him, and be at peace; his shuddering hatred of Miss Fauntleroy. On the

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last day of his life, as the doctors thought, Lucy was sent for, in the hope that her presence might calm him. But he did not know her: he was past knowing any one.

"Lucy!" he would utter, in a hollow voice, unconscious that she or any one else was present—"Lucy! we will leave the place for ever. Have you got your things ready? We will go where *she* can't find us out, and force me to her. Lucy! where are you? Lucy!"

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And Mrs. Arkell! She was the most bitterly repentant. Many a sentence is spoken lightly, many an idle threat, many a reckless wish; but the vain folly is not often brought home to the heart, as it was to Mrs. Arkell.

"I would pray Heaven to let me follow you to your grave, Travice, rather than see you marry Lucy Arkell." *He* was past feeling or remembering the words; but they came home to *her*. She cast herself upon the bed, praying wildly for forgiveness, clinging to him in all the agony of useless remorse.

"Oh, what matters honour; what matters anything in comparison with his precious life!" she cried, with streaming eyes. "Tell him, Lucy,—perhaps he will understand you—that he shall indeed marry you if he will but set his mind at rest, and get well; he shall never again see Miss

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Fauntleroy. Lucy! are there no means of calming him? If this terrible excitement lasts, it will kill him. Tell him it is you he shall marry, not Barbara Fauntleroy."

"I cannot tell him so," said Lucy, from the very depth of her aching heart. "It would not be right to deceive him, even now. There can be no escape, if he lives, from the marriage with Miss Fauntleroy."

A few more hours, and the crisis came. The handsome, the intelligent, the refined Travice Arkell, lay still, in a lethargy that was taken to be that of death. It went forth to Westerbury that he was dead; and Lucy took her last look at him, and walked home with her aunt Mildred—to a home, which, however well supplied it was now with the world's comforts, could only seem to her one of desolation. Lucy Arkell's eyes were dry; dry with that intensity of anguish that admits not of tears, and her brain seemed little less confused than *his* had done, in these last few days of life.

Mildred sat down in her home, and seemed to see into the future. She saw herself and her niece living on in their quiet and monotonous home; her own form drooping with the weight of years, Lucy's approaching middle life. "The old maids" they would be slightingly termed by those who knew little indeed of their inward history. And

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in their lonely hearts, enshrined in its most hidden depths, the image that respectively filled each in early life, the father and son, William and Travice Arkell, never, never replaced by any other, but holding their own there so long as time should last.

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Seated by her fire on that desolate night, she saw it as in a vision.

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CHAPTER XVI.

MISS FAUNTLEROY LOVED AT LAST.

BUT Travice Arkell did not die. The lethargy that was thought to be death proved to be only the exhaustion of spent nature. When the first faint indications of his awaking from it appeared, the physicians said it was possible that he might recover. He lay for some days in a critical state, hopes and fears about equally balancing, and then he began to get visibly stronger.

"I have been nearly dead, have I not?" he asked one day of his father, who was sitting by the bed.

"But you are better now, Travice. You will get well. Thank God!"

"Yes, the danger's over. I feel that, myself. Dear father! how troubled you have been!"

"Travice, I could hardly have borne to lose you," he murmured, leaning over him. "And—*thus*."

"I shall soon be well again; soon be strong.

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Be stronger, I hope," and Travice faintly pressed the hand in which his lay, "to go through the duties that lie before me, than I was previously."

Mr. Arkell sighed from the very depths of his heart. If his son could but have looked forward to arise to a life of peace, instead of pain!

Mildred was with the invalid often. Mrs. Dundyke, who, concerned at the imminent danger of one, in whom she had always considered that she held a right, had hastened to Westerbury when the news was sent to her, likewise used to go and sit with him. But not Lucy. It was instinctively felt by all that the sight of Lucy could only bring the future more palpably before him. It might have been so different!

Mrs. Dundyke saw Mr. Arkell in private.

"Is there *no* escape for him?" she asked; "no escape from this marriage with Miss Fauntleroy? I would give all I am worth to effect it."

"And I would give my life," was the agitated answer. "There is none. Honour must be kept before all things. Travice himself knows there is none; neither would he accept any, were it offered out of the line of strict honour."

"It is a life's sacrifice," said Mrs. Dundyke. "It is sacrificing both him and Lucy."

"Had I possessed but the faintest idea of the sacrifice it really was, even for him, it should

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never have been contemplated, no matter what the cost," was Mr. Arkell's answer.

"And there was no need of it. If you had but known that! My fortune is a large one now, and the greater portion of it I intended for Travice."

"Betsey!"

"I intended it for no one else. Perhaps I ought to have been more open in expressing my intentions; but you know how I have been held aloof by Charlotte. And I did not suppose that Travice was in necessity of any sort. If he marries Miss Fauntleroy, the half of what I die possessed of will be his; the other half will go to Lucy Arkell. Were it possible that he could marry Lucy, they'd not wait for my death to be placed above the frowns of the world."

"Oh Betsey, how generous you are! But there is no escape for him," added Mr. Arkell, with a groan at the bitter fact. "He cannot desert Miss Fauntleroy."

It was indisputably true. And that buxom bride-elect herself seemed to have no idea that anybody wanted to be off the bargain, for her visits to the house were frequent, and her spirits were unusually high.

You all know the old rhyme about a certain gentleman's penitence when he was sick; though it may not be deemed the perfection of good manners

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to quote it here. It was a very apt illustration of the feelings of Mrs. Arkell. While her son lay sick unto death, she would have married him to Lucy Arkell; but no sooner was the danger of death removed, and he advancing towards convalescence, than the old pride—avarice—love of rule—call it what you will—resumed sway within her; and she had almost been ready to say again that a mouldy grave would be preferable for him, rather than desertion of Miss Fauntleroy. In fine, the old state of things was obtaining sway, both as to Mrs. Arkell's opinions and to the course of events.

"When can I see him?" asked Miss Fauntleroy one day.

Not the first time, this, that she had put the question, and it a little puzzled Mrs. Arkell to answer it. It was only natural and proper, considering the relation in which each stood

to the other, that Miss Fauntleroy should see him; but Mrs. Arkell had positively not dared to hint at such a visit to her son.

“Travice sits up now, does he not?” continued the young lady.

“Yes, he has sat up a little in the afternoon these two days past. We call it sitting up, Barbara, but, in point of fact, he lies the whole time on the sofa. He is not strong enough to sit up.”

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“Then I’m sure I may see him. It might not have been proper, I suppose, to pay him a visit in bed,” she added, laughing loudly; “but there can’t be any impropriety now. I want to see him, Mrs. Arkell; I want it very particularly.”

“Of course, Barbara; I can understand that you do. I should, in your place. The only consideration is, whether it may not agitate him too much.”

“Not it,” said Barbara. “I wish you’d go and ask him when I may come. I suppose he is up now?”

Mrs. Arkell had no ready plea for refusal, and she went upstairs there and then. Travice was lying on the sofa, exhausted with the exertion of getting to it.

“My dear, I think you look better,” Mrs. Arkell began, not altogether relishing her task; and she gently pushed the bits of brown hair, now beginning to grow again, from the damp, white forehead. “Do you feel so?”

He drew her fingers for a moment into his, and held them there. He was always ready to respond to his mother’s little tokens of affection. She had opposed him in the matter of Lucy Arkell, but he was ever generous, ever just, and he blamed circumstances more than he blamed her.

“I feel a great deal better than I did a week ago. I shall get on now.”

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Mrs. Arkell paused. “Some one wants to see you, Travice.”

The hectic came into his white face as she spoke—a wild rush of crimson. Was it possible that he thought she spoke of Lucy? The idea occurred to Mrs. Arkell.

“My dear, it is Barbara. She has asked to see you a great many times. She is downstairs now.”

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Travice raised his thin hand, and laid it for a moment over his face, over his closed eyes. Was he praying for help in his pain?—for strength to go through what must be gone through—his duty in the future; and to do it bravely?

"Travice, my dear, but for this illness she would now have been your wife. It is only natural that she should wish to come and see you."

"Yes, of course," he said, removing his hand, and speaking very calmly; "I have been expecting that she would."

"When shall she come up? Now?"

He did not speak for a moment.

"Not now; not to-day; the getting up seemed to tire me more than it has done yet. Tell her so from me. Perhaps she will take the trouble to call again to-morrow, and come up then."

The message was carried to Miss Fauntleroy, and she did not fail in the appointment. Mrs. Arkell took her upstairs without notice to her son;

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possibly she feared some excuse again. The sofa was drawn near the fire as before, and Travice lay on it; had he been apprised of the visit, he might have tried to sit up to receive her.

She was very big as usual, and very grand. A rich watered lilac silk dress, looped up above a scarlet petticoat; a velvet something on her arms and shoulders, of which I really don't know the name, covered with glittering jet trimmings; and a spangled bonnet with fancy feathers. As she sailed into the room, her petticoats, that might have covered the dome of St. Paul's, knocked over a little brass stand and kettle, some careless attendant having left them on the carpet, near the wall. There was no damage, except noise, for the kettle was empty.

"That's my crinoline!" cried the hearty, good-humoured girl. "Never mind; there's worse misfortunes at sea."

"No, Travice, you had better not rise," interposed Mrs. Arkell, for he was struggling into a sitting position. "Barbara will excuse it; she knows how weak you are."

"And I'll not allow you to rise, that's more," said Barbara, laying her hand upon him. "I am not come to make you worse, but to make you better—if I can."

Mrs. Arkell, not altogether easy yet upon

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the feelings of Travice as to the visit, anxious, as we all are with anything on our consciences, to get away, invited Barbara to a chair, and hastened from the room. Travice tried to receive her as he ought, and put out his hand with a wan smile.
"How are you, Barbara?"
There was no reply, except that the thin hand was taken between both of hers. He looked up, and saw that her eyes were swimming in tears. A moment's struggle, and they came forth with a burst.
"There! it's of no good. What a fool I am!"
Just a minute or two's indulgence to the burst, and it was over. Miss Fauntleroy rubbed away the traces, and her broad face wore its smiles again. She drew a chair close, and sat down in front of him.
"I was not prepared to see you look like this, Travice. How dreadfully it has pulled you down!"
She was gazing at his face as she spoke. Her entrance had not called up anything of colour or emotion to illumine it. The transparent skin was drawn over the delicate features, and the refinement, always characterizing it, was more conspicuous than it had ever been. No two faces, perhaps, could present a greater contrast than his did, with the broad, vulgar, hearty, and in a sense, handsome one of hers.
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"Yes, it has pulled me down. At one period there was little chance of my life, I believe. But they no doubt told you all at the time. I daresay you knew more of the different stages of the danger than I did."
"And what was it that brought it on?" asked Miss Fauntleroy, untying her bonnet, and throwing back the strings. "Brain fever is not a common disorder; it does not go about in the air!"
There was a slight trace of colour now on the thin cheeks, and she noticed it. Travice faintly shook his head to disclaim any knowledge on his own part.
"It is not very often that we know how these illnesses are brought on. My chief concern now "—and he looked up at her with a smile—"must be to find out how I can best throw it off."

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"I have been very anxious for some days to see you," she resumed, after a pause. "Do you know what I have come to say?"

"No," he said, rather languidly.

"But I'll tell you first what I heard. When you were lying in that awful state between life and death—and it is an awful state, Travice, the danger of passing, without warning, to the presence of one's Maker—I heard that it was *I* who had brought on the fever."

His whole face was flushed now—a consciousness

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of the past had risen up so vividly within him. *"You!"* he uttered. "What do you mean?"

"Ah! Travice, I see how it has been. I know all. You have tried to like me, and you cannot. Be still, be calm; I do not reproach you even in thought. You loved Lucy Arkell long before anybody thought of me, in connection with you; and I declare I honour the constancy of your heart in keeping true to her. Now, if you are not tranquil I shall get my ears boxed by your doctors, and I'll not come and see you again."

"But—"

"You just be quiet. I'm going to do the talking, and you the listening. There, I'll hold your hands in mine, as some old, prudent spirit might, to keep you still—a sister, say. That's all I shall ever be to you, Travice."

His chest was beginning to heave with emotion.

"I have a great mind to run away, and leave you to fancy you are going to be tied to me after all! *Pray* calm yourself. Oh! Travice, why did you not tell me the truth—that you had no shadow of liking for me; that your love for another was stronger than death? I should have been a little mortified at first, but not for long. It is not your fault; you did all you could; and it has nearly killed you—"

"Who has been telling you this?" he interrupted.

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"Never mind. Perhaps somebody, perhaps nobody. It's the town's talk, and that's enough. Do you think I could be so wicked and selfish a woman as to hold you to your engagement, knowing this? No! Never shall it be said of Barbara Fauntleroy, in this or in aught else, that she secured her own happiness at the expense of anybody else's."

"But Barbara"—

"Don't 'Barbara' me, but listen," she interrupted playfully, laying her finger on his lips. "At present you hate me, and I don't say that your heart may not have cause; but I want to turn that hatred into love. If I can't get it as a wife, Travice, I may as a friend. I like you very much, and I can't afford to lose you quite. Heaven knows in what way I might have lost you, had we been married; or what would have been the ending."

He lay looking at her, not altogether comprehending the words, in his weakness.

"You shall marry Lucy as soon as you are strong enough; and a little bird has whispered me a secret that I fancy you don't know yet—that you'll have plenty and plenty of money, more than I should have brought you. We'll have a jolly wedding; and I'll be bridesmaid, if she'll let me."

Barbara had talked till her eyes were running down with tears. His lashes began to glisten.

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"I couldn't do it, Barbara," be whispered; "I couldn't do it."

"Perhaps not; but I can, and shall. Listen, you difficult old fellow, and set your mind and your conscience at rest. Before that great and good Being, who has spared you through this death-sickness, and has spared *me*, perhaps, a life of unhappiness, I solemnly swear that I will not marry you! I don't think I have much pride, but I've some; and I am above stooping to accept a man that all the world knows hates me like poison. I'd not have you now, Travice, though there were no Lucy Arkell in the world. A pretty figure I should cut on our wedding day, if I did hold you to your bargain! The town might follow us to church with a serenade of marrowbones and cleavers, as they do the butchers. I'll not leave you until you tell me all is at an end between us—on your side as on mine."

"It is not right, Barbara. It is not right that I should treat you so."

"I'll not leave you until you tell me all is at an end."

"I *can't* tell it you."

"I'll not leave you until you tell me all is at an end," she persistently repeated. "No, not if I have to stop in the room all the blessed night, as your real sister might. What

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do I care for their fads and their punctilios? Here I'll stop."

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He looked up in her face with a smile. It had more of *love* in it than Barbara had ever seen expressed to her from him. She bent down and kissed his lips.
“There! that’s an earnest of our new friendship. Not that I shall be giving you kisses in future, or expect any from you. Lucy might not like it, you know, or you either. I don’t say I should, for I may be marrying on my own score. We might have been an estranged man and wife, Travice, wishing each other dead and buried and perhaps not gone to heaven, every day of our lives. We will be two firm friends. You don’t reject *me*, you know; *I* reject you, and you can’t help yourself.”
“We will be friends always, Barbara,” he said, from the depths of his inmost heart, as he held her warm hand on his breast. “I am beginning to love you as one already.”
“There’s a darling fellow! Yes, I should call you so though Lucy were present. Oh, Travice! it’s best as it is! A little bit of smart to get over—and that’s what I have been doing the past week or so—and we begin on a truer basis. I never was suited to you, and that’s the truth. But we can be the best friends living. It won’t spoil my appetite, Travice; I’m not of that flimsy temperament
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Fancy *me* getting brain-fever through being crossed in love!”
She laughed out loud at the thought—a ringing, merry laugh. It put Travice at ease on the score of the “smart.”
“And now I’m going into the manufactory to tell Mr. Arkell that you and I are *two*. If he asks for the cause, perhaps I shall whisper to him that I’ve found out you won’t suit me and I prefer to look out for somebody that will; and when Mrs. Arkell asks it me, ‘We’ve split, ma’am—split,’ I shall tell her. Travice! Travice! did you really think I could stand, knowing it, in the way of anybody’s life’s happiness?”
He drew her face down to his. He kissed it as he had never kissed it before.
“Friends for life! Firm, warm friends for life, you and I and Lucy! God bless you, Barbara!”
“Mind! I stand out for a jolly ball at the wedding! Lizzie and I mean to dance all night. Fancy us!” she added, with a laugh that rang through the room, “the two forlorn damsels that were to have been brides ourselves! Never mind; we shan’t die for the lack of husbands, if we choose to accept them. But it’s to be hoped our second ventures will turn out more substantial than our first.”

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And Travice Arkell, nearly overcome with emotion
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and weakness, closed his eyes and folded his hands as she went laughing from the room, his lips faintly moving.
“What can I do unto God for all the benefits that He hath done unto me?”
It was during this illness of Travice Arkell’s that a circumstance took place which caused some slight degree of excitement in Westerbury. Edward Blissett Hughes, who had gone away from the town between twenty and thirty years before, and of whom nobody had beard much, if any, tidings of since, suddenly made his appearance in it again. His return might not have given rise to much comment, but for the very prominent manner in which his name had been brought forward in connexion with the assize cause; and perhaps no one was more surprised than Mr. Hughes himself when he found how noted he had become.
It matters not to tell how the slim working man of three or four-and-thirty, came back a round, comfortable, portly gentleman of sixty, with a smart, portly wife, and well to do in the world. Well to do?—nay, wealthy. Or how he had but come for a transitory visit to his native place, and would soon be gone again. All that matters not to us; and his return needed not to have been mentioned at all, but that he explained one or two points in the past
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history, which had never been made quite clear to Westerbury.
One of the first persons to go to see him was William Arkell; and it was from that gentleman Mr. Hughes first learnt the details of the dispute and the assize trial.
Robert Carr had been more *malin*—as the French would express it—than people gave him credit for. That few hours’ journey of his to London, three days previous to the flight, had been taken for one sole purpose—the procuring of a marriage licence. Edward Hughes, vexed at the free tone that the comments of the town were assuming in reference to his young sister, made a tardy interference, and gave Robert Carr his choice—the breaking off the acquaintance, or a marriage. Robert Carr chose the latter alternative, stipulating that it should be kept a close secret; and he ran up to town for the licence. Whether he really meant to use it, or whether he only bought it to appease in a degree the aroused precautions of the brother, cannot be told. That he certainly did not

intend to make use of it so soon, Edward Hughes freely acknowledged now. The hasty marriage, the flight following upon it, grew out of that last quarrel with his father. From the dispute at dinner-time, Robert went straight to the Hughes's house, saw Martha Ann, got her consent, and then sought the

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brother at his workshop, as Edward Hughes still phrased it, and arranged the plans with him for the following morning. Sophia Hughes was of necessity made a party to the scheme, but she was not told of it until night; and Mary they did not tell at all, not daring to trust her. Brother and sister bound themselves to secresy, for the sake of the fortune that Robert Carr would assuredly lose if the marriage became known; and they suffered the taint to fall on their sister's name, content to know that it was undeserved, and to look forward to the time when all should be cleared up by the reconciliation between father and son, or by the death of Mr. Carr. They were anxious for the marriage, so far beyond anything they could have expected, and, consequently, did not stand at a little sacrifice. Human nature is the same all the world over, and ambition is inherent in it. Robert Carr, on his part, risked something—the chance that, with all their precautions, the fact of the marriage might become known. That it did not, the event proved, as you know; but circumstances at that moment especially favoured them. The rector of St. James the Less was ill; the Reverend Mr. Bell was Robert Carr's firm friend and kept the secret, and there was no clerk. They stole into the church one by one on the winter's morning. Mr. Bell was there before daylight, got it open, and waited

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for them. The moment Mary Hughes was out of the house, at half-past seven, in pursuance of her engagement at Mrs. Arkell's, Martha Ann was so enveloped in cloaks and shawls that she could not have been readily recognised, had anybody met her, and sent off alone to the church. Her brother and sister followed by degrees. Robert Carr was already there; and as soon as the clock struck eight, the service was performed. One circumstance, quite a little romance in itself, Mr. Hughes mentioned now; and but for a fortunate help in the time of need, the marriage might, after all, not have been completed. Robert Carr had forgotten the ring. Not only Robert, but all of them. That important essential had never once occurred to their thoughts, and none had been bought. The service was arrested midway for the want of it. A few moments'

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consternation, and then Sophia Hughes came to the rescue. She had been in the habit of wearing her mother's wedding-ring since her death, and she took it from her finger, and the service was completed with it. The party stole away from the church by degrees, one by one, as they had gone to it, and escaped observation. Few people were abroad that dark, dull morning; and the church stood in a lonely, unfrequented part. The getting away afterwards in Mr. Arkell's carriage was easy.

"Ah," said Mr. Arkell now to the brother, "I

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did not forgive Robert Carr that trick he played upon me for a long while, it so vexed my father. He thought the worst, you know; and for your sister's sake, could not forgive Robert Carr. Had he known of the marriage, it would have been a different thing."

"No one knew of it—not a soul," said Mr. Hughes. "Had we told one, we might as well have told all. I and Sophia knew that we could keep our own counsel; but we could not answer beyond ourselves—not even for Mary."

"Could you not trust her?"

"Trust her!" echoed Mr. Hughes. "Her tongue was like a sieve: it let out everything. She missed mother's ring off Sophia's finger. Sophia said she had lost it—she didn't know what else to say—and before two days were out, the town-crier came to ask if she'd not like it cried. Mary had talked of the loss high and low."

"Did she never know that there had been a marriage?" asked Mr. Arkell.

"Quite at the last, when she had but a day or two left of life. Sophia told her then; she had grieved much over Martha Ann, and was grieving still. Sophia told her, and it sent her easy to her grave. Soon after she died, Sophia married Jem Pycroft, and they came out to me. She's dead now. So that there's only me left out of the four of us," added the returned traveller, after a pause.

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"And Martha Ann's eldest son became a clergyman, you say; and he died! I should like to see the other two children she left. Do they live in Rotterdam?"

"I am not sure; but you would no doubt hear of them there. They sold off Marmaduke Carr's property when they came into it, after the trial. It's not to be wondered at: they had no pleasant associations connected with Westerbury."

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Edward Hughes burst into a laugh. “What a blow it must have been for stingy John Carr!”

“It was that,” said Mr. Arkell. “He is always pleading poverty; but there’s no doubt he has been saving money ever since the old squire died and he came into possession. “That can’t be far short of twenty years now.”

“Twenty years! How time flies in this world, sir!” was the concluding remark of Mr. Hughes.

There was no drawback thrown in the way of *this* marriage of Travice Arkell’s, by himself, or by anybody else; and the day for it was fixed as soon as he became convalescent. Mrs. Arkell had to reconcile herself to it in the best way she could; and if she found it a pill to swallow, it was at least a gilded one: Mrs. Dundyke’s money would go to him and Lucy—and there was Miss Arkell’s as well. They would be placed above the frowns of the world the hour they married, and Travice could turn amateur astronomer at will.

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On the day before that appointed for the ceremony, Lucy, in passing through the cloisters with Mrs. Dundyke, from some errand in the town, stopped as she came to that gravestone in the cloisters. She bent her head over it, for she could hardly read the inscription—what with the growing dusk, and what with her blinding tears.

“Oh, Aunt Betsey”—she had caught the name from Travice—“if he had but lived! If he could but be with us to-morrow!”

Aunt Betsey touched with her gentle finger the sorrowing face. “He is better off, Lucy.”

“Yes, I know. But in times of joy it seems hard to remember it. I wonder—I hope it is not wrong to wonder it—whether he and mamma are always with me in spirit? I have grown to think so.”

“The thinking it will not do you harm, Lucy.”

“Oh, was it not a cruel thing, Aunt Betsey, for that boy Lewis to throw him down! He was forgiven by everybody at the time; but in my heart—I won’t say it. But for that, Henry might be alive now. They left the college school afterwards. Did you know that?”

“The Lewises? Yes; I think I heard it.”

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"A reaction set in for Henry after he died, and the boys grew shy and cool to the two Lewises. In fact, they were sent to Coventry. They did not like it, and they left. The eldest went up to

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be in some office in London, and the youngest has gone to a private school."

"It is strange that the two great *inflicted* evils in your family and in mine, should have come from the Carrs!" exclaimed Mrs. Dundyke. "But, my dear, do not let us get into a sorrowful train of thought to-day. And, all the sorrow we can give, cannot bring back to us those who are gone."

"I wish you could have seen him!" murmured Lucy. "He was so beautiful! he—"

"Here are people coming, my dear."

Lucy turned away, drying her eyes. A clerical dignitary and a young lady were advancing through the cloisters. As they met, the young lady bowed to Lucy, and the gentleman raised his shovel hat—not so much as to acquaintances, as because they were ladies passing through his cloisters.

"Who are they?" whispered Mrs. Dundyke, when the echo of their footsteps had died away.

"The dean and Miss Beauclerc. Aunt Betsey, she knew Henry so well! She came to see him in his coffin."

They were at Mr. Arkell's house, in the evening—Lucy, her aunt, and Mrs. Dundyke. The breakfast in the morning was to be given in it, Miss Arkell's house being small, and the carriages would drive there direct from St. James-the-Less. Mrs. Arkell, gracious now beyond everything, had sent

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for them to spend the last evening, and see the already laid-out table in the large drawing-room. She could not spare Travice that last evening, she said.

Oh, how it all came home to Mildred! She had gone to that house the evening before a wedding in the years gone by, taken to it perforce, because she dared make no plea of refusal. She had seen the laid-out table in the drawing-room then, just as she was looking down upon it now.

"Lucy's destiny is happier!" she unconsciously murmured.

"Did you speak, Mildred?"

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She raised her eyes to the questioner by her side, William Arkell. She had not observed that he was there.
"I?—Yes; I say Lucy's will be a happy destiny."
"Very happy," he assented, glancing at a group at the end, who were engaged in a hot and laughing dispute, as to the placing of the guests, Travice maintaining his own opinion against Aunt Betsey and Lucy. Travice looked very well now. His hair was long again; his face, delicate still—but it was in the nature of its features to be so—had resumed its hue of health. Lucy was radiant in smiles and blue ribbons, under the light of the chandelier.
"I begin to think that destinies are more equally apportioned than we are willing to imagine; that
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where there are fewer flowers there are fewer thorns," Mr. Arkell observed in a low tone. "There is a better life, Mildred, awaiting us hereafter."
"Ah, yes. Where there shall be neither neglect, nor disappointment, nor pain; where—"
"Here you are!" broke out a loud, hearty, laughing voice upon their ears. "I knew it was where I should find you. Lucy, I have been to your house after yon. Take my load off me, Travice."
Need you be told that the voice was Barbara Fauntleroy's? She came staggering in under the load: a something held out before her, nearly as tall as herself.
A beautiful epergne for the centre of the table, of solid silver. Travice was taking it from her, but awkwardly—he was one of the incapable ones, like poor Peter Arkell. Miss Fauntleroy rated him and pushed him away, and lifted it on the table herself, with her strong hands.
"It's our present to you two, mine and Lizzie's. You'll accept it, won't you, Lucy?"
Kindness invariably touched the chord of Lucy Arkell's feelings, perhaps because she had not been in the way of having a great deal of it shown to her in her past life. The tears were in her earnest eyes, as she gently took the hands of Miss Fauntleroy.
"I cannot thank yon as I ought. I—"
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"Thank me, child! It's not so much to thank me for. Doesn't it look well on the table, though? Mrs. Arkell must allow it to stand there for the breakfast."

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"For that, *and for all else*" whispered Lucy, with marked emotion, retaining the hands in her warm clasp. "You must let us show our gratitude to you always, Barbara."

Barbara Fauntleroy bent her full red lips on Lucy's fair forehead. "Our bargain—his and mine—was, that we were all three to be firm and fast friends through life, you know. Lucy, there's nobody in the world wishes you happier than I do. Jolly good luck to you both!"

"Thank you, Barbara," said Travice, who was standing by.

"And now, who'll come and release Lizzie?" resumed Miss Fauntleroy. "We shall have her rampant. She's in a fly at the door, and can't get out of it."

"Not get out of it!" repeated Mr. Arkell.

"Not a bit of it. It's filled with flower-pots from our hot-house. We thought perhaps you'd not have enough for the rooms, so we've brought a load. But Lizzie got into the fly first, you see, to pack them for bringing steadily, and she can't get out till they are out. I took care of the epergne, and Lizzie of the pots."

With a general laugh, everybody rushed to get

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to the imprisoned Lizzie. Lucy lingered a moment, ostensibly looking at the epergne, really drying her tears away. Travice came back to her.

He took her in his arms; he kissed the tears from her cheeks; he whispered words of the sweetest tenderness, asking what her grief was.

"Not grief, Travice—joy. I was thinking of the past. What would have become of us but for her generosity?"

"But for her generosity, Lucy, I should have been her husband now. I should never have held my darling in my arms. Yes, she was generous! God bless her always! I'll never hate anybody again, Lucy."

Lucy glanced up shyly at him, a smile parting her lips at the last words. And she put her hand within the arm of him who was soon to be her husband, as they went out in the wake of the rest, to rescue the flower-pots and Miss Lizzie Fauntleroy.

And Mr. St. John and the dean's daughter? Ah! not in this place can their after-history be given. But you may hear it sometime.

THE END.