

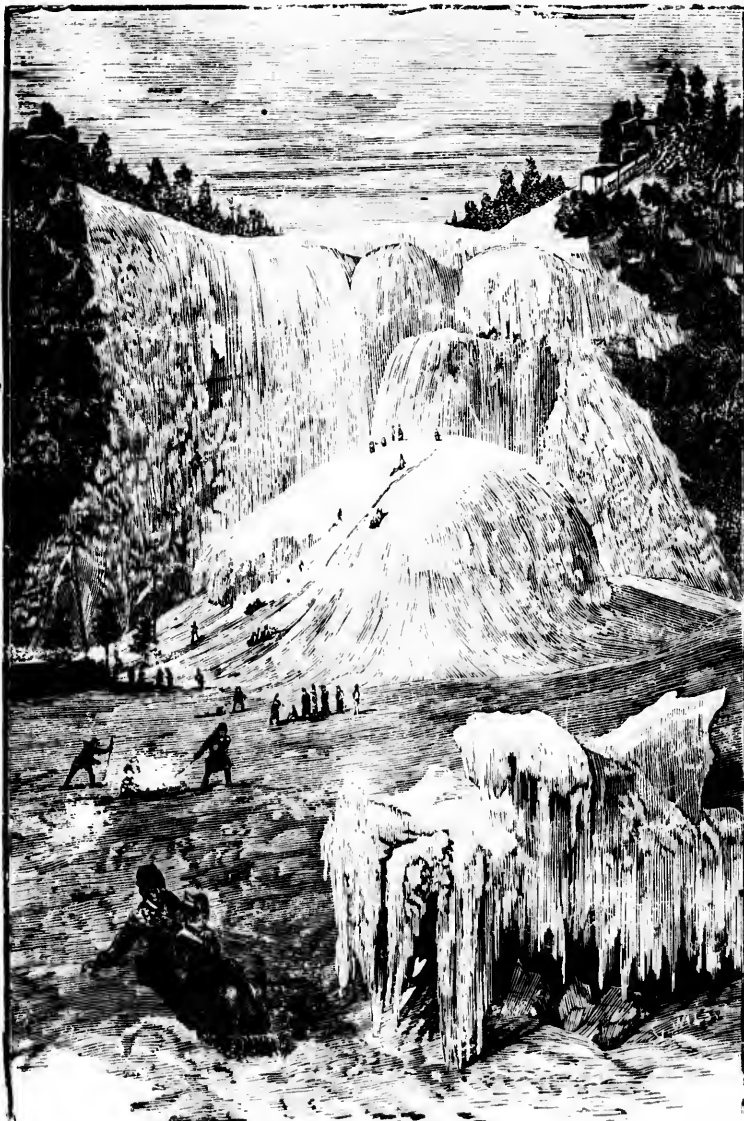
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SIR PETER PETTYSHAM.

A CANADIAN STORY.

"Aspiring beggary is wretchedness itself." — *Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield.*

CHAPTER I.

The Pettysham's were an exalted family in the supremely aristocratic city of Montreal. The blood of the *ancienne noblesse* flowed through their patrician veins though adulterated by each successive generation with a more plebeian, but proportionately more practical fluid. The seignorial family from which they were descended by the paternal side was an infinitely decreasing series, and, as time rolled on, the ancestral acres became so divided that if placed on end and planted on both sides, they might have sustained a childless couple of meagre appetites. But the quivers of the Pettyshams were full to bursting, and the olive branches came "as the leaves come when forests are blended." Consequently the practice of small economies was a school of adversity most beneficial to the young ladies of the family.

In fact, the Pettysham girls were perfectly phenomenal, as several of their acquaintances remarked, and conjecture was rife regarding the domestic economy of this remarkable household. Always neat and attractive in appearance, invariably *bien chaussés et bien gantés*, they moved as peers in a sphere far above their financial resources. They rigidly practised small economies, but, with a taste begotten of good breeding, as rigidly abstained from the magpie chatterings of a cheese-paring class who are prodigal of precious time in making the aforesaid small economies the staple of its conversation. No one ever heard of the marvellous bargains Mrs. Pettysham made in the auction rooms, and few of the secrets of her household were ever known to the world. The family were well aware that discretion was essential to social success, and she was shrewd enough to employ none but French Canadian servants, whose language and nationality kept them estranged from the English speaking Abigails of the neighborhood. And in this particular showed excellent judgment. She had a curt discouraging way of remarking when a servant ventured to speak of "her last place."

"I have no interest in their affairs"

This rebuke was conclusive and a great

many mistresses in all gossip loving communities might profit by Mrs. Pettysham's example

When the Pettyshams changed residences and the *carte blanche* for promiscuous intrusion, "House to Let," disfigured the porch, she peremptorily declined to admit any person except at stated hours and by a written order from the agent. Inquisitive, but impecunious people, who seldom see the inside of such mansions except on occasions like this seldom went to the trouble of a long ride to the house agent in Great St. James Street, for permission to Paul-Pry through a house they had not the slightest intention of renting. Those who took the trouble were people who meant business, and when these unbidden visitors came during the prescribed hours they found every part of the household in orderly perfection. The dining-room table was laid as if the family were about to sit down to an ordinary repast, though they and the domestics might have dined gregariously on "herring and point" in some obscure apartment before the arrival of observant house-hunters. These inquisitors were struck by the display of plate, cutlery and old china visible through the vistas in a miniature forest of fruit, and flowers. Indeed, Miss Martha Meany, who like her namesake, Martha of Holy Writ, was troubled about many things which didn't in the least concern her, lay awake two whole nights in a vain endeavor to solve the problem of how the Pettyshams made both ends meet.

By arts like these and uncommon tact she cleverly managed to keep the impecunious skeleton in her closet at the centre, and not at the circumference of her affairs. She was the practical head of the family, as Mr. Pettysham had so long suffered from an exaggerated sense of his own aristocratic importance as to be utterly incapacitated from attending to the ordinary utilitarian affairs of life. In condescending to marry Miss Margaret Stuart, the only child of a wealthy merchant, he concluded that his role in life had been played, and, thereupon, placidly enveloped himself in the dressing gown, and put on the easy slippers of sinecure as the husband of a rich heiress.

But the crash of 1858 revealed to the astonished Sir Peter that he had been living in a fools paradise. His father-in law failed, and the creditors discovered that for many years the bankrupt had been living beyond his income. Mr. Stuart was a man of preposterous Scotch pride so led away by a little commercial success that he would disown his own photograph taken in less prosperous days.

"King Stuart" as he was facetiously called, was a lion hunter and immoderately fond of associating with titled persons and people of aristocratic pretensions. No person in the retail trade was ever known to have crossed his threshold except to collect a bill. Unfortunately in the days immediately preceding the crash these visits exceeded those of invited guests by a large majority. The old gentleman's ancestry was veiled in dense obscurity; but like the Homeric heroes under similar circumstances who modestly declared themselves to be descended from the Gods, he was understood to have thrown out hints that if "the King should have his own again" Victoria might not be on the throne of England. In mellow post-prandial port-pervaded moments he dwelt lovingly on the Jacobite affairs of 1815 and the 45, bemoaning Culloden's fatal field as if it had deprived him of the crown of England. If prodigality at other people's expense and a strong antagonism to strict veracity were traits of the unfortunate Stuarts, especially of that mutton-eating King Charles the Second whose word no man relied on, he must certainly have been a lineal descendant. His royal blood would boil with indignation if any one ventured to spell his name with a "w." Miss Margaret, his handsome daughter, on becoming engaged to Mr. Pettysham, who was not Sir Peter then, rather encouraged her father's exaggerated Jacobinism, shrewdly calculating that her future husband could not offset his seigneurial blood against her Royal pedigree. Mrs. Stuart, however, who had been a milliner's apprentice in Edinburgh where her future husband was a draper's clerk, had never heard in their courting days of Jamie's regal pretensions. He was silent on the subject for many years until prosperity shone upon the couple in Canada. Then for the first time he took his pedigree out of his pocket and aired it in monograms, crests and the Royal Stuart coat of Arms on his plate, carriages and everything in which their was a shadow of excuse to put them. In fact, it was even said that he seriously contemplated having his coat of Arms tattooed on the back part of his bald head, and was only deterred by the fact that the blue ink would be in too strong a contrast to the remaining fringes of red hair.

When he enlarged too alarmingly on his Royal ancestry, she would exclaim.

"Now James, now, now really!"

But she never said more than this, and the wit about town gave her the soubriquet of "Mrs. now now really."

That drastic year of shrinkage 1858 left Mr. Stuart a wreck on the commercial shore. His creditors cruelly intimated that he failed from entertaining too many military people *et hoc genus omne*, which being translated into modern English means "all in that swim." Mr. Stuart, unfortunately in this was but a type of a multitude of Canadian merchants during the military occupation of Canada.

He could not reconcile himself to live in a rational manner on the residue of his fortune, which his creditors through clannish generosity left him, and after a few years died in debt and the hopes of a blessed resurrection where vulgar creditors and inquisitorial bankruptcy Courts are unknown.

Mr. Pettysham, after his father-in-law had wasted his substance on ephemeral society, which, like the dew of the morning, came not to refresh him at eve, found it necessary to doff his slippers and don his boots for active service in securing bread for his family. The small seignenry of "Hardscrabble" bore a suggestive title. The land from defective agriculture was so exhausted that if presented to a western farmer he would have taken it immediately to the poorhouse. The family lived at "Hardscrabble" for several years, and managed by hook or crook—principally by the latter—to make out a very substantial existence.

Mrs. Pettysham, rose equal to the occasion, and by her vigorous management "Hardscrabble" assumed a less rugged appearance. The city's "fair pale daughter" brought cultures charms to her rural home to harmonize and soften the rough farm life. She had acquired in the cultured sphere in which she had moved.

"An inborn grace that nothing lacked
Of culture or appliance—
The warmth of genial courtesy,
The calm of self reliance."

This genial courtesy and self reliance made her a favorite with her neighbors far and near, and in return for their experienced advice in agricultural matters, she taught them many of the little arts and devices to embellish rude homes which through the ministrations of a refined monitor had less of the back wood, and more of the boudoir about them. Then dairies, vegetable gardens, graperies and flower plots soon converted the forlorn seignenry into a more presentable state, from which a fair income was derived.

If blood tells, the Royal Blood of the Stuarts told most emphatically in this instance. Her husband, who was inert, selfish and full of magnificent theories for the improvement of the gov-

ernment soon found that his wife was a skilful domestic if not a political economist, and though knowing little of the tariff and revenue was fully aware that the source of power lay with the possessor of the purse. She sold the produce and was finance minister of "Hardscrabble" while he kept the accounts and obeyed orders. There is no absolute cure for constitutional laziness, but a vigorous wife of decided character has been known to infuse some of her energy into a drone and by dint of perseverance and proximity—keep him galvanized into moderate activity. Like an electric battery as soon as she ceased working he relapses into his former shiftlessness, gets lazy and bilious, takes to pills, and other internal improvements, dies and only in death becomes a utilitarian by fertilizing a soil he was too inert to cultivate while living.

Mr. Pettysham had abilities of no mean order, which only required the rough school of adversity to develop, by attrition with the world, into fortune winning instruments. He was phlegmatic, had a portly, solid appearance, and by cultivating a reticence which distinguished General Grant and Napoleon the Third might pass for a man who could "an if he would" utter many wise thoughts on any given subject if he only wanted to. Such men get the credit for much reserved power by simply lying hushed in grim repose. He had been, by marrying an heiress, a stall fed ox and expected to be such for the remainder of his days, but his father-in-law's riches took wing and fodder came not to that bin to which a fortunate marriage had tethered him. One morning shortly after the failure his wife propounded the following problem relating to domestic economy:

"Peter what shall we have for dinner to-night, there's not a cent in the house?"

"My dear," he replied with a smile, "I shall be better able to answer that question to-morrow."

The Stuart blood was up in arms at this levity, but restraining her anger, she determined to teach her easy going husband a severe practical lesson. It was an October day, crisp and bright. The air, full of tonic, felt like immaterialized champagne and Mr. Pettysham, after a brisk walk, from some "down town" haunt, felt he could do justice to a dinner which, from a woman so full of resources as his wife, he knew must be in waiting for him.

The master of the house took his accustomed seat and looked with enough burning hunger in his eyes to melt the silver dish

covers and scorch the food beneath. Madame sat vis-a-vis, and when her husband was not regarding her, one might have observed a look of silent thunder in her eyes.

As usual he was full of club gossip and that fractional currency of conversation peculiar to men whose business in life is to kill time.

She touched the bell and the little French maid with a look of bewilderment on her sparkling Gallic face removed the cover.

The dish contained only a card on which was inscribed "WORK OR STARVE."

"Why, my dear," he exclaimed in a cheery tone that ill concealed his mortification, "I never dreamt you had so much talent for humor or were addicted to practical jokes!"

"This is no joke," was the dry response.

"Then what is that?" he added picking up the card.

"A stern reality, I told you this morning there was not a cent in the house."

"Nonsense, Margaret, if I thought you really meant it I should have been more considerate. I'll just run down to the club and raise the siege, we're not in Poverty Flat just yet, are we?"

"My dear, I shall be better able to answer that question to-morrow."

It suddenly struck him that he had made a similar remark not many hours before.

When a man's credit is "gilt-edged," to use a cant phrase of the money market, there are many ways of obtaining money, though his business be rotten to the core. Mr. Pettysham was not long in discovering that by his father-in-law's bankruptcy he had entered a *cul de sac* through which there was no outlet. He also found that friends had feelings—for themselves. One had a heavy and unexpected payment to meet, another had invested every available cent in mortgages, while a third, dear, good, kind soul, would be only too happy to oblige him if he would call next Monday. This promise the accommodating friend was quite safe in making as he had already engaged a berth on the Allan steamer for Glasgow which left the Saturday preceding the appointed Monday.

Mortified beyond expression he sat in the card room and watched the players for hours. His meditations were not interrupted as prosperity is the basis of most friendships, and few care to cultivate the poor "who no revenue hath."

Thrusting his hand into his coat pocket it came in contact with a card which he mechanically drew out and again read its significant inscription, "WORK OR STARVE."

CHAPTER II.

A DULL ONE.

"The crowning fortune of a man is to be born with a bias toward some pursuit, which finds him in employment and happiness.

R. W. EMERSON.

Those strong corrosive hours that eat into the heart conquer us. Pettysham rudely awoke to the fact that Montreal was a magnificent place no doubt to spend in, but an undesirable locality when old debts were to be collected and money borrowed. Then he wondered how he could have wasted so much of youth's golden prime in associating with this herd of frivolous club-loungers, most of whom gambled in stocks all day and at cards all night. How often had his palate bribed his brains into accepting their hospitalities! And how he had endured their platitudes and inanities for the sake of unsatisfactory suppers and semi-barbarous civilities, from people who had just stepped into fortune but were a considerable way from good taste.

His wife's intimation that he must work or starve reminded him of the Scotch border custom. In the good old days of Lang Syne when honest industrious Canadian farmers were tilling the soil and building up Canada, the ancestors of the present race of Foreign Satraps who monopolize the Dominion and despise all other nationalities were plunderers, robbers and cattle raiders. They had little respect for the rights of meum and tuum as shown by their predatory free-booting mottoes such as "Thou shalt want ere I want" and "I hope to share." When the larder of one of these marauding lairds was empty, the good wife placed a pair of spurs instead of food on the dish—an intimation that the clan should go on a raid and replenish the larder. Pettysham resolved to do likewise. He owed the world a grudge for not giving him a sybarite livelihood suited to his ease loving constitution.

He thought he would turn his attention to medicine and, after being pitchforked through college, settle down to kill people scientifically, or wreak his vengeance by physicking unfortunate humanity. But in that noble profession one has to do so much for nothing and it is not pleasant to be disturbed at night. Sleep like an oyster is to be swallowed at once and not to be nibbled at intervals.

The army would suit him, but a moneyless married man on a subaltern's pay knows much of wretchedness though it be gilded by the gold of a showy uniform—the livery of impecuniosity. Besides fighting was unpleasant now-a-days, however glorious, what with mitrailleuses, tor-

pedoes, and a wretchedly mismanaged commissariat. He had no idea of dying for the glory of Canada in the jungles of India or that "white mans' grave" Sierra Leone. To be sacrificed for England's commerce and for the advantage of mercenary adventurers and unscrupulous traders. True, in coming years he might have staid at home and fought the Fenians, with volunteers who lost their positions in the Banks whose vaults they had gone to the front to defend. Exit army, better be a settler or keep a canteen.

The church would be charming. He regretted being a Protestant as only the R. Catholic Church in Montreal is open to men of Canadian birth. The pastors of many of the religious club-houses misnamed churches were Scotch or English, the majority of whom were furnished like Dr. Holmes' country parson with a one story intellect and a one horse vocabulary. But they were ignorant and bigoted enough to consider R. Catholics, Episcopalians and the followers of all denominations but blue Presbyterianism as only human beings by toleration. This is the cause of so much sectarian bitterness in Montreal. He might get a little church in the suburbs to commence with and look out for a larger sphere of usefulness, or, in other words an increased salary, as all spheres of usefulness are larger where there is a larger salary. He might while studying theology get the bag pipes to play for an hour or so every morning under his window in order to acquire the ministerial drone of Scotch divines so dear to the "Presbyterian" heart. But when he thought of penurious, faultfinding, contradicting elders who could quarrel like demons on the question of standing, bowing or kneeling at prayers, his heart failed him and he concluded that he had not received a call to go forth and preach the gospel of peace on earth and good will to man. He once remembered hearing Dr. Cummings of London, an eminent divine addicted somewhat to tossing theological tea cups and foretelling the destruction of the world, that certain persons were "As quarrelsome as a Scotch Presbyterian—and that was saying a great deal." Pettysham disliked quarreling on religious subjects because he looked upon religion as spiritual food to be taken with the same unquestioning faith that we accord to boarding house fricassee. A too close analysis of the former might lead to heterodoxy and of the latter to disgust.

Professor Grant, President of the Kingston College, stated a short time ago that Presbyterianism since the days of John Knox has split up in to forty different sects. Pettysham therefore

feared that when he had achieved success in gathering around him a large wealthy and fastidious congregation who could afford to pay him a very handsome salary and not feel the slightest drain on its resources, that certain of the members might be ambitious of distinction in the religious world and strive to be elders. Many would be called but few chosen to this enviable position, while the disappointed saint would hie into the cave of Adullam and then secede from the church and establish another sanctuary, the pulpit of which would be filled by a clergyman from Scotland, as no Canadian, no matter what his talents and acquirements were, would be deemed worthy even to teach a Sunday School class among these chosen and peculiar people. Sandy McGrab, whose commercial reputation has never been of the cleanest, can then aspire to be elder and may be seen of all men engaged in piously taking up the collection. He knows that Bank Presidents and Bank Directors will behold him in the high places of the Sanctuary and be more inclined to increase his line of discount at the Bank. Those demi-gods of Mammon, Presidents and Directors of Banks, look less to a merchant's commercial status than to his social and religious standing. If he is of the right faith and moves in the right circle he can help himself from the Bank coffers until the crash comes and the Directors disclaim all culpable negligence for giving unlimited credit to people of nominal means, and pass resolutions thanking each other for the talent and vigilance displayed in—robbing and defrauding the orphan. These unfortunates always suffer, as they have no right in Canada that any one seems bound to respect. The church has become simply an instrument for advancing the temporal interests of its members. It starts in debt, stays in debt, and soon becomes a source of annoyance to the congregation, who drop off one by one and join churches where the pulpits are not made Sunday after Sunday a rostrum for dunning purposes. Its projector, Mr. Sandy McGrab, having disappeared under the debris of the bank he was so material in destroying, is known no more in the high places of the church and, after a few years of painful struggling, the sacred edifice is sold and converted into a Variety theatre for the apotheosis of "Jump Jim Crow" and other Ethiopian farcialities.

Pettysham concluded that the path of a Minister of the Gospel is not strewn with roses, and the pseudo-pleasant places on the way to the celestial city have a good deal

more of heart burning than of heart's ease about them.

Should he go into trade! The seigniorial blood rebelled at the bare thought. His hesitation, however was to a great extent influenced by the knowledge that the whole business of the city was in the hands of the Scotch, whose motto was "we'll have none but Hieland bonnets here." The Bank Presidents and Directors were all Scotch, and dishonestly favored men of their own nationality and were not over scrupulous in ridding Montreal of any other race. This is how Scotch supremacy has been maintained in Canada to the detriment of that unfortunate country, seven hundred thousand of whose people, after begging in vain from their oppressors for leave to toil, are now living in the United States. Two hundred thousand more, of various nationalities, who attempted to earn a livelihood among the Canadians, have left in sullen disgust for the Great Republic where no *one* foreign race dare assert a supremacy. The British merchant, in those days before the Protection Tariff, when Canada was at the feet of England and paid tribute to Manchester, welcomed with open arms the representatives of Scotch houses in the Dominion, but treated native born Canadians with coolness and insolence. Goods were thrust on the former while the latter had shorter credits, higher prices, and smaller discounts than his Caledonian rival. Falsehood, treachery and slander were freely resorted to by the Sandy McGrabs to keep the entire trade in their own hands. They strenuously opposed any manufacturing enterprise in Canada, and took for their shibboleth "Free trade forever—and let us do *all* the importing."

A native born Canadian went heavily handicapped into business as his foreign rival was supreme and enjoyed every advantage. The St. Andrew's, Caledonian, and Thistle Societies advanced his interests, the pulpit lent him every aid, his clan shielded him in every dishonest proceeding provided a Scotchman was not the victim, and the whole masonic body, until recently, was at the feet of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. How different Canada would have been to-day if her rulers had been as broad and liberal in their views as those of the United States! Pettysham wisely decided that business in the face of oppressive monopoly was out of the question.

The Civil Service certainly offers a refuge for decayed gentility.

In the days when Canada was governed by

a bureau consisting of Englishmen, very few Canadians were able to obtain positions under the Government. If a vacancy occurred one of Albion's lordly sons was imported, and as he "seldom died, and never resigned his term of office was lengthy. It was simply giving this importation, who never paid a dollar of taxes, a position for life. If he had a salary of \$1000 per annum, it was simply bestowing the usufruct of \$15,000 of the public money. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a native born Canadian would do the work better at half the price. The civil service, in that particular, is no better to-day. Young Flamingo Fastboy, a showy specimen of some noble family in England, is sent out with letters of introduction to one of our ministers who has been wined, dined and flattered, for an object, by the youth's father. The Canadian statesman having received their attention, when in England, to whom he humbly took orders from Downing Street to further British art at the expense of Canadian interests, feels constrained to do something for the plausible youth. The young man dances with the minister's plain daughter, makes himself very agreeable in the mimic court circles, and in due course of time the civil service carriage comes around and the people of Canada are saddled with another imbecile who, as before stated, never paid a dollar of taxes. But a Canadian, whose family has been resident for centuries in the Dominion and have paid thousands upon thousands of dollars in taxes to the local and general governments, is snubbed and his claims ignored. *This will not always last.*

Pettysham felt that he might get something to do in one of the departments, but it would take time to work that oracle. In palmy, prosperous days he had taken a part for mere pastime in the election canvass, and was very felicitous in stump speeches, and almost as happy as the jaunty Sir John Macdonald in illustrating his telling points by apropos anecdotes. On one occasion he had canvassed a county in which he had never been before, and did so well that his friend was ignominiously defeated and came near being mobbed by the outraged constituents. It happened in this wise: Pettysham had two lists of the voters, one for the Catholic and the other for the Protestants. He started out with a box of Bibles and a quintal of Cod-fish. When he arrived at a farm house belonging to a Catholic, a cod-fish was left for Friday's use, and a few appropriate remarks were made on the divine origin of fast-days. When the hardy yeoman was a Protestant, and it happens that in this particular county those of that persuasion were uncompromising Orangemen, he

presented a bible and urged the recipient to search the Scriptures and to beware of the scarlet woman of Rome. These tactics, no doubt, would have worked like a charm, but unfortunately the stupid election agent put the Catholics on the Protestant list and the Protestants vice versa.

The Protestants at the hustings, denounced the candidate as a Jesuit in disguise, and as emissary of Rome, while the Catholics called him a "Swiss," which is a term they use to denote Protestant, French speaking missionaries, who are nearly all of that nationality. After this little *contretemps* he had refrained from meddling in politics.

"No," he soliloquised, "I am not in a position yet to push for a position in the civil service."

There was the law. Blackstone defines law as "a rule of action." Aaron Burr's definition, though Machiavellian gives a better idea of this uncertain science. "Law," he says, "is that which is plausibly, asserted and persistently maintained." Pettysham felt that he would make a proficient pupil in the Burr school, more especially as Lower Canadian law was a crude, ill digested mass of antiquated absurdities. So much so that England assumes the right to adjudicate on all cases involving a sum greater than \$2,500. This sum represents the calibre of a Canadian Judge, and is the length to which mother England will trust his legal lore. The defendant, above that sum, may take the case to the English privy counsel, who knows about as much of Canadian law as a wild Indian does of the technicalities of a steam engine. It is true we have a Supreme Court, but a defendant with a long purse who wishes to ruin a poorer adversary who has both equity and Canadian law on his side, may take the case to England in order to make the costs as formidable as possible. The new Pacific Railway Syndicate should bring this fact prominently before the Irish people—it will be such an inducement to immigrate to the North-west. The judicial robe in Canada, in order to harmonize with the law, should be like Jacob's coat, of many colors. It is an inharmonious composite made up of the coitume ut Paris full of mediæval absurdities which the French Revolution of 1793 swept out of existence. Engrafted on this is the Code Napoleon, the English common law and a mass of statutes and amendments, one overlapping the other like shingles on a roof. The prophet Elijah says: "a sense of wrong maketh a man mad," and considering the hap-hazard way in which justice is administered in this benighted realm, it is surprising

that there is so little personal violence. Executors and guardians, for instance, give no bonds, nor are they required by law to render any account until the close of their official duties. To rob the widow and orphan is considered an accomplished pastime, and the Dick Turpin Executor who succeeds best is sent to Parliament to give him an opportunity to rob the treasury. Such men become the public tools of railroad monopolists and are instrumental in depopulating the country.

It was now just midnight and the billiard room of the club had a desolate air. Pettysham had thoroughly reviewed the field, and the law seemed to offer the best chance of success. The "Hardscrabble" property yet remained, though for years it had only paid a nominal rent.

That night husband and wife remained long in consultation. She reminded him that his heritage, small as it was, had been sufficient for the moderate wants of a bachelor, but was entirely inadequate to the requirements of a small family. In the past it had been a title deed to stock, but in the future, like Carlyle's little estate at Craigenputtick, away up in the Scottish Highlands where he spent six years in writing Sarters Resarters, it would be a retreat where he could preen his wings ere soaring to ambitious giddy heights.

CHAPTER III.

"A knave a quoting holy writ,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the core."

SHAKESPEARE.

Malevolent and frivolous reader, if you imagine this story to be a cornucopia of sweetmeats and complimentary *bons bons* lay it down and read Martin Fraquhar Tupper or any other versifier of commonplace cheap morality. Gall and laughing gas are the animating factors in this wormwood narrative, and, to quote from Byron, "as fools are my theme let satire be my song."

It is very agreeable through such soothing amenities as the foregoing, to put one self *en rapport* with the reader and give him thoroughly to understand that his adverse opinion is not of the slightest importance.

But let us return to our sheep—that is the Canadian people. Also to the wolves in kilts.

The gift of continuance or "saintly perseverance" is essential to the novelist. Emerson says that in the study of mankind "we touch and go and sip the foams of many lives." So let it be with this thread on which are strung

more facts than fancies in a touch and go style, as connected thought is irksome, especially when we write to please ourselves and not the reader.

Such being the case, no doubt a large edition of this work will be left on our hands, and our library will contain many hundred volumes all of which, with the exception of a ridiculous minority, will be the product of our own pen.

* * * * *

The Pettyshams went to "Hardscrable," to practice economy in retirement. The head of the family read laws in the office of an advocate in Consumption, a neighboring village where the notary and the storekeeper kept the poor *habitants* for miles around in a state of abject serfdom. The one by lending money at fabulous usury; the other, by his over-reaching and rascality.

Solomon Screws, the storekeeper, was a Caledonian Jew of Yankee extraction. Unscrupulous and selfish, he was fast amassing a fortune with which he intended to go into the wholesale line in Montreal.

Jean Prudhomme, the notary, had the whole prothonotary system of Lower Canada instilled into him from earliest boyhood, his father for long years having been the leading notary of the village.

Between him and the legal rate of interest there was a deadly antagonism. He abhorred schools, abominated newspapers, and never heard of a city bank establishing a branch without a premonitory symptom of apoplexy.

"De habitants," he was wont to say, "dey know too much already. If dere was no schools dey would not read, and no read dey would never see dose newspapers, where de fools say dey will lend money at six per cent. Den de bank come here and, Mon Dieu, de notary's business he am spoilt."

The cohesive power of plunder kept the notary and the storekeeper on the most intimate terms. It was a tacit understanding that when Jean Baptiste gave Prudhomme a mortgage on his farm, Jean should trade exclusively with Screws, to whom he transferred the mortgage. If Jean failed to buy his supplies from the storekeeper who charged extortionate prices for adulterated goods, he could expect no mercy if he failed to meet his obligations.

Screws, like all his breed, was diabolically vindictive to those who traded more cheaply elsewhere, and when he "got the upper hand of them"—a favorite Scotch expression—they were cheated out of farm, home and country.

Fortunate, indeed; were they who had sufficient money left to take them to the United States, the home for the oppressed of all nationalities.

It is to be hoped that the French Credit Foncier Companies who offer to lend money for long periods at a reasonable rate of interest will be a check on the Shylock storekeeper and the unscrupulous notary. This, by the way. While Solomon sat in the little room at the end of the store, which was hidden behind bales and boxes of merchandise, he suddenly caught sight of Mr. Samuel Skimpit, his head clerk, a diminutive man, with a lynx eye and a hatchet face, on which nature had put a trade mark of close bargains and sharp practices.

"Here, Skimpit," cried the Tycoon with beckoning finger.

The clerk, who was carrying a gallon can of rum that lacked at least a pint of full measure hustled to his employer.

I didn't see you in church yesterday?

I was there.

Not in your regular seat.

No, in the choir.

What was the text.

"When ye measure corn unto your neighbor, measure as an offering unto the Lord full and overflowing."

Skimpit glanced at the gallon measure.

So did Solomon.

They parted in silence.

"Yon Skimpit, is a shrewd lad," soliloquised the employer, "he'll be a leading merchant in Montreal yet."

"If the Tycoon knew as much of Scripture as he does of falsifying errors" thought the clerk "he would know there is no such text in the bible. It's all right; he won't trouble me about church again. He values a man who makes seven pints pass for a gallon and fifteen ounces for a pound."

Both resumed their respective employments, and between Skimpit in the front and Solomon's system of book-keeping in the rear, the *habitant* might as well have been one of the children of Israel in Egypt, making bricks without straw.

Screws, with a Louis the Eleventh class of piety, which could plan a murder between the pauses of a prayer, was only scrupulous in his religious observances. With slimy softness of speech, he uttered many edifying remarks when the minister or one of the elders called on matters connected with the church of which he was treasurer. Like Judas Iscariot, he kept near the money bag. It was as truly refreshing as a spring in the desert, to hear him, in the pauses of his writing, dilate on the goodness of Divine

Providence. He punctuated his remarks by occasional entries in the ledger, as he wished to impress his visitors with the idea that he was an exceedingly busy man, and consequently they should feel complimented that he could spare them so much of his valuable time. "My doctrine is that we shall be rewarded in the next world for the good we do in this—"

Pause to enter one pair of boots to Jean Baptiste who was too poor to wear anything but home made beef mocgassins.

"And I make it a practice and instil it into all whom I employ, to do unto others as they would be done by."

Another pause to add twenty-five per cent to the price. Skimpit had charged for a seven pint gallon of rum.

"The Lord knows that the things of this world trouble me not."

Here he dropped a cent and with a pained expression fumbled over five minutes on the floor until he found it.

Rising with a flushed hue on his porcine countenance, with its small, deep-set, furtive eyes, he continued the sermonette; pointing out in speech the straight and narrow path and by his actions travelling on the broad road to perdition.

In the estimation of his fellow citizens who had a pity and contempt for any lack of shrewdness in business, he was all in all. But he, and those of whom he was a type, felt uneasy and uncomfortable before superiors in education and refinement.

The Revered Jeremiah Rose, the local canon of the village, regarded Solomon Screws as a very exemplary man, a sort of commercial demigod, and determined to place his son as an apprentice in his store on the very first opportunity.

The Revered Jeremiah, in a voice loud enough to reach the gratified ear of the listening Solomon, said to one of the Elders on departing:

"What modest piety! what industrious enterprise."

"A very discerning Divine," thought Screws. "Every far-seeing merchant should be on the right side of the spiritual teachers of the people."

That eccentric author, John Ruskin, whose bright things come like flashes of lightning, said. An English clergyman told me, and I agreed with him that it was acknowledged to be impossible for an honest man to live by trade in England.

Ruskin's father was a wine merchant. On

his death, the gifted son placed this epitaph on his tomb stone:

"An entirely honest merchant."

Was this the exception to prove the rule, or merely the out-come of filial partiality?"

Is staid honesty, in its severest sense, possible in trade?

Did the elder Ruskin ever tell a customer that his claret was the cheapest in the market when he knew that his aggressive rival was selling the identical article at half a crown less per dozen?

Had he never prevaricated, never misrepresented, always pointed out to the unobservant and careless the defects of his merchandise? Never persuaded a customer to load up with a stock ruinously slow of sale! Never asserted that Tokays and Madeiras, as much out of fashion as the Falernian vintage of Rome, were once more popular?

If such a man can be found, make him the Messiah of commerce - then crucify him for introducing principles into business wolly in compatible with the present age standard of mercantile morality.

Ruskin's clergyman was correct and his aphorism might apply the world over. All merchants are just as honest as circumstances will allow them to be.

How men would smile if they beheld this paradoxical epitaph in a churchyard.

"An honest diplomat."

Byron, with his usual cynicism, says "Believe a woman or an epitaph." A truism no doubt when applied to the women with whom his lordship associated, but a malicious libel when applied to the sex. This introduces us to another scene.

Mrs. Screws sits at the head of the table. She is a ponderous matron of the British type, suggestive of Dublin stout and porter house steaks. Around her are four little Screws, fat podgy, and good natured. They look so much alike, one might fancy they had been pulled from a sheet of postage stamps.

Others were in the nursery in the tadpole dough-like state of infancy, when all children seem to old bachelors to be howling-machines made on one universal plan.

"Solomon, my dear" said the buxom dame to her husband, who was doing the great knife swallowing trick at the other end of the table. "Mr. Pettysham, and family are going to live at 'Hardscrabble so Buchan says."

"Indeed! its about time they came and looked after the place. Buchan has made a *pretty good* thing out of it. Pettysham, got precious little

rest from him. They say Mrs. P. is a smart woman. She's the man of that family."

"She's very ladylike too," echoed Mrs. Screws.

"Ladylike! fudge! she'll be putting a lot of nonsensical aristocratic notions into your head. You're too extravagant already. She was brought up with those military people, a reckless prodigal lot. You don't catch me lending money on officers' paper, When the "Buffshire bouncers" were in Canada they were all in debt and used to endorse each other's notes as carelessly as confirmed toppers take temperance pledges they never mean to keep. Then, when matters got too hot, the gallant officer went on leave of absence, exchanged into another regiment at Timbuctoo or the world's end, and that was the last you saw of your money."

"But, my dear, they have had reverses in fortune, and have learnt prudence by adversity."

"What nonsense! such people never learn. They never learn economy, nor forget extravagant habits. I suppose you'll want to imitate their city ways, and *dear Mrs. Pettysham* will be your guide and pattern. They are an ungodly, worldly minded set, and walk not in the fear of the Lord!

"Judge not that ye be not judged, Solomon."

No man is a hero to his valet, and some men are precious small in the eyes of their wives. Solomon knew that his wife was prone to ridicule his religious cant and therefore did as most men do on such occasions, got angry and abusive.

Screws, in fact was a Bourbon himself, and thirty years of Canadian civilization could not expel the vulgarity of an Edinburgh slum, a veritable in grained cowboy whom you could soak in attar of roses for a generation, and yet the fumes of the stable would still be paramount.

Bourgeois like he made the dinner table the exchange for all that transpired in the household during the day, and there the fault finding was done.

Unquiet meals make ill digestion, and Screws, when his mouth was not full, growled about extravagance, pausing occasionally to harpoon a potato from the dish. A rather venal breach of politeness as he never ate with his fork. When in a particularly bad humor he hurried over grace, and the echo of "make us thankful for what we are going to receive" had hardly died out when it would be supplemented with the angry exclamation.

"Lord, woman; what a devil of a dinner you're givin' us."

Then Bridget carried the dismal tidings to

the kitchen : "The master's jawin' agin' !"

Poor Mrs. Screws had got used to this, but the Elder's children, just returned from boarding school in Montreal, remained silent and mortified through these ever recurring scenes.

Their beloved parent's organs of alimentativeness were preternaturally developed. He dotes on doing the marketing. It was quite appetizing to see him sniff food and make voluminous remarks on its quality. The beef was "beautiful," the mutton "lovely," and other dishes were designated by similiarly expressive but inappropriate adjectives. But when he scowled and prefaced his remarks with the trite proverb : "God sends food but the Devil sends cooks," a storm was bursting.

Bridget heard the cook reviled and the beef disrespectfully used, and reported accordingly.

Cooks, as a rule, are not culinary angels, being so much near the fire is apt to make them partake more of the character of the denizens of a lower and hotter sphere.

"Ould Blood and Bones is at it again," cried Bridget skipping gaily into the kitchen, "he says the Devil sinds such cooks as ye be, and it would take a sassage machine to chaw the mate. Sorry a lie I'm telling ye !

The cook, full of speechless wrath, looks unutterable things, and amid angry sniffs, she hurriedly wipes her red, smoking arms with her apron.

"I'll leave the house ! I'll give warning ! It's meself as will be after sarvin' the loikes o' thim ! Me what cooks for the McFlyers, an the Ravens, and all the hoigh families on the top of the mountain."

"Don't be after doing that," says Bridget, soothingly ; "Never take heed of ould Blood and Bones, just stay and the Missus will be after givin' yes an old dress or a rise in your wages."

"Is it a rise of wages, indade, and live wid the loikes; me, what's bin livin' wid the quality? I'p sooner cook for a has-been for me vittles thin git good wages from a niver-was, and ould Screws niver was and niver will belong to the quality ! Tell the Missus I've given her warning."

Poor Mrs. Screws, as she had often done before, managed to mollify the cook. Blood and Bones marched off to the store muttering that he was a misused man, though snarling a reluctant consent to visit the Pettyshams on their arrival at 'Hardscrabble." He wanted to "hold off" he said and "keep a stiff upper lip," just to show these people that he considered himself quite as good as they were.

The festive board was now the resort for Skimpit

and his fellow clerks, who luxuriated in the baked meats of the funeral. Ther repast was resided over by the elddest daughter of the house, Miss Mary Screws, who adored Skimpit "he was so business like."

Skimpit thought more of a prospective share in his future father-in-law's business than he did for the undivided affections of the ever faithful Mary

To his practical mind the heart was a useful muscle to promote the circulation of the blood and nothing more.

CHAPTER IV.

A chapter in which business and religion are mixed like the sign on the Swiss inn.

"Wake and repent your sins with grief,
I'm called the Golden Shin of Beef."

The Seignury of Hardscrabble, consisting of about a thousand acres, had been rented for a nominal sum during the prosperous days of the Pettyshams to Robert Buchan, a Scotch Highlander, known in the country round as "Bob Buchan."

The generous Celtic blood coursed through Bob's veins, making him passionate and proud, but neither vindictive nor treacherous, and as hospitable as an Arab. Poor Buchan was fearfully superstitious, and firmly believed in witches, warlocks, wraiths, apparitions and all the paraphernalia of the supernatural that precede, sudden death and calamities.

In his native hills, where fancy feeds the imagination with beautiful scenery, he imbibed a strong love for the marvellous, the weird and mysterious. Ossian, that Homer of Celtic song, he had read and re-read, and found unbounded delight in his sonorous swelling numbers and majestic imagery. This poem, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the woe begone book of Job, the Apocalypse, and Wilson's tales of the Scotch border formed the extent of his reading. The impress of such a library on the Gaelic nature can well be conceived, and it is not astonishing that in after life he fancied he had the gift of prophecy and second sight, like Campbell's seer who gave warning to Lochiel.

"The advent of age gave him mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before."

This generous Celt was a singular psychological study, demonstrating the injurious effects of superstition on an impressionable romantic nature. The ignorant *habitants* who surrounded him were not much improved by the advent of several Scotch clans who settled in the vicinity of the Seignury towards the close of the last century, and received from time to time accessions to their numbers. The Highland

regiments who took part in the taking of Quebec, remained in Canada and formed settlements in the country adjacent to that fortress, but the assimilating power of the French Canadian was too much for even the obstinate Scotch blood. Their descendants so gradually lost their nationality that the traveller in less than half a century could scarcely find an English speaking person among the population clad in homespun, with *tuques* on their heads and moccasins on their feet. These rustics were the descendants of the Caledonian mountaineers who scaled the rocks of Quebec and were led by Wolfe to victory on the plains of Abraham. The clan patronymic alone survived, and Macdonald, Macpherson, Macintosh, were household names borne by ruddy, often red-haired men, who were strangers to the garb of old Gaul and to both the Celtic and the Saxon tongues. The Highland clans, however, who settled in the vicinity of Lancaster preserved their national traits and language intact for a long period, until within the past thirty years, when the ever increasing frugal French invaded their stronghold. These seem in a fair way of attaining numerical supremacy, as many of the descendants of the original settlers have moved to that land of promise, the Western States. The same singular transformation is going on in Glengarry at the present day.

They swarm down from the lumber districts in the Spring, singing merrily some simple Canadian lay, which seems to have an immortality of popularity. The fiddler plays an electric lively air, beating time with his fete and swaying his body in rhythm to the music. The Frenchified Heelandman springs on to a shutter, or any platform improvised for the purpose, and dances with all the abandon and vim of his Jacobite ancestor, that Macpherson, who, when on the scaffold, according to the old song,

"Sae rantingly, sae wantingly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he,
He played a sprig and danced it round,
Beneath the gallows tree."

Vive la bagatelle, Jean Baptiste with a fiddle, a shutter and *du gin* rises like his Scotch prototype, Tam O'Shanter, o'er all the ills of life victorious, and sings this new version of the patriotic air.

"Pour chasser le spleen,
J'entrais dans une inn,
Ou je bus du gin,
God save ze Queen."

Bob Buchan, though he had many rollicking semi-barbarous characteristics, was a fair farmer, and during the period in which he

was the "laird of Hardscrabble," as he loved to be styled, managed to make a very handsome income, but being hot-headed and improvident, involved himself in a number of petty lawsuits that depleted his money-chest of more than petty cash.

But the reign of the Buchans was now over.

The Pettyshams had come down to stay on the old domain, but as Bob was advancing in years, though still hale and hearty, he was offered and had accepted the duties of overseer under the supervision of Mrs. Pettysham, who allowed him to lease, for a long time, a few acres adjoining the homestead, on which he erected a cottage and a small barn and stable. Here he lived with his wife, a sonsie Scotch matron, who, when not occupied with household duties, revelled in reading of the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem as depicted by Josephus, Fox's book of martyrs, the gloomy scriptural prophets, Revelations, and other light cheerful literature of a kindred character. Not a very desirable person to be entrusted with the care of impressionable young children. So Mrs. Pettysham thought, and endeavored, but in vain, to keep her younger brood from listening to the old dame's ghost stories. When the dog howled, she prophesied a death, and as the dog was a persistent howler, she a persistent soothsayer, and the number of her family and relatives exceedingly large, she was invariably as correct—well, as Vennor. Finding herself so successful in this graveyard department of the prophesying business, she let her weird imagination take other flights and protended dire evils to Church and State. She fixed the day when the seals would be opened, the vials of wrath poured forth and the Scarlet woman of Rome hold high carnival in this Canada of ours.

The children of this supernatural-loving couple had all left the oracular, sphynx-like abode, and betaken themselves to the United States. Thomas, the eldest, had gone to Boston. Resembling his parents in their love for the marvellous, he had gradually drifted so far from religion, by attending spiritual seances and associating with mediums, that he conceived he had the gift of second sight and took to table-turning and interviewing the departed. In fact he was like one of those doctrinaires who take you into a fog and then leave you there. One would have forgiven his religious eccentricities, were he not a most persistent propagandist, seeking to inoculate every one he encountered with his own belief.

He preached by this text, "The chosen of the Lord are we and heathen all besides," and with an inherited spirit of intolerance, those who were not spiritualist could never see the "Summer land," the heaven of this sect. They would be condemned to hang around a celestial lobby or wander in a sort of Swedenborgian Hades—as ghostly undergraduates, until sufficiently examined to obtain admittance to a higher class. This other spiritualistic world consisted of a number of spheres into which mortals were placed at death according to the relative degree of perfection they attained to in this vale of tears. If only comparatively good they were assigned to the comparative sphere. But if they struck the bull's eye of perfection in this sinful world of weak flesh, they ascended immediately to the superlative superstructure, on the summit of bliss, and no doubt looked down with contempt from their mountain perch on the dwellers in the Sherbrooke, St. Catherine, St. Antoine and lower streets of this hereafter, where all men are evidently not equal before the throne. But of this individual more anon.

The Buchans were regular attendants at the Rev. Jeremiah Rose's church. That mild mannered Divine was much troubled in spirit by Bob's vagaries, and strove ardently to keep the imaginative highlander in the orthodox path. In the main Bob was a full believer in the five points of Calvinism and the great truths of Christianity, but would too frequently allow himself to wander into the circuitous paths of superstition and have a good bout with witches and warlocks. This bib and rattle theology grieved the minister while Mrs. Pettysham quite lost all patience at his absurdities.

Old Mrs. Buchan was always delighted to see the Minister. It gave her a chance to talk on religion which she loved only a little less than contradiction. When there was a rheumatic wind from the east she had serious doubts about the resurrection of the body, coming to the conclusion that it was rather risky taking to the next world this earthly tabernacle of the soul with all the ills that it is heir to. In confirmation of this she would hurl texts from the minor prophets and other obscure portions of the Scriptures at the good man's head until he retired discomfited. Then the neighbors, loud in praise of her piety and learning, would pass the word from mouth to mouth.

"Mother Buchan has again stumped the parson."

This rather lowered the good man in the estimation of the venerable Geddes's of the village who "were no Jerria Shudds that the meenister was gifted we' the power o' the speerit," and as women rule their husbands generally on re-

ligious matters, it was as generally concluded that the Rev. Jeremiah was not a theological breech-loading, hundred pound armsstrong gun. An itinerant preacher, when told that his pay was very poor, remarked frankly, "Yes the pay is dreadful poor—but it's dreadful poor preaching I give for the money." So the people of Consumption had to be contented with their minister whose preaching at the worst was better than his pay. Serews the Treasurer believed in keeping the ministers poor, as poverty restrained pride and begot humility—an essential in the character of a country clergyman.

The Rose residence, or the Manse, as the old country people called it, was a substantial structure having being built by an old Hudson Bay trader who, from compunctions of a tardily awakened conscience, devoted a pittance of the pelf swindled out of the Indians to the service of his Maker, like the penitent thief who thought to silence the still small voice by giving in alms the tail of the pig he had stolen. This Nor-West magnate had also built the church, and on a marble tablet above the entrance commemorated the fact by the following inscription:—

"This church was erected by Peter McGrab at his sole expense."

It might have been written truthfully at "his soul's expense," considering the number of shoddy blankets and the amount of poor whiskey he palmed off on Lo, the poor Indian. Peter forgot, or never read Pope, or else the couplet would have warned him that

"He who builds to God and not for Fame,
Will never mark the marble with his name."

The church and manse, however, were the pride of the village, and if the minister did get poor pay, he was at least comfortably housed and was not under the necessity of constantly dunning the congregation for money to make as constant repairs to a cheap church run up by a contractor, who knew he would have to wait a long period for his money and consequently wasted as little time and material as possible on the job.

Not a few such flimsy churches are built on promises to pay.

The Rose family consisted of Mrs. Rose, a refined lady, who in younger days had been one of the garrison belles of Montreal, but with that impulsiveness characteristic of the sex, suddenly embraced religion at a revival meeting and as suddenly embraced the opportunity of making the impression permanent by accepting the Rev. Jeremiah, who opportunely presented himself, while she was in this spiritual mood. The whilehome garrison belle made a most exemplary wife, and with

ready tact adopted herself to the entourage of a Canadian village. She more than supplied the deficiencies of her husband, and managed their small income with the skill of a financier.

The reverend gentleman was undoubtedly a good man. He had a solid figure, unimpassioned face and all the dignity of dullness—a dignity most essential in divines of imposing appearance and limited abilities. The Buchans delighted to "sit under him" and Robert could truthfully exclaim :

"I stroked with joy my ~~own~~ grey beard,
To hear the points of doctrine cleared,
And all the horrors of damnation
Set forth with faithful ministration.
No doubtful testimony here,
We all were damned, and that was clear
I owned with gratitude and wonder,
He was a pleasure to sit under.

No one could deal in purgatorial pyrotechnics, nor amplify a parable into a sermon better than the Rev. Mr. Rose, and this even his worst enemies admitted.

Two children enlivened the manse. The eldest Frederick, a young lad of sixteen and full of promise, had been reared in the family circle, and inheriting a studious refined disposition with a certain nobility of character, was better adopted for a learned profession than to measure tape and sell molasses in Screw's store, where his father had determined to place him.

Florence, the other child, was in the delectable period of budding womanhood. Her well poised head of oval form, giving the impression of refinement and intellect, was graced by luxuriant waves of golden hair like an aureole, that swept back into a plain Grecian knot, regular features of Hellenic loveliness, were made most piquante by a pair of dark hazel eyes which contrasted startlingly yet harmoniously with her sun-lit hair. This Andalusian type of beauty, so rare, so unique in our colder climes, may be frequently encountered in the sunny land of Spain. The late Adelaide Neilson, born in Madrid, was the most lovely being that has graced the stage in this generation at least. And of the pure Spanish type also, was the radiant Eugenie Countess de Montejo, whose beauty hid the ambition of a usurper sleep, as Napoleon, declining a monarchical alliance that might have strengthened his dynasty, raised the daughter of a Count of comparative insignificance to the Imperial Throne of France. Of this rare type was fair Florence, who had that indiscribable soft charm of manner which a convent education gives, there being an entire absence of the *Boarding School Bounce* which intrudes so un-

pleasantly in young ladies fresh from Miss Mc-Smatters fashionable Seminary, where the proprietress modestly purports to teach everything within the bounds of the human understanding. The Sisters of St. Joseph, where she was educated, were ladies of intelligence, and that exquisite French refinement characteristic of the *ancienne noblesse*. In fact, not a few of these worthy women belonged to families of the highest rank in the courtly land of France. Her father, and many of the leading members of the congregation, were at the commencement antagonistic to his child's being educated by the nuns, but as no one offered to pay his daughters expenses at a fashionable Montreal boarding school, they were constrained to silence. On one occasion her mother called at the convent to see Florence, who was sent for by the nun in attendance.

"Oh Mamma," she cried on seeing her mother, and was just about rushing into her dear parents arms when the nun stepped forward and gently but firmly arrested her progress, saying with dignity.

"Miss Rose, leave the room and enter properly."

The hot indignant blood mounted to the rebellious young beauty's face, but she restrained her anger and left the room.

On being summoned she re-entered, and turning to the nun made a most respectful courtesy which the sister returned and then retired, leaving mother and daughter together.

Withal, her voice, like Cordelia's, "was ever soft, gentle and low, that excellent thing in woman," and her accents fell so naturally that it was quite refreshing to listen to her liquid Canadian tones, after the tympanum had been harrowed by the affected English drawl imitated by too many of our Dominion belles. This drawl is perfectly excusable in young gentlemen who have been sent from Canada to Oxford or Cambridge for the purpose of forgetting this native accent and their country. These soft-shelled snobs come back so imbued with English ideas, that when bad weather in London is cabled, they put up their umbrellas in Montreal.

* * * * *

We have now, inconsequential reader, introduced the main army of our characters in due form, and with the foregoing *dramatis personee* we intend to work on to the finis, introducing occasionally, as they say in the play bill, persons equivalent to "soldiers, sailors, peasants, policemen" and other utility people that vulgar little boys in the gallery jeer at and call

"soups," and men of the world consider as insignificant pawns on life's chess-board,

Like the German army at the siege of Sedan, we have placed our forces on the surrounding hills and now the cannonading begins. The modern story-tellers introduce the reader into a room full of people, and he finds out the character as best he can in such a colloquial fashion that it is difficult to know who's who, until half way through the book, *vide* the realistic pages of "Ouida" and the Sunday school editions of "Zola."

CHAPTER V.

A chapter wherein conceit chokes a text, ignorance expounds it, and superstition advocates it.

The Pettyshams had been for several days in possession of "Hardscrabble" and as soon as "things were set to rights" as our practical American cousins say, the family received calls. Already the old place shows traces of rejuvenation, a few coats of paint, a little tidying up, a little gardening, a nail here and a nail there, and the wrinkles gradually disappear from the face of the old mansion, as if it had applied an infallible "Bloom of Youth" or some other cosmetic to its aged features. Mrs. Pettysham put energy into all around her and even the lubberly cow boy endeavored to be active and let people know he was alive while he did live. Mr. Pettysham, though a mortal of the careless kind and something of a Sybarite, was almost transformed into a stern Spartan by his indefatigable wife. He read law diligently and being a man of varied information with strong perceptive and retentive faculties might have been a Canadian Solon had fate called him to the bar at an earlier age. A jovial corpulent man with something of a sensual expression, he took life easy and never worried. There is an impression that fat people are "so good natured." This is an error, the most intensely selfish people are invariably fat, they have no sympathy for others and with them freedom from pain and a fair supply of material wants means happiness unalloyed. Your fat jovial sybarite is a very *c'ubabble* fellow in the city, and a very pleasant person to chat with at the country store where he spends most of his time, but for active work active sympathy, and the fatherly care of to family the less of corpulence the better.

Pettysham had all the qualifications for achieving popularity, not being troubled with delicate sensibilities or active sympathies, consequently he could refuse a favor in a suave pleasant way that would be utterly impossible to a man of heart and impulse who, in endeavoring to hide the pain it gave him to refuse, would too frequently assume an austere and even harsh man-

ner. Being indifferent on religious matters, he was very tolerant and took the first opportunity to give old Mrs. Buchan a practical lesson on that subject. Like the Earl of Shaftesbury he believed all sensible men to be of the same religion and men of sense never tell what that religion is.

One fine sunny afternoon in the early part of June, Pettysham might have been seen surrounded by a troop of olive branches among whom were Miss Constance, a romping lass of fourteen and the eldest son Fred, a handsome youth of sixteen who had passed very creditably through sixth form at the High School, Montreal, and would have entered McGill College had his grandfather not failed. Would it many of us could but recall those happy school days, when gay and free from all care and pain we frolicked, fought and got thrashed with unflinching regularity. There was even sugar in Howes' cane, "Davy" Rogers' taws which sometimes made us wish we were cherubs without bodies to be whacked, were never laid on except when the culprit richly deserved it. Well do many of us remember being called out to perform for the warning and benefit of the class *a pas seul*, a sort of a squirming minuet to the *swishing* music of the cane, and were so demoralized as to find it preferable to being kept in, a more dignified but terribly tedious punishment to young mercurial blood.

The Pettyshams were on their way to pay their respects to Mrs. Buchan, whom they found sitting on the porch of her cottage knitting.

"How's a' wi' ye the day" cried out Mr. Pettysham when within speaking distance.

"Brawly" responded the old dame, "come awa ben."

"No, no, its a fine day and we'll pay our respects to you here on the porch."

"Na, na, I will ca' it a *veesit* unless you cross my threshold."

"Well, well, children come away in," said Mr. Pettysham laughing, as he humored the old dame, who insisted on the 'bairns, puir bodies' gorging themselves with cakes and currant wine. These juveniles with phenomenal digestions were soon romping over the premises, into the stable, up in the hay loft, and then far into the fields, where they wondered until nightfall.

After the children had gone, the old lady resumed her seat on the porch, and Mr. Pettysham, leaning against the post, kept up quite an animated discussion on prophetic scriptural problems which could only be solved by the author, and she had lost the key.

"Don't you think Mrs. Buchan, that all good

folks in the world will be saved? There are, perhaps more roads to Heaven than one."

"Na, Na, ye must be saved by faith, ye canna be saved by works alone, there is only one straight and narrow path, that John Knox in the time of the Reformation pointed out."

"What! You don't mean to say that only Presbyterians will be saved!"

"I hae me doubts *about ither* creeds, they are a led by the false prophets of Anti-Christ."

"Indeed—How lucky it was for the world that Christ was born a poor Jew, if Scotland had been the place of nativity, no one south of the Tweed would have been saved! Come, come, Mrs. Buchan, be a little more charitable."

"I *am* charitable but ye ken well that many are called and but few chosen."

"And I suppose the majority of that few will come from Scotland?"

"Aye, aye, they'll all come from the land where they ken how to keep the *Sawbath*."

"I thought you said we could only be saved by faith and not by works. Keeping the Sabbath is not an exercise of faith. Do you see that cart-wheel leaning against the fence?"

"Yes."

"What are the ants climbing up the spokes for?"

"To eat the grease at the hub."

"Can't they get to the hub as well by one spoke as by another?"

"Certainly."

"Now these ants are like Christians travelling to the promised land. They are on different roads, but all lead to the same centre. Perhaps these ants resemble human beings. Those on one spoke are calling to those on another, warning them that they are on the wrong path and will never reach the grease at the hub. How astonished some ants will be at the end of the journey to find those they thought on the wrong way have arrived before them! There will be many such surprises in Heaven. People we expected to meet are absent and many we thought doomed to perdition are in the high places."

The old lady adjusted her spectacles and was about to demolish Mr. Pettysham with texts from the minor prophets, when Mrs. Pettysham opportunely arrived and the conversation drifted for a time into other channels.

Mrs. Pettysham must of course "come awa ben" and taste the cake and currant wine.

"What sultry weather we are having, is it not unusual for this season of the year," she remarked.

"It is indeed Mrs. Pettysham, we're living in dreadful days, the prophesied time is at hand,

and "the fifth angel has soundcd, and a star has fallen from Heaven unto the earth, and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit, and he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit," Now all this is in Revelations, ninth Chapter, 1st and 2nd verses. I saw we my ain' eyes yon star fa last night."

"But stars fall in some parts of the Heavens every night. Do you really think the bottomless pit is opened and this is the cause of the warm weather?"

"I'm verra verra sure I dreamt for the third time last night of the seven seals and the beast with seven heads and ten horns."

"Perhaps you had indigestion" here interposed Mr. Pettysham, adding laughingly, "when I have a nightmare of that sort I see the Jabberwook, and the Giascutus flying with the Rhinoceroses among the trees, and bob-tailed salmon swimming backward up Niagara Falls for mere diversion."

Mrs. Pettysham gently reproved her husband for his levity and then turning to the prophettess said half laughingly half seriously.

"My dear Mrs. Buchan don't you think it is rather an impious assumption to imagine that Providence has appointed you the expounder of his will!"

"Providence, madam, has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty."

"But Mrs. Buchan," again interposed Mr. Pettysham, "you are not a weak woman, the people say you often stump the minister in argument?"

The old lady acknowledged the compliment with a grateful smile of conscious pride, which partially mollified her. But just as she was rallying to annihilate Mrs. Pettysham, a tremendous uproar was heard in the rear of the house and in rushed "Bob" Buchan in a state of furious indignation, crying.

"I'll wrestle the evil one out of her. I'll not stand it, she's a witch and has sold herself to Satan."

"What's the matter Mr. Buchan?" cried the visitors in a breath, considerably alarmed.

"Muckle the matter, that old witch has been up to her tricks again, she's sold me rats."

"Sold you rats, Mr. Buchan!" exclaimed Mrs. Pettysham in astonishment, moving towards the door as if she had some doubts about Bob's sanity.

"Yes, sold me rats, I just found the penny under the door of the barn and as I picked it up a rat run across the floor. There wasn't a

rat to be seen for months past, but I'll wrestle with her as Jacob did with the angel, she'll not sell me rats again I've warrant ye."

"Who is the woman?" queried Mrs. Pettysham with an amused smile.

"That Frenchwoman, the Widow Barbotte, who lives near the creek at the back of Screw's store. She's the mother of Narcisse Barbotte, who used to work for me. But he's gone to the United States where these French go, and it will be a lucky day when they all leave Canada. I knew something would happen, I never yet dreamt of Moses and the plagues of Egypt but I was bewitched. Only last night I saw in a vision the Egyptians, full of boils and blains, rubbing themselves against scratching posts as they do in Scotland, and now the witch Barbotte has sold me rats!"

"Nonsense man! she's a poor half-idiotic creature who can harm nobody."

"Harm nobody indeed! I tell ye one of those French Canadian farmers gave her a few pennies and some food to sell his rats and she's sold them to me."

"You astonish me! How does she do it?"

"With the help of Satan she bewitches the rats. Then she goes to the barn at night and calls out."

"Rats! Rats! Rats!!! I've sold ye to Bob Buchan, I've got the money and ye must go when I lay the penny."

"The old hag then comes to my barn and slips a newly minted penny that Satan has bitten, under the barn door and says:

"Rats! Rats!!! Rats!!! While ye stay with Bob Buchan, cats can not kill ye, dogs cannot bite ye, traps cannot catch ye, nor poison destroy ye. Kiss ye the penny."

"She no sooner says this than the rats who have followed her squeal with delight and each one as he passes through the barn door kisses the penny and is safe from all harm. I'll make the old beldame rue this job, I'll no leave her till she and Satan lead the rats into the creek and drown them."

Despite all remonstrances Bob rushed off to put his design into execution. During this strange scene Mrs. Buchan never uttered a syllable but shook her head in a dismal conceited owlish way, as if to infer that the bottomless pit was now open and she would not be astonished though Lucifer himself and all the powers of darkness paid her a visit.

Mr. Pettysham enjoyed this characteristic little melo-drama, but his wife was shocked at such a display of sacrilegious ignorance, wherein rats and Holy Writ seemed inextricably mixed.

On their return after remaining silent for

some time, she abruptly asked her husband:

"Had poor Mary Queen of Scots to live among such uncouth superstitious people?"

Yes, my dear, the Scotch in her day were exceedingly rude in their manners and horribly superstitious. Her son, "his sowship" James the First, of England, found that text in the Bible, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." This modern Solomon employed a wretch to go around the country and discover those possessed of evil spirits. This miserable fellow known as "Hopkins the Witch finder," caused a number of harmless old women to be brought before one of the pet judges of the King. Sir Matthew Hale, who, acting as judge, jury, and prosecuting council, readily admitted the most absurd and suborned testimony, and condemned these unfortunates to be tortured, drowned or burnt at the stake. His Majesty, or his "Sowship" as his favorite Carr, called him, was grasping avaricious, and mean even for a Scotchman, which is saying a great deal. The King's enemies, with much apparent truth, asserted that Hopkins and the Monarch levied a considerable amount of black mail, and not a few wealthy old ladies were compelled secretly to pay heavy fines lest they should be denounced and burnt as witches. To be denounced meant conviction as much as being suspected of being a Royalist meant death during the reign of terror in France. It was this apology for a King who caused the great Sir Walter Raleigh to be beheaded in the tower and then seized his estate, saying "I must have it for Carr." This Carr was the worthless favorite who familiarly addressed the Royal James as "his sowship," and no doubt the monarch deserved the title. Rather singular that such a defender of the Divine right of Kings should allow such familiarity from a subject, but a Scotchman can never see any wrong in his cronies."

"I had my doubts about poor Mary "interposed Mrs. Pettysham," but now I sincerely pity her. Just fancy her leaving the polished, gay, esthetical Court of France, to live in such a bleak, severe, barbarous country. I can well imagine with what infinite feelings of disgust she was compelled to listen to John Knox.

Yes, John Knox was not a pleasant propagandist according to our modern notions of making converts. The spirit of love and moderation was foreign to his rough, harsh character. With Mahomet it was the sword, tribute, or the Koran, with John Knox, Presbyterianism or persecution. He was born in 1505, became a Protestant in 1545, and though over three hundred years have passed, the same intolerant spirit towards every other creed is a distinguish-

ing trait of Scotch theology. Monseigneur Capel, (the Caterby of Disraeli's Lothair, which was not written at that period) who has converted half the English nobility to Catholicism, used the *suaviter in modo* method,—a method the Protestants might learn to advantage in dealing with the Catholics of Canada. But the Stuarts were a bad lot."

"Mr. Pettysham, remember my father was a descendant of these Kings," exclaimed the lady indignantly.

"By Jove, my dear, I forgot I was declaiming against your family. Pray moderate your anger, you are almost as bad as the humorist who wept at the grave of Adam because he felt the relationship."

This levity was too much for the haughty descendant of a royal line, and the irreverent ribald was in process of receiving a sound rati-
ng when, from a path turning into the road, her belligerent ladyship encountered Mr. and Mrs. Screws, Miss Mary Screws accompanied by Mr. Samuel Skimpit, the Rev. Jeremiah Rose and his pretty daughter Florence. These good people had come to pay their respects to the new-comers. After many serious and prolonged consultations, these rural fashionables concluded to visit the Pettyshams in a body, to support and encourage each other, Dame Rumor having circulated exaggerated reports concerning the grandeur and fashionable style of life maintained at "Hardscrabble."

CHAPTER VI.

"As the husband, so the wife is
Thou art mated to a clown,
And the grossness of his nature
Will have weight to drag thee down."

LOCKESLY HALL.

Mr. Solomon Screws greeted Mr. and Mrs. Pettysham, with a disagreeable mixture of assurance and servility, coupled to an unctuous deference interrupted by a harsh spirit of contradiction. Though generally soft and slimy in speech he could not disguise the natural roughness of his nature. One saw only the artificial civility of the tradesman who endeavors to please that he may rise in his business, but the true civility of the gentleman who endeavors to make others happy, even at his own cost, was not a component part of Screw's politeness.

Mrs. Pettysham, a keen but kindly observer, soon placed these people at their ease, by her affable engaging manners. The clergyman and his daughter, the fair Florence, particularly interested her. She felt that with them there might be some approach to intimacy, but a secret instinct warned her to be on guard with the

Screws family whose ideas and habits were on a much lower plane. These she treated with the most marked and stately politeness—a politeness that effectually checked all undue familiarity. She felt like a besieged commander who is compelled to admit an enemy under a flag of of truce, but is determined to keep hidden from his observation the condition of the fort and garrison. To treat this gossip-mongering clique genially and yet allow no prying into her affairs was no easy task with people accustomed to ask the most blunt questions.

Poor Mrs. Screws was one of those good-natured common-place souls made by the thousand like planks from a saw-mill, and well fitted for the common usages of life. Nursing, dressing and housekeeping, with a little peppery gossip filled up the gamut of her life. She never meant any harm by what she said, but like most people who make the same remark did a great deal. Her husband had frequently to reprimand her for speaking too freely of the internal economy of the household, then she would cry and sob "Solomon I'm far from well. I'm not long for this world." This plaintive appeal, in the early days of matrimony, was potent to quiet the angry passions of Screws but of late years it had become monotonous.

"You're not long for this world are you?" he would exclaim, "if you keep on whining you'll be dead in a month and then I'll be at the expense of a funeral, and the annoyance of being without a wife for six months."

This had an electrical effect on Mrs. Screws who lived in mortal terror that she should die and her children be left to the care of a step-mother, for nothing could convince her that Screws would not marry again. Had she studied better that species of the human race the widower, she would have known such be-
reaved ones are not over apt to take a second chance in the lottery of matrimony when the first proves to be a blank. These truths she poured into Mrs. Pettyshams ear in a *sotto voce* while Solomon was discussing politics and Skimpit entertaining the young ladies with a story wherein he quizzed a countryman who called tomatoes *tomatoes*, by saying systematically *potatoes* instead of potatoes. The little imp, hardly large enough to bait a mousetrap, was taking lessons in grammar at a night-school and went around like a *nonpareil* edition of Lindly Murray obnoxiously correcting everybody and telling them they spoke "bad grammar." Indeed he got quite a reputation as a grammarian, and on one occasion an American from over the lines not seeing him in the store asked one of the clerks if that "Little dictionary cuss was around."

Poor Skimpit was not naturally of a literary turn of mind. His esthetic taste had just sprouted and was not yet out of the nursery. People wondered how Sammy should "go so suddenly for book learning." Little they knew that under the calm business-like exterior of Samuel Skimpit there was an emotional volcano of romance. It that heart, as it were, Cupid had started business and was doing a roaring trade. Miss Mary Screws had found pices of paper in his room covered with original poetry, wherein the spondees and dactyls were about as musical as if they had been fired out of a cannon. One line could be measured with a yard-stick and the other with a ten-foot pole, for Skimpit cultivated the rugged metre of Walt Whitman and made his poetic lines like "Blades of Grass," some "long, and t'others short." Mary treasured these effusions and grew more lovingly affectionate with her own Sammy. But she acted on him like a dose of treacle and brimstone they give school boys in spring to cool their blood.

Alas poor Samuel, alas poor Mary. The course of true love never does run smooth. Talk of the "Rocky Ride" to Dublin, dream of riding over a corduroy road in a springless hay-cart! These are as ephemeral as infantile spankings, forgotten perhaps ere the maternal slipper is replaced, but what, *what* balm is there for the pangs of unrequited affection?

Skimpit loved—but not where he could get a share in the business. This was quite a mistake from a commercial point of view. Where were the claims of interest and advancement? "The thoughts ye cannot stay with brazen chains a girls hair lightly binds." The spell of woman's wiles have been woven around Samuel's heart, and

—Love forever hath
A spell to make Ambition sleep.

crews now had no occasion to reprimand his head clerk for non-attendance at church. Samuel, instead of racing around the country on a buck-board on the Sabbath day buying produce and doing a little note shaving on his own account, now went regularly to church, taught Sunday school, attended the Thursday evening meetings, and not unfrequently led in prayer. He never played cards now on Sunday evenings, and spoke of the failings of others in a tone indicative of his own infallibility. In fact he became a pious prig, but, like a pendulum, was eternally swinging to extremes. One month he would forswear dancing and declare it was sinful. Then his restless energy, like one of Cromwell's Roundheads, with a text of Scripture for a Christian name, would denounce stage

plays as vain devices of the evil one. When the pendulum was at stage plays he never missed a dance in the whole country side, but when it got back he attended every vagabond strolling company that performed, and talked of high art and the drama.

In fact Skimpit fell over head and ears in love with that heart ensnarer, Florence Rose, the minister's lovely daughter, who had just finished her education at the Convent and had returned to Consumption. How eagerly he embraced the opportunity of obtaining an introduction when the visit to the Pettysshams was arranged. How agreeable he tried to make himself while his little enslaver, as demure as a nun quietly enjoyed this her first triumph.

"Yes, Mrs. Pettyssham, the doctor knows my constitution, Mrs. Pettyssham, and I feel far from well, Mrs. Pettyssham, and I know I'm not long for this world, and what's to become of those poor motherless children, Mrs. Pettyssham?"

"There she goes again," said Screws to himself, pausing in the conversation with Mr. Pettyssham and darting a fierce look at his wife. "I suppose Mrs. Pettyssham will know more than I do of my own house if I stay much longer."

But Mrs. Screws was not to be put down, and by way of defiance raised her voice a little louder, and having heard somewhere that it showed respect when addressing a person to repeat their name as frequently as possible, took care to sprinkle Mr. Pettyssham's patronymic pretty liberally in the conversation. She learnt it from her father, Joblot, boot-maker to the nobility, who couldn't sell Lord Tom No'dy even a pair of laces without calling him "My lord" as often as there were eyelets in his shooting boots.

"Yes, Mr. Pettyssham, what is to become of those poor motherless darlings. There is my eldest daughter, Mary, she of course will be provided for—"

The rest of the conversation could only be inferred from fragments—*Mr. Skimpit—steady pious young man—good husband—share in business.*

This little bit of family history was unfortunately revealed at a time when a complete lull in the conversation took place.

Skimpit heard it and could have howled with anguish.

Miss Screws heard it, blushed, and looked tenderly at her own Sammy.

Miss Rose heard it, and imagining there could be no harm in being affable to the fiancée of her friend, made herself very agreeable.

Mr. Pettyssham heard it, and putting Skimpit under a mental microscope, anatomized the insect in his usual calm way, "Confidence—

brass—assurance—never lack anything for want of asking."

Mrs. Pettysham of course heard it, and with a woman's unerring instinct, considered it a very good match.

What more unseasonable confidences the loquacious Mrs. Screws would have inflicted on her much enduring hostess had not the servant announced—

Mr. and Mrs. Prudhomme.

The notary, a short meagre man, with a countenance as full of angles as a treatise on trigonometry, advanced into the room followed by his wife, a large corpulent woman, who was dressed so inharmoniously that each article looked as if it had been won at a lottery. A paint shop struck with a bombshell would have been harmony itself compared with her toilet.

The man of deeds and titles bowed politely to the hostess and host, and was about to take his seat when Screws advanced familiarly and shaking his hand exclaimed—

"Why, Toughheel, you here? Didn't expect this. Mrs. Pettysham, all the village seems to be making you a call to-day."

"Ah, Monsieur Screws, you will call me *tough heel*. Monsieur Pettysham, dis man no pronounce the French vera well. My name is Theophile Achille, and he call me Tough-heel."

"Your name in English is Theophilus Achilles," responded Mr. Pettysham. "Mr. Screws perhaps is something of a humorist, and calls you 'the tough heeled Achilles.' That mythological warrior was only vulnerable in the heel, but you are completely invulnerable, judging by your name."

The notary laughed at this quaint conceit and so did Screws, to show that that he understood the classical illusion, which he did not.

Mr. Pettysham took a good look at the hard-featured notary, and concluded that his tough heel was the only soft spot about him.

The notary in his turn thought that as far as Pettysham was concerned, "Hardscrabble" would not stay long in such hands. The *Madam*, as he called Mrs. Pettysham, would be a foil to any plans he and Screws had to eventually possess the seignory.

Injustice to-day lives as much in a fortress as in the old feudal times when the predatory baron swept down from his stronghold and harried the defenceless peasants of the plain. Our modern robbers are the store-keepers, and the extortionate money-lenders and they are destitute of chivalry and romance, redeeming features of their prototypes. That delightful writer, Washington Irving, says, "a conscientious highwayman reforms and becomes a praiseworthy citizen,

contenting himself with cheating his neighbor out of that property he would formerly have seized with open violence."

"Ah, Monsieur Pettysham, you will soon make one fine place of dis 'Hardscrabble.'"

"To be sure," added Screws. "Mr. Pettysham has no doubt studied scientific farming and will help to educate our farmers up to the modern style of agriculture. They know nothing about sub-soil drainage and plowing, phosphate, guano and patent fertilizers. I suppose you will introduce the new systems?"

"Not I; in fact I know but little about farming, except in theory—enough perhaps to enable me to make a short speech at an agricultural dinner. Besides, I have no capital to embark in such enterprises. I leave that for Montreal millionaires, who farm on the Lachine Road for pleasure and raise potatoes that cost about ten cents each. My wife will look after 'Hardscrabble.'"

"As for capital," said the notary, "you would have no trouble, I assure you, in raising all the money you want at a nominal rate of interest, —merely nominal, I assure you. Is that not so, Mr. Screws?"

Certainly, my dear Toughheel, no man in this county has better judgment on such matters, and Mrs. Pettysham, this fine estate is susceptible of great improvement, but it never has had such intelligent management as you can bestow upon it.

"I am afraid, Mr. Screws, replied the hostess, this is no country for scientific agriculture and gentleman farming." "He who would thrive by the plow must hold it himself." This is an old and true saying and worthy of all acceptance. I have many friends in the townships who have sunk large sums in experimental farming without much success, and you know sir it is wisdom to profit by the experience of others.

"Madam is very prudent, but too great prudence kills enterprise."

"Experience teaches us caution."

"Caution carried to excess makes us lose many opportunities."

"It is better to lose opportunities than to imperil that by which opportunities can be improved."

"Ah, Madame, it is useless to discuss with so clever a lady, you should be in Parliament."

"No thank you, that is not woman's sphere, I hope my husband will some day get there."

"If he ever gets there," thought Screws, "he will be more indebted to you than to his own abilities. He may have book learning, but a baby could beat him at a bargain."

Skimpit listened attentively to this conversation. He had heard similar conferences on

several occasions and they boded little good for the person who got between Screws and Prudhomme.

The notary before retiring was loud in his praises of his good friend Screws and improving an opportunity when Mrs. Pettysham was alone, informed her in Frenchified English that he admired "self-made" men.

"Dere is my vera good friend Monsieur Screws. Smart *ah oui*. He make every ding himself—he make himself. No fadder no mudder, he came here all alone. He *rich* now *ah oui*. He rise from de lowest of de low."

Screws heard these too fulsome compliments at first with pleasure, but when the enthusiastic notary said that he arose from "the lowest of de low," he fidgetted, grew red, and looked daggers at his indiscreet eulogist.

Mr. Pettysham listened with amusement to the little notary's application of the phrase "lowest of the low," which he had heard in some other conversation and imagined it would be suitable in describing the primal condition of a self made man. These self made men worship their creator, that is self, and though willing to be considered the architect of their own fortune, hardly wish to convey the impression that they were, "Born in the garret, in the gutter bred." All men, would prefer to have it known, that like St. Patrick, they "came of *decent* people."

"Why dear," he said when the visitor left, "I don't think Mr. Screws appreciated the reference to his being the "lowest of de low." That was a pretty good joke. Do you remember old bald-headed Crawfish who died worth a mint of money?"

"Yes, he was very proud of being a self made man."

"Well one day at the club he was boasting rather loudly of the fact, when Charley Bounce, the broker asked him slowly and dryly:

"Mr. Crawfish—you say you are a self made man,—well when you—were—about it—why didn't you put a little more hair on the top of your head."

CHAPTER VII.

"Will I write in your album? Ah, do you not know, We are writing in albums wherever we go!
Do good or do evil, whatever our part,
We are writing a line on somebody's heart."

Screws when angry was a master of invective and could be as vituperative as a police court lawyer. He allowed the rest of the party under Skimpit to form the advance guard while he held Prudhomme back, and gave the astonished notary such a volley of abuse for his too candid

reference to his lowly origin, that the little man fancied he must have suggested there was a bar sinister on the Screws coat of arms.

The two men hated each other, but the cohesive power of plunder kept them together, though they could kiss like Judas and deny each other in danger like Peter. Grab and self were their gods, and to their master passions all other considerations must succumb. Both prostituted their religion to gaining temporal ends. Like pirates beguiling an unsuspecting merchantman they attracted the strangers under the "Banner of the Lamb," but when they came within range hoisted the skull and cross bones and fired a raking broadside. One rode the Protestant horse, while the other poses as a leading light of the Ultramontane party and thus they led the religious world of Consumption. It was robbery in broadcloth and therefore revered. Not the act but the manner of doing it constitute the difference between the financier and the felon. Speculate with the employer's money and the penitentiary awaits the loser, but taking the funds of a bank and sinking it in a hazardous railroad enterprise is only considered a financial misfortune, whereas success leads to knighthood and a seat at Royalty's table.

"Tough-heel, I don't see any use of a man who has been brought up in the gutter always talking about mud pies," said Screws to his companion with an angry snort.

"Dat is vere true, Mon Dieu, nor do I see any use in the man what no speaks the French calling his friend, *Tough heel* and every body laugh. Ef you call me tough heel—bah! *cet nom bete*—I will tell that little story of de lowest of de low and vill lief you and take my hat and promenade."

"Tut, tut, *Mr. Prudhomme*, we can't afford to fall out about trifles, let's us change the subject. I found out in this visit just what I wanted to ascertain. The lady is the head of that house'old. No use wasting any powder on Pettysham."

Ah! yes, she smart, vere smart. He good fellows, pleasant man to transact de business, he know so kettle of de grand art of making one bargain, Eh!"

"Make a bargain! he make a bargain? Just about as well as an Indian could with a Hudson Bay trader. But he is no fool though he may not be sharp at a trade."

"Yes, he have de grand ability, and he is of de noblesse, his family is von of stupendous antiquity in la France."

"What does family amount to if you can't pay cash?"

"Ah! Monsieur Screws, you are too practical. You can pay cash for one, two, dree, four, thous-

and dollar. Maybe he no have a leetle ten dollar bill, mais mon Dieu, if he run and you run for de Parliament, he takes his seat, and you! You stay at home."

Screws made no reply, but after some minutes reflection in which his pace kept time to the hurrying thoughts passing through his scheming brain, he remarked:

"Every man can be had somehow. Mrs. Pettysham is ambitious to have her husband in Parliament. The Conservative party is coming to the front."

"De liberal member is vere rich. He will spend much money to be re-elected!"

"Money alone won't do. The people evidently want a change, and a Conservative candidate of old family would command much influence especially with the clergy."

"His election will cost two or tree thousand dollar."

"I'll furnish that amount."

"Without security."

"No," a mortgage on "Hardscrabble."

"His wife will never consent."

"She will if the money is to send her husband to Parliament. That is her dearest ambition."

"What good will his going to Parliament do us."

"None at present."

"Then why elect him?"

"I don't purpose he shall be elected, at least, this time."

"If he run we must support him."

"Yes, we can urge him on with one hand for the sake of appearances, and pull him back with the other."

"How?"

"Circulate reports that he is an infidel. Mrs. Buchan says that he laughs at the holy Prophets. He is careless, make jokes, and we can easily manage to convey an impression that he is not sound on religious subjects. If defeated, we hold the mortgage on "Hardscrabble" and you know what that means, Eh, Mr. Prudhomme!"

"Yes, yes, but dey are not like the poor habitant, dey read and dey know where money can be had for low interest."

I am aware of that. We can say we don't wish to hurry him, and will make a mortgage at low interest, say for five years. Paying the interest will reduce their income. I'll allow them to open a running account at the store, and you know what that means, Eh, Prudhomme?"

"Ah! yes," replied the Notary with alacrity, his face puckered into a grimace, den you will suddenly have some notes falling due, eh. Some heavy payments to meet, eh. Must have the

money, eh. Perhaps your vere good friend Prudhomme, might oblige de Pettyshams with a loan, eh. Yes, but it is second mortgage, must pay good interest on second mortgage, eh! Ah! ah!! he!!! you vere smart man, Screws."

The conspirators were so interested in their schemes, that they unwittingly approached the party led by Skimpit and the clergyman, who being guileless of the ways of business men, did not understand the purport of their remarks. The clerk putting together the conversation in the drawing-room and this on the road had the key to the plot.

"What a pity" he thought, that Florence is not Mr. Pettysham's daughter, then I could counteract the plot, save her father from ruin, who would out of gratitude bestow on me the hand of his lovely child. *Cracky*, this is getting romantic!"

Skimpit, since he joined the church never indulged in strong language. He had quite a vocabulary of modified oaths, and never got nearer to swearing under the highest provocation than an occasional "darn."

But he wss too much occupied with his fair enslaver to give much attention to planning personal advantages from the knowledge he overheard.

Fair Florence loved poetry, and so did Skimpit. He never heard Shakspeare's name mentioned without a jealous pang, failing to see much difference between his Muse and that of the Bard of Avon. Skimpit's imagination was not of a glowing, tropical east; on the contrary, it was very practical. With a knowledge of the art of versification, he could have put David's Psalms in as good long metre as a certain exalted personage, who may be heartily congratulated himself on not being obliged to live by his pen, which, in the hands of little men, is an instrument for their own martyrdom.

"What a lovely vegetable garden!" ejaculated the poet. "Are you not fond of vegetables, Miss Florence? Why shouldn't poets praise these useful products? Flowers are very well, but they only please, whereas vegetables sustain life. And as poets write much about life, why shouldn't they sing about that which sustains it?" If I had been Tennyson, I would have written, 'Come into the garden, Maud, and cull a cabbage for cooking.' Better than culling lilies. A man can't live on lilies."

"You're evidently not an æsthetic," replied the young lady, laughing.

"A what?"

"An æsthetic. Don't you know what that means? Æsthetics are—well, they are people who live on sentiment for breakfast, languish over a lily for dinuer, and sup on moonbeams."

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"Indeed! They should be exterminated."

"Why?"

"They spoil trade. When people get to live on nothing, they ruin the country stores, and I, as a business man, object to them. I do a little quiet trading on my own account in the beef and pork line."

"Why not write poetry on beef and pork, Mr. Skimpit? They sustain life," queried the young lady, with a quizzing laugh.

Why not, reader? This is a prosaic, practical age of heifers and hogs. We banquet not on manna, ambrosia, nectar and such celestial cordials. Let the modern bard, then, strike the lyre, and sing a cantata on cabbage, a bravura on turnips, or warble the tender lamentations of the onion, that tearful Niobe of vegetables. Let the love-lorn poet indite a soft, sentimental sonnet to the potato (when mashed), or cultivate a philosophical mood and rival Virgil and Homer in an epic on pork! Again, why not? The citron, the orange, the fig and the vine are all praised in immortal verse. Then why should the more substantial part of the staff of life be neglected?

Pope did, however, devote this couplet to the kitchen garden:

"See dying vegetables life sustain;

See life, dissolving, vegetate again."

But the muse on this subject is not exhausted.

Skimpit took the practical view, and as a consequence his versification was a blending of the sublime and the commonplace, a characteristic of the inspired Fenian orator, who said, that the ship of state of the Irish republic would ere long walk the waters like a canvas-back duck. He no doubt meant to give the quotation that the vessel would "walk the waters like a thing of life," but his memory was treacherous, and his florid imagination supplied the duck simile. It was not so sublime and comprehensive as "a thing of life," which might mean a swan or a whale.

It is difficult to hide genius under a bushel. Mary Screws confided to Florence that her Samuel was a poet and wrote lovely verses. Though Skimpit never gave out, like *Simon, Magus*, "that himself was some great one," yet he never denied that he occasionally cultivated the muse, and, though some might think it unbusiness-like, he entertained a contrary opinion, as in the present age, he said, literary ability is a synonym for general ability, *vide* Disraeli, Gladstone, Cobden, Bright, Lord John Russell, and many other able statesmen, who have also left their impress on the world of letters, to say nothing of Carlyle's "Able Editors."

The mornse was at length reached, but before saying adieu to her admirer the young beauty made the blushing Skimpit a request, that he should write a few lines in her album, and without waiting for a reply tripped gaily into the house, and speedily reappeared with a delicately bound, gilt-edged, perfumed little book—the bugbear of poets, and the delight of versifiers.

The poet received this tribute to his genius with all the rapture a lover would a tell-tale rose from his mistress. In the solemn stillness of the night, he pondered on the profoundness of his passion, which was too great for his tongue to utter. His heart must break or burst in song. It did burst into song, but not of the agonizing, wailing, woe-begone school that apostrophizes life and asks if it be worth living—a school that alternates its lamentations on getting into the scrape of being alive with mixed metaphors, which may be highly suggestive, like Browning's poems, but are not easily understood. The reader gropes after the hidden, mysterious meaning in fear and trembling, lest he should lose his mind, and when he snatches bald-headed the mercurial thought, thinks it might much better have been said than sung, as there was nothing so sublime in it to warrant such ambiguous phraseology. But this is one of the fashionable freaks of the modern muse, and every lamb's wool suckle-thumbkin who makes a burglarious entrance into Parnassus must be termed a poet because he darkens the most commonplace thought in sublimity.

Skimpit was not of this pernicious school. He wrote for the people. Every phrase was as clear as the noonday sun, and every line was plain to the least tutored mind. He penned an acrostic on "Florence," but its burning ardor was too pronounced for common eyes to see in a semi-public album. He laid the effusion aside, and, after long tossing in the bed in a wild frenzy of composition, produced this sweetly tender couplet, so full of fervid remembrance and unaffected simplicity:

When this you spy
Remember I.

SAM'L SKIMPIT.

5, 4, '58.

True, it was not strictly grammatical, but the free-bounding soul of the poet was not to be chained Prometheus-like to a work of Prosody. He disdained the artificial rules of a class culture, out of all originality, and as the poet of the people gave the rugged nuggets of his Muse just as they came from the mine of his exalted soul.

The young lady's feelings on receiving back her album were not those of unmingled delight. Her first impulse was to tear the couplet out as

being too touching and tender for the general eye, but unfortunately it was written on the back of a page that bore a name and a couplet which was the refrain of her every song.

CHAPTER VIII.

"'Tis sweet to court,
But O how bitter,
To court a girl
And then not get her."

Sweet Singer of Michigan.

Miss Florence showed her album to a particular friend, who solemnly ejaculated after a peal of laughter,

"In the name of the prophet—*Figs.*"

This is a cry that may be heard daily in the streets of Constantinople. There the peddlers preface the name of their wares by a pious exclamation, regardless of the incongruous associations and the rapid transaction from pathos to bathos.

This friend, Richard Douglas, the village schoolmaster, was a tall muscular young man whose father, a farmer, not far distant from "Hardscrabble," having a large family to support, had early suggested that his eldest son Richard, who showed a very decided disinclination to farming, should find employment in the city. The young man had no love, however, for trade, and notwithstanding bright prospects held out to him by relatives in Montreal, accepted the offer of teaching school at a mere nominal salary. Unlike a great many shallow pretenders, who by teaching others learnt themselves to spell, he brought to bear on his duties a culture and conscientiousness, the result of arduous study and a stern devotion to principle. A school is a mimic world, and the master no mean potentate. He rules the children, the children influence the mothers, and the mothers the fathers; consequently, he is an unseen force acting in the present and reaching far into the future. Dionysius, the tyrant, after his downfall, taught in Greece, and became the autocrat of the school-room. Louis the Eighteenth was a pedagogue in Switzerland, and was fonder of translating Horace than of framing a constitution for the French. Louis Phillippe taught philosophy and gave French lessons in New York city. Royalty under a cloud teaching the sovereign citizens of the American Republic!

"Oh, he is only a schoolmaster!" sniffed Miss Screws to Miss Florence a few days after the latter's return from the convent.

"He's very nice-looking; do you know his name?"

"Richard Douglas, son of an old farmer up the river, with a large family, and as poor as charity."

"Does he farm when not teaching?"

"Not he; it would be something to his credit if he did. It would aid the old people who have a hard struggle to make a living. Pa offered to take him into the store before Mr. Skimpit came, and, just imagine, he actually had the insolence to refuse. He might have got to be a partner. Pa even offered to give him a salary to keep the books in his spare hours, and do you know that after a week's trial Pa found him so obstinate and unwilling to learn business habits that he was obliged to dismiss him. Then he took to studying law. There, he's crossing over as if he wanted to speak to me!"

Mr. Douglas advanced with a polite bow, but Miss Screws returned the salute in such a frigid manner and with a quickened step that he saw any attempt at conversation would be considered intrusive. He looked at Florence, their eyes met, and in that momentary glance lay concealed the fate of a lifetime.

The funny cynic who laughs with all and weeps with none loves to analyze the grand passion and puts it down to mere imagination which clothes lovers in each other's eyes with more charms and graces than the world can see. It is therefore quite a fallacy to suppose love is blind. In fact it would be truer to say that he enlarges the vision and lovers see more in each other than the cold, disinterested onlooker who judges with the intellect and not with the heart. No doubt Douglas thought Florence an angel, and he was to her a demi-god. If in after life such fond lovers discover that he has married but a woman and she only a man, why should the laughing cynic ridicule the the romance of courtship? *Disillusion* will come soon enough—almost with the laying aside of the *illusion* fabric of the bridal veil. This is not a love story, and therefore the minute details of this courtship will be omitted. Suffice it to say, that he duly obtained an introduction, as most people can when there is a will, and she was not displeased with his attentions. "Love in a village" would, no doubt, make a very pretty story, but when one grows old and cynical, few flowers of Fancy bloom on the rugged granite of his mind; in fact the vegetation of romance at a late period of life becomes stunted, and if the attempt be made to portray passion, the reader feels more inclined to laugh than to liquefy into sympathetic tears. May and December never agree either in writing or reality. If readers hunger after highly-wrought love romances, let them seek the columns of the *Montreal Star* and there find passion torn to tatters by characters who walk on stilts with their heads in the clouds. To be realistic in this intensely prac-

tical age, one must deal with facts as they are. The young lady no longer attitudinizes at the harp, an instrument well calculated to display a beautiful figure, nor do her tapering jeweled fingers play over the chords of the soul-melting lute. No, as Skimpit would say, she flounces down at the piano and pounds, while the agitated lover turns the wrong leaf of the music and makes a mess of the robust melody. What pathos or passion is suggested by a modern young lady sitting at a piano! Juliet discovered by the light of a moonbeam playing the lute, or burning Sappho in the isles of Greece waking to ecstasy the living lyre are fit subjects for Anacreon and the Irish bard who sang of love and wine and song. Our barque, with flowing sail, is no longer on the sea; the chaste Dianas of Belgravia grace not chariots drawn by prancing steeds; nor is the melodious horn of the post-boy heard on the king's highway. Times are changed. Juliet goes to the ball in an unportical carriage, while Romeo rattles down to the sea behind a shrieking, rushing locomotive, and takes a panting snorting steamer like a Leviathan or Behemoth of flesh and blood, to plow the watery main. What poetry or romance is therefore left in the age of machines! Even love itself has become a mechanical assortment of the sexes to meet the demand of the matrimonial market.

True, people do elope nowadays, but in the majority of instances such elopements are not from opposition of relations, but from notions of economy. The hero comes riding along in a buggy, snatches up the heroine in travelling dress, and gets married by the nearest parson without any flowers or flummery. Sensible way! as there will be fewer remarks, several years afterwards, when the divorce comes, then if there had been a grand wedding and a grand display.

People even in this prosaic age, when disappointed in love, presumably commit suicide, but the scientist says this is merely a specimen of emotional insanity and cannot be relied on as an exact science, not being reducible to this mathematical formula:—Given two lovers, one a jilt the other infatuated; result suicide. The infatuated, contrary to all the approved rules of romance, instead of his own life, takes another woman to wife and laughs at his former passion as a sickly sentiment. This is indeed an era of india rubber hearts so elastic that no trace of a past impression is left. It is hard to break such organs, and though broken they brokenly live on.

Douglas was not melodramatic and Florence was a lovely, healthy specimen of womanhood, not "too bright and good for human nature's daily food." He paid her no compliments in the Chesterfieldian style of the days of the Regency,

when Turveydrop was master of ceremonies and manners were as fine as morals were coarse. Like all her sex she no doubt appreciated sighs, but doted on suppers, silks, and other superfluities, and, all things being equal, would marry where her vantage lay.

As he turned the leaves of the album she remarked,

"What an extraordinary person this Mr. Skimpit is. So very practical, so shrewd in business, and so very pious."

"Oh, very! but his interest will never be sacrificed to piety or principle."

"You are not an admirer of poor Mr. Skimpit?"

"Yes, I admire him for what he seems to be."

"That is rather an ambiguous answer."

"Like the sphynx, one must speak in riddles when we speak of appearances."

"Miss Screws told me you were in her father's employ. Perhaps you were jealous of Mr. Skimpit?" she said laughingly.

"Yes, I *was* in her father's employ. But our arithmetics were at fault. He preached long and practised short measure. One day he asked me with a cunning look if I understood addition, division and silence. I guessed at his meaning, and told him I *could* but *would* not understand it. He pretended to be very angry at the insinuation, and intimated that my services would be no longer required."

"I don't quite understand you."

"It is better that you should not, nor shall I be more explicit, provided the Screws family let my reputation alone."

The Rev. Jeremiah Rose at this moment entered the drawing-room and observed the young man, whom he usually received in a very gracious manner, as Douglas was a favorite with Mrs. Rose. On this occasion his greeting was far less cordial and much constrained. Turning to his daughter, he said in a tone of displeasure,

"Go to your mother, my dear; she desires to see you."

After the young lady left there was an awkward pause. The silence was at length broken by the reverend gentleman.

"Mr. Douglas," he said, "I regret to say that at a meeting of the school trustees held at Solomon Screws' store this afternoon a change was deemed necessary, and at the end of this term your connection with the school closes."

"You surprise me. Most of the trustees expressed perfect satisfaction, and only yesterday one of them spoke of increasing my salary."

"That is just the point. A friend of Mr. Screws, a gentleman from Scotland, has offered

to teach for less salary than you are now getting, and you know Mr. Screws is a man of great influence in the community. Besides, he offered to repair the school-house at his own expense, and the least the Board could do would be to appoint his friend, which they accordingly did. I am sorry to lose you, but Mr. Screws says that, if you will accept it, he can almost guarantee you a similar position in Upper Canada."

"Mr. Screws is very kind," replied the young man, with a mingled haughtiness and bitterness, "but I am not reduced so low yet as to be indebted to Mr. Screws for a livelihood."

"Richard! Richard! You shouldn't speak in that way of this excellent man. He is very much respected."

"Mr. Rose, you are entitled to *your* opinion, what you choose to assert. I prefer to remain silent as to *my* opinion regarding Mr. Screws. He is a man of influence, I am but a school-teacher and a poor law student; but the time may come when my asserted opinion will outweigh his influence. I hope, however, that our pleasant relations may remain unchanged?"

"Well, Richard," replied the minister in a hesitating, embarrassed voice, "you see, Mr. Screws is very influential, and—well, he is the leading elder of the church, and I am under many obligations to him. He has been very kind, and, though there was no vacancy, he made a position for my son in his establishment, and—"

"That is quite enough, I shall not place you under the disagreeable necessity of being too explicit. It is very evident to me that further friendship would be intrusive, therefore—"

"O, dear, no! As a member of my congregation it is my duty to welcome you to the manse, and—"

"Pray don't explain," said the young man, bowing and approaching the door, "time will justify me in your estimation, but until then I must refrain from considering myself more than a mere member of your congregation."

When Douglas left, the Rev. Mr. Rose gave a sigh of relief, and was positively thankful that the young man had intuitively perceived that further acquaintanceship would be prejudicial to the Rose interest. Screws was the satrap in that district and Screws must be obeyed. To offend him was to draw down on the culprit's head a surly vindictiveness that would stoop to the lowest meanness to accomplish its object.

He sought his wife and daughter, whom he found in earnest converse, and was delighted to find the young lady so resigned. Before the advent of her husband Mrs. Rose had explained how matters stood. Screws had much influence, and, in fact, could compel a change of ministers,

were he so disposed. He had taken a violent prejudice against Douglas, and evidently desired to drive the young man out of the village. She was fully aware that an attachment between her daughter and Richard existed, and she encouraged it; for with a woman's keen perception, they being better judges often or the other sex than men are of each other, she saw that he possessed latent power that would one day lead on to fame and fortune, but at present without opportunity he was as seed without soil. She permitted her daughter, in the event of Richard accepting a position in Upper Canada, to correspond, and hoped that the future would bring them freedom from the influence of Screws.

"My dear," said the minister on entering, "the interview was less painful than I thought, but I was grieved to find the young man would not accept Mr. Screws, kind offer. I felt like telling him it was very ungrateful."

"Did he give any reason?"

"No, but he as much as inferred that he would not stoop to be under any compliment to such a man as Screws."

"Did he say what his future intentions were?"

"No, but I suppose he will leave the village and find employment elsewhere, or return to the farm; but I hardly think he will do that, as his father has too many mouths now to feed."

"This is very awkward. I hope, Florence, you will be discreet and give no cause for further comment."

The young lady bowed, blushed, and remained silent.

The parents then discussed Frederick's prosperity in Screws' employ. The mother, with a woman's pride, was desirous that her son should study a profession, but they could ill afford to send him to college. She had to forego her desire, and in due time Frederick entered Screws' store, where he measured tape, the narrowest piece of which was broader than his employer's mind, though he was considered a Solomon on commercial matters.

CHAPTER IX.

She brought me hope, and joy, and wild ambition;
She taught my heart new prayers, my lips new songs.
To all my thoughts she gave that glad fruition
Which wins the plaudits of the earth's great throngs.

DEWITT VAN BUREN.

Why come not spirits from the realms of glory
To visit earth, as in the days of old—
The times of ancient writ and sacred story?
Is heaven more distant! or has earth grown cold!

"Hallo, Douglas!"

The person addressed was walking along moodily, after leaving the Manse, and had just

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commenced to realize how much his position had changed in a few hours. He turned, and was soon joined by Squills, the editor of the *Consumption Clarion*, a weekly paper, devoted to Freedom, Liberty, and the latest gossip.

"I say," began Squills, who never wasted words, but talked as if he were telegraphing across the ocean, and had to pay the heavy tolls out of his own pocket, "you are just the man I wanted to see. Here, I've got a letter from my brother away out in California, and he wants me to come on without delay, as he has been sick for some time and don't expect to recover. You've done some writing for me. Will you take charge of the paper while I am away? I like your dashing style."

"Yes, I *should* like it, but first I must tell you that I am no longer connected with the school, and I must work to eat."

"Country papers, you know, are not Eldorados, but if you choose, I will give you a small salary, and as much as you can make over running expenses."

Squills named the salary, Douglas accepted, and next day the editor was on his way to the Far West, and Richard reigned in his stead.

The Rose and Screws families were quite surprised at this sudden change, and, no doubt, if Screws had known that Douglas could have so opportunely dropped on his feet, he would have found a method to prevent it. A journal creates popular opinion, and an intrinsically bad man fears popular prejudice, the most formidable, because it is the least tangible opponent a man has to encounter. Screws felt this and dreaded the impalpable touch that can direct public opinion, without seeming to lead it. The Cardinal in Bulwer Lytton's "Richelieu," exclaims when the courtiers come to demand Julia De Mauprat in the name of the King—

"Aye, is it so !

Then wakes that power which, in the age of iron,
Burst forth to curb the great and raise the low.

Mark where she stands ; around her form I draw

The awful circle of our solemn church.

Set but a foot within its bounds, and on

Thy head—aye, though it wear a crown—

I launch the thunders of the Church of Rome.

What the Church was in mediæval ages the Press is to-day, in curbing the great and raising the low. That is to say, when it is untrammelled, and not in the leash of King Corporation, who has his collar around the servile necks of too many editors in Canada, whose pens are directed by railroad magnates, who corrupt legislatures and tyrannize over the people.

Douglas took to his new duties kindly ; the work was congenial, and gave him ample time to pursue his legal studies ; and between himself and Mr. Pettysham there sprang up a warm

friendship, as both were students in the same office.

He had neither seen Florence nor heard from her, and as time advanced, his uneasiness, despite the absorbing nature of his labors, grew apace. He was now going through the agony of Love's Mount of Olives, and in such moments even the most stoical pagan deems the gods too prodigal in dealing out evil to mortals, and too stingy of good. On Sunday, however, he would at least see her, and that was some consolation.

Sunday came ; she was not in her accustomed place. The family, however, were very affable. Fred ran up, on the way home, to tell him the good news that Florence was on a visit to an aunt in Montreal, where she would probably stay for a long time, as the old lady was very rich and wanted a companion.

"It will be so much pleasanter for poor Flo ; there is no society, nor any one she cares about here, but in Montreal she will have a chance to enjoy herself going to balls, sleighing parties, and the skating rink. My aunt entertains a great deal, and the officers are fond of her society."

Poor Douglas ! The thoughtless boy's prattle fell on his heavy heart like molten lead and he felt a sickening sense of despondency and desolation stealing over him. A strong genuine early attachment is the best safeguard for a young man, and during the period he had known Florence the world was bright and hopeful, but now life in his loneliness devoid of all attraction stood before him with the brutal justice of a photograph. Come what may he was determined to face the world manfully and seek in hard and unremitting toil the only panacea for the pilgrim of love. In those bright brief days just closed he found in his grand passion as grand an incentive to ambition, and under the fostering light of woman's laughing eyes and lovely lips his labors attained to a happy joyous fruition, but now labor would press its heavy weight on his equally heavy heart.

As he sat at his desk, her love-ensnaring face was ever present, and seemed to guide his pen to nobler thoughts and loftier sentiments, and bade him nurture his mind at the spring of knowledge. He would become a lawyer by profession—a gentleman by practice ; and should he attain to political power would make moral suasion the only proper way of governing men.

Heigh ! ho ! What grand resolves young lovers make on the threshold of a career !

Mr. Pettysham often listened to the newly hatched young editor, with fragments of the shell still clinging to him, giving an opinion on

me.. and things with all the dogmatism of a veteran scribbler. He had yet to learn the vast difference between theory and practice even in editing a newspaper.

"How do you propose to run this paper, Douglas?" inquired his visitor.

"I intend to follow James Gordon Bennett's advice, and never be more than a day in advance of the people. In fact, to hold my hand on the public pulse, write as it indicates and thus seem to lead, where in reality I only follow public opinion."

"That course is well enough for an *independent* paper, but I am afraid you would never make a party man, and the *Clarion* is a Conservative paper."

"How so? Cannot a party man be at least truthful?"

"No, because you will find that when the party pulse is at the lowest, the party organ will be expected to crow loudest."

"But that would be partisanship, not journalism."

"No party journal can be truthful at all times and under all circumstances. The status of any party is best ascertained by the independent press. Its friends over estimate its virtues, its enemies exaggerate its faults."

"Why use the phrase *enemies*? It seems to me that the perpetuation of personal friendship is not incompatible with political antagonism."

"But you must assert your opinion."

"Decidedly! It is the duty of every public man to enforce his convictions with energy and persistency."

"Then you may expect to be bitterly assailed and if you can go through the crucible of vituperation and calumny, yet still preserve friendship for traducers you will be a phenomenon in the journalistic world. Take my advice, keep within the party lines, but still, at least, be independent of the politicians. Let them have no hold on you for politicians "who seem to see the thing they do not" spoil everything they lay their hands on. They make use of the press. See that you are no crossing sweeper to this class who forget to throw a copper for past services and are only grateful for favors to come.—Hallo!! who is that stranger passing with old Bob Buchan?" exclaimed Pettysham breaking the thread of his sermonette.

"Oh! that is his son Thomas!" responded Douglas. "He is on a visit from Boston. A creaky notional spiritualist, rather amusing at intervals but a terrible bore. Shall I call him over to inflict you with some of the mysteries of the Summer Land as they term their paradise."

By all means do so. I like such characters.

I make them either afford me amusement or pay tribute to my stock of information."

The young editor then opened the window, hailed the Buchans and beckoned them over to the editorial rooms. As they approached, Pettysham, a shrewd observer, noticed that the spiritualist had mild peculiar grey eyes that seemed to be looking far away into the future, and light colored hair indicative of a sanguine temperament. The majority of spiritualists, and the late Judge Edmonds declared there were eleven millions in the United States and England have these peculiar traits which are also common to persons of an emotional poetical temperament. The finer higher organization of Americans, especially in the New England States, a land of refinement and high mental training, is more susceptible to such hallucinations. One is rather startled to find there so many who have a firm belief in mediums and supernatural manifestations.

A heavy tramp on the stairs, a shuffling, and the two Buchans appeared in the flesh.

"Ho! Douglas, lad, and *you* Mr. Pettysham, how's a' wee ye?"

"Brawly, brawly, Mr. Buchan," responded Douglas, using a favourite expression of the old Highlander, who added:

"Gentlemen, this is my son Tam, frae Boston. Tam, you is Mr. Pettysham, the laird o' Hardscrabble, and this is the laddie we ca'd 'wee Dick Douglas,' but it's lang syne he was wee Dick!"

"How do, how do, gentlemen," said Tam, with a sharp New England accent. "Most pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Pettysham. Mr. Douglas and I have had the pleasure of a previous introduction."

To this Douglas gave a bow of acquiescence, full of nerve-torturing recollections, and knowing by experience that a long *siderunt* would ensue, bade the visitors be seated.

The seige then commenced.

"Tam O'Shanter's," as Prudhomme, the notary, nicknamed the spiritualist, from his familiarity with supernatural beings, soon turned the reconnoitering conversation into a general engagement, and enlightened his hearers on his peculiar religious views, which views were clothed in very vague but tropically luxuriant, grandiloquent language.

"How do you define Spiritualism?" inquired Douglas, who wished to give a direction to Buchan's rambling eloquence.

"Spiritualism, sir," responded Thomas, with solemn impressive pomposity, "is to-day a light, a voice, a power from Heaven rolling away the stone of doubt from the door of a long entombed humanity. It is Paradise Regained!

It is Harmonial Philosophy! It is the Universal religion of the future! It is eclectic and assimilates the essences of all past creeds! Of Mammon and Moloch, Belial and Baal, Isis and Osiris, Jupiter and Minerva, Thor and Odin, and that of the Nazarene. All have contributed to its advancement, and before it the dark idolatries of alienated Judah must dissolve, for the Anglo-Saxon deluge is over the world, and it is difficult to Jerusalemize an Anglo-Saxon."

"Very," ejaculated Douglas, smiling; "but proceed."

"Sir, it is folly maddened by bigotry," emphasized the Spiritualist, with knit brow, "to ask the thinkers of the nineteenth century to hold the flag-staffs of the ancients over deserted forts. All religions must have their day and lie on one another like the strata of a geological formation. Each one of us should be his own authority. Jehovah speaks to us just as frequently and just as fatherly as he did to Jewish seers."

"Oh, I see," suggested Pettysham. "Every one should be a seeker after the truth on his own account, as the man remarked when he fell down the well."

"Yes, let them seek the truth at the bottom of a well or on the top of a steeple, and there find the divine afflatus from celestial hosts, submerging and suffusing our natures in a measureless ocean of purity and wisdom."

"Yes, yes, but *what is Spiritualism?*"

"Spiritualism, sir, grasps the highest conception of the infinite, incarnate life principle of the Universe. It discards the mouldy crumbs that fall from the oily lips of ordained Rip Van Winkles, who 'say' their prayers instead of doing them, and 'profess' instead of *possess* the Divine principles of absolute religion."

"Just so, just so, but light, more light," demanded Pettysham petulantly. "Now what are the principles, tenets, dogmas, doctrines, of Spiritualism?"

"Tut, tut, man," responded the fervid irascible Thomas at what he supposed to be Pettysham's dense stupidity, "have I not been telling you all along what Spiritualism is? Can't you understand that the conscious human spirit, as the innermost of man, is an essential portion of the Infinite, pure and eternal, a celestial compass with an infinitude of points bearing fixed relations when in conjunction with grosser matter, to time past, present, and future? Do you comprehend?"

"I can't say that I seize your ideas at the first bound. I shall have to reflect. But is not Spiritualism of very modern origin, dating only from the Rochester Rappings in 1850?"

"Bless you, no! Modern Spiritualism is certainly of modern origin. Three mighty waves have loomed up on the ocean of the ages, ancient, mediæval, and modern. The first shed its kindling glories in India, Egypt and China, and illuminated the world down to the birth of the Nazarene."

"Indeed, do you maintain that the Saviour was a Spiritualist?"

"Most assuredly, mediæval Spiritualism dates from the advent of Christ, that eminent Judean Spiritualist. It lasted for nearly twenty centuries, until the Rochester Rappings."

"Were the Patriarchs gifted in that way?"

"Certainly! Moses was a medium. But the magii of Egypt were his superiors. They turned their rods into serpents, water into blood, and produced the frogs also, with seemingly the same ease and celerity that Moses and Aaron did, but when the Lord through Moses, commanded Aaron to "stretch out his rod" and go to manufacturing "*lice*," the magicians begged to be excused; it was too small business—utterly beneath the magii of proud old classic Egypt. They would not thus degrade the sacred mysteries!"

"Lucky they drew the line at '*lice*,' they might have got to grasshoppers and Canada thistles," ejaculated Doyle, laughingly. "Do you think Socrates, Plato, Demosthenes and snarling Diogenes were spiritualists?"

"Yes, every one of them. All the heathen divinities were only different representatives of deceased progenitors; Gods and demons of the mythological ages were the good and heroic of earth's immortalized, yet giving oracles to the living."

"How fortunate spirits are not quite so sociable now-a-days," remarked Pettysham. "It would be very awkward, for example, if paternal spirits could appear to spendthrift sons."

"Spirits come not to tell us pleasant things. Cæsar's spirit came to Brutus and said, 'I shall meet thee at Phillippi,' and at Phillippi Brutus fell."

"The St. Francois-Xavier street brokers should retain the services of a spiritualist."

"The spirits never gamble. Yet presentiments, spirit voices, portents, bodings, visions, dreams and shadowy warnings here, frequently precede individual, and almost uniformly national disasters."

"Does the dog not see speerits when he howls," queried old Bob Buchan getting interested in his son's discourse.

"Tut, tut, father, that is all bib and rattle superstition, only fit for babies and dotards."

"I'm no sae sure o' that," growled the nettled old man. "You fash ye hae been telling us is no

gospel I'm vera sure. I've ta'en a sounner at a' yer speerit dirt. Hae ye the impudence, mun, to tell me the Lord was ane o' yer lang-haired, loony bodies ye ca' mediums?"

"Of a surety," almost screamed Tam rising to his feet. "Did not Gabriel, the prophet's angel, hail Mary, 'Blessed art thou among women.' Did not a host of angels, appearing to the shepherds, sing at his birth, 'Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and good will towards men.' In the temple, when a mere lad, under the heavenly ministering, he confounds the Rabbis. At his baptism the spirit descends in form of a dove and voices his conversation, as it has to other mediums."

"Fudge, havers," growled the old man.

The spiritualist took no notice of the interruption but proceeded—"At his temptation, when famishing with hunger, angels came and ministered unto him. Under spirit influence he healed the diseases of the people. Inspired by a Sampson he drives out the money changers of the Temple. Moved by his mighty guards, indignant at religious corruption, he utters words that call down upon him the anathemas of all the priesthood—a true sign of the faithful iconoclast. Is he not transfigured before the Apostles. Upheld by spirit hands he walks upon the sea of Tiberias. In Gethsemane an angel appeared strengthening him. At his crucifixion, the electro-spirit batteries are strong enough to rend the rocks, and the veil of the Temple from top to bottom."

"Oh, my, my, did ye iver hear sich a daft loon. Tam you've been to see the widow Barbotte. I kent it weel?" fairly roared the old man.

"Nonsense father let the poor old woman alone. She can't hurt anybody."

"She's put Beelzebub into you. I'll no stand it. I'll make her rue this, noo see if I don't!"

Douglas and Pettysham, after considerable difficulty quieted the pair and the latter, finding that further questioning at present, would not enable him to see further into the spiritualistic Millstone suggested that Thomas should relate some of his personal experience and manifestations instead of giving such gorgeous and abstruse definitions that raised the rerriment of mortals and caused the infinite sorrow of angels. The old man sat down and glared at Tam who gave the following sample of his experience.

"Two nights before I left Boston I attended a seance. We all stood around and I held out my hands. In a few minutes a pair of soft hands were placed in mine. I pressed them and knew they were the beloved hands of my dear wife, who has gone before me to the Summer Land. Skeptics said I must be mistaken, so

next day I drove out to Cambridge where my wife's sister resides. I said to her,"

"Susan, take my hands."

"Yes," says she, "I will, Thomas."

"Susan, were your hands not like my dear wife Kate's?"

"They were, Thomas," she replied.

"Now, gentlemen, was that not extraordinary?"

The spiritualist looked around with the air of one who has adduced incontrovertible, infallible proof.

Pettysham, in a gay spirit of levity, thought he would match this story, and exclaimed:

"Yes, most extraordinary; I had a similar experience in Montreal last winter, at a circle. I felt a number of smartappings on my back, and next day I went to my aunt, and said to her:

"Aunt, was your foot not like mother's?"

"Yes, Peter," says she, "we used to wear each other's shoes."

"Aunt," said I, "take off your slipper?"

"Yes, Peter," says she; "I will."

"Now," said I, "spank hard."

"She did, and it felt just like mother's slipper. Mother died when I was a boy."

"Now, gentlemen, was that not extraordinary?" and Pettysham, imitating Thomas, looked around with a convincing air.

Douglas, who had moved out of sight of the spiritualist, shook with laughter, and was so intent on listening to these extraordinary manifestations, that he failed to notice the entrance of Solomon Screws, and Prudhomme the notary, who listened in astonishment to Pettysham's spiritualistic experience.

CHAPTER X.

"A man may cry, Church, Church at every word,
With no more piety than other people,
A daw's not reckoned a religious bird
Because he keeps a cawing from the steeple."

Religious toleration well practised and well understood is one of the noblest conquests of the human mind, and this is the conquest of Henry IV. THIERS.

"Skimpit! Take this note over to Prudhomme and tell him to come immediately."

Solomon Screws, hastily applying his lips to the envelope, handed the missive to the waiting clerk.

Now Samuel was ostensibly deeply religious, but as no mention has been made in the moral code regarding the surreptitious reading of other people's letters, he, without compunction, moistened the envelope, took out the note and perused its contents.

This was merely a breach of etiquette, a social

sin from which vulgar piety considers itself morally absolved. The worldly religion of honor, not being a matter of faith with a certain oleaginous, emotional class, whose sole salvation is by a Faith much handicapped by works, is deemed no obstacle in the way of self-interest. Samuel, therefore, sealed the note, and conscience gave no rebuke.

The notary read it, threw it carelessly on the table, and taking up his hat, told the clerk he would be with his employer in a few minutes. Skimpit, watching an opportunity when the notary's clerk was not observing him, slipped the note into his pocket and hastened to deliver the answer.

Res Scripta Manet. The thing written remains and the shrewdest men write the fewest and the shortest letters. "If you want to give or get information from a politician," said a crafty statesman, "walk ten miles to see your man rather than write him a letter." "The thing written remains" ought to be placed over the door of the Divorce Court, but then the public would be deprived of many a good laugh if none of "his letters were put in evidence." Skimpit had it in black and white, and it might be useful some day.

Screws received the message with a silent nod, and while awaiting the notary stood jingling the coin in his pocket with an air of self-conscious infallibility. The coin had a harsh sound and Screws smiled cynically at its clink which echoed so well his own harsh metallic voice. The notary, who had gone to make a few touches to his toilette, appeared from behind a pile of boxes.

"Ready for Hardscrabble, Prudhomme?" inquired Screws, in what he meant to be a cheerful tone.

"Yes, Monsieur, all ready."

"Then let us be off at once. Saw old Bob Buchan a moment ago. He says Pettysham is in the village, so we can have an uninterrupted interview with the lady."

"Mortgage, eh!"

"Yes, mere matter of form, low rate of interest, long time to run."

"Madame is one vere smart woman."

"Yes, very, but very proud and very ambitious."

"Pride pay de fiddler, de no proud man he dance at Pride's expense, eh!"

"You're not proud, Prudhomme."

"Oh no, when we poor we make de grand bow, we vere polite. Mais, *Mon Dieu*, when we vere rich we no say *bon jour* to all de world."

"Except about election times," added Screws sarcastically.

"Ah yes, dear Monsieur de Candidate he vere

good friend to every body, but after de election he vere good friend to himself."

"True, and all the bills he introduces are written on paper bearing the stamp of 'Private Interest.'"

"Is Private Interest do man as makes de stationery for the Government?" asked Prudhomme, not quite catching the meaning of Screws' remark.

"Well, no, not in theory," laughed Solomon, "but he does in reality. I mean by private interest the bills that best serve himself."

"Den if Pettysham be elected, Monsieur Screws will be de stationer."

"Perhaps, but he must not be elected this time, he is not sufficiently in our power. If, however, he does succeed he must be in the hands of his friends and we are his very best friends, head and right hand men.

Screws here changed the tenor of his remarks by a suggestion which flashed across his quick scheming brain. "There" he exclaimed, "is the office of the *Clarion*. Let us drop in and start the ball rolling. Must get Squills to insert a notice that Pettysham will probably be the Conservative candidate. How provoking! Squills the Editor has gone West, and that fellow Douglas is running the paper. It won't do to be out with him. Must have his good will!"

"No fear of dat. De paper is Conservative journal."

"Yes, that may be, but when an editor is at enmity with the candidate or managers of a party, he can give such lukewarm support, that his open enmity would be better. Douglas for the sake of appearances, might give only a feeble squeak in reply to the most damaging statements of the Liberals. Editors often get the wrong collar around their necks."

"You no good friends with Douglas?"

"Well we are not bad friends, I employed him but found he would not suit."

"He no vere good bookkeeper. He no understand de double entry style, eh."

Screws, stung by the manner more than the matter of the question, which might not, though it did convey, a double meaning, sternly demanded if the young man had said anything to the notary regarding his connection with his store.

The notary who had only suspected, now had his suspicions confirmed, and only smiled sardonically when Screws muttered.

"Miserable fellow! One of those high-strung fools, blind to his own and his friends' interests. Never succeed, never! Poor all his life."

Screws was not a moral philosopher. He only professed to be a Christian, yet deemed that gilded vice was better than draggled virtue.

"I would have taken this young man by the hand," continued Screws, "and made something of him. He might have been a merchant prince, now he's nothing but a scribbling schoolmaster dabbling at law."

Prudhomme made no reply as they were just at the door of the *Clarion* office. They ascended the stairs but unexpectedly finding Pettysham in discussion with the spiritualist, postponed for a time the object of their visit, and after listening to Pettysham's farcical spiritualistic experience, turned to leave. Before reaching the door, Skimpit, who had hurried upstairs, almost ran into them.

"Hallo, what are you doing here?" demanded his employer.

"I just ran over," responded the clerk hesitatingly, "to correct a line of goods in the advertisement. I saw there was a mistake and before it escaped my memory, came to correct it immediately."

Screws made no further inquiries, and taking the notary's arm, proceeded on his way.

Skimpit, when his employer's back was turned, winked knowingly at Douglas, as he handed him a contribution, with the question:

"Get it in this week?"

"Perhaps, We'll try," smiled the young editor.

As Skimpit departed, Douglas turned laughingly to Pettysham, and remarked:

"That is Screws' head clerk. He is a poet, and writes those rhymes in the advertisements. You were not aware that Screws keeps a poet? But what's this! A poem to the 'Absent One,' signed 'S. S.' Skimpit is becoming ambitious."

"He has evidently a wide and deep vein of romance. Did you hear him tell Screws he came to change an advertisement? Did he do so?"

"No; he came to leave this poem."

"I do like to hear a man lie beautifully. It's quite refreshing in this age of bungling mendacity."

"Skimpit's not exactly untruthful. He is only moderate in all things, even in truth-telling and other virtues. Would you like to read his poem to the 'Absent One?' I wonder who she is."

Pettysham took the effusion, and after perusing a few hobbling, commonplace lines, asked the editor if he was afflicted with much stuff of that sort. But as he was about to hand it back, he noticed that the poem was an acrostic.

"Douglas, who do you think the absent one is?"

"Possibly Mary Screws. She's off somewhere on a visit."

"No, that's not the name. It's F-L-O-R-E-N-C-E R-O-S-E."

Now, the hero in most novels, when such a revelation was made, would either be "petrified with astonishment" or "start as if a thunderbolt struck him." Douglas did neither. His lip curled not in proud scorn, nor did his brow darken. He merely drew a long breath, and gave a long and not very polite whistle.

This, then, was the cause, he thought, of the Rev. Jeremiah Rose's embarrassed explanation! Skimpit, who had good business prospects, was then the favored suitor. Yet he was attentive to Miss Mary Screws! Could it be possible that the clergyman was something of a diplomat, and to shield himself had inferred that Screws was his enemy and wished to drive him out of Consumption, and failing in that had sent his daughter away. This seemed most probable. Screws, after all, might not be the implacable enemy he imagined him to be.

* * * *

Screws and the notary proceeded on their way to Hardscrabble, and passed the cottage of the widow Barbotte, whom they saw sitting in her porch. As they approached, she hobbled inside, muttering "*Anglais*," and closed the door.

Prudhomme, who noticed her flight, involuntarily crossed himself and, though a man of education, believed the poor woman to be a witch, or at least "femme sage" endowed with supernatural powers, having been raised to that bad eminence by selling her soul to Satan. The French Canadians are almost as superstitious as the Scotch Highlanders. In some parts of Canada, few will venture outside their homes on Hallowe'en or All Saints' Night when the ghosts of the dead walk abroad. Those whose cupidity overcome their superstitious fears, sally out on this night to pick up chickens, fowls, or such trifles, as the owners would not leave the house, even if instead of screeching poultry, they heard the crack of doom. This credulity is strengthened by the belief that at midnight, the cock that crew thrice when St. Peter denied the Saviour, can be seen and heard, but the unlucky spectator is sure to die within the year.

"Madame Barbotte is one vere bad woman. She make the people sick, she kill cattle, she do much bad; when she die she go to hell sure."

"What nonsense, Prudhomme, I thought you at least had more sense. It seems to me you're all daft. But here is Mother Buchan's place, let us give her a short call. I like to be evil to the old lady, she may be of use to me."

"Ah, Mr. Buchan is that you? have come all the way from Consumption to pay you a visit. How's a' wi' ye?"

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"No vera weel, Mr. Screws. I'm sorely troubled about my son Tam. He's been among the Yankees, and has come back with the most outlandish notions. Talks havers about spirits. Yester morn I came in to take him his breakfast and I found him laughing and talking to himself."

"'Tam,' says I, 'yer in good spirits this morn.'"

"'Yes, mother,' says he, 'I've just been having a chat with King Solomon.'"

"'King Solomon,' says I."

"'Yes, mother, King Solomon,' says he. 'He told me he was in awfu' distress at the way the women do now-a-days, and if he lived in the present, he was no vera shure but that one wife would be over too much for him. Just think o' having to gie eight hundred wives spring bonnets and sealskin tippits.' Did ye iver hear tell o' such daft doings as yon?'"

"'Why do you not get the minister to speak to him?'"

"'The minister, indeed! I can do naething mysel' wi' Tam. If he dared to expound the prophets wi' my Tam, he would go off wi' a flea in his ear, exclaiming wi' Job, 'Hast thou not poured me out as milk and curdled me like cheese?' The minister canna convince me, and I'd like to see the one that could meddle wi' Tam, sir.'"

"'Perhaps your landlord, Mr. Pettysham, might have some influence?'"

"'Na, na, Mr. Pettysham's no the man for our Tam. The blind cannot lead the blind. He compares Christians to caterpillars on the spokes o' a cart wheel and Heaven to the grease at the hub, and all religions may yet get to the Golden City by works and no by faith. Just think o' likening the Lord's people to caterpillars and the new Jerusalem to the grease on a cart wheel!'"

Screws shook his head and Prudhomme did likewise.

It evidently never does to use figures of speech in addressing people of a matter-of-fact turn of mind like Mrs. Buchan.

"It's a great pity Mr. Pettysham is loose on the subject of religion. He is too liberal, too freethinking, tending towards German Materialism, and Mrs. Buchan," added Screws, lowering his voice, "they do say he is a spiritualist."

The old lady raised her hands in astonishment, and before she could summon presence of mind to detain her visitors longer they were off.

"I think," sneered Screws, "I have sent a counter ball rolling. That Pettysham is a

spiritualist will be all over the village and country before the week is out."

"A truth that's told with bad intent,
Beats all the lies you can invent."

CHAPTER XI.

"It is not what we want that constitutes happiness, but that which is good for us."

Screws and the notary found the lady of Hardscrabble, attending to her household duties, but looking more neat and tidy than many a fashionable dame, whose sole employment is copying impossible figures in pre-Raphaelite worsted work. She received her visitors courteously, and with ready tact soon placed them at their ease.

After the usual conversational skirmishing, the attack commenced in earnest by Screws remarking,

"Mrs. Pettysham, my patriotic friend here, Mr. Prudhomme, and I, have been discussing a very serious question. The Conservative member for this county can neither fill nor inflate the position. We might just as well have no representative, and in these times of great public enterprises it behooves us to have an active intelligent man in parliament, a man whose voice will be heard in legislative halls, and who will see that our interests are protected. Perhaps you have heard that a great railroad project is under way, between Montreal and Quebec. Our people must make an effort to have it pass through Consumption. It will require strong and persistent effort to do this. Our member who resides at St. Croix, is determined to have it pass through his village, where he has a large amount of property, therefore, he is leaving no stone unturned to be re-elected."

"He is a very wealthy man, Mr. Screws, and I have no doubt will succeed."

"I am not so sure of that. The Conservatives are gaining strength here every day, and if the proper candidate comes forward he will be almost certain of election."

"But the Liberals are still in the majority."

"True, but it might happen that two Liberal candidates would be in the field, and between their faction fights a consolidated Conservative vote would carry its candidate into Parliament."

"I always thought you were an ingrained Liberal," remarked the lady, laughingly.

"So I was, so I was," responded Screws with some embarrassment, "but their policy has been far from satisfactory. I have, there-

fore, determined to be independent in politics, and choose the best from both sides."

"Are you not afraid of being deemed a renegade?" she asked with a pleasant smile which softened the asperity of her question.

"O, they may say what they please, madam, every pure honest man must obey the dictates of his conscience, and as a Christian and a patriot I feel compelled to dissent from the party. In so doing, I only admit that I am wiser to day than what I was yesterday, and this is a progressive age."

"I must compliment you, Mr. Screws, both on your tact and on your sagacity, but I am afraid the leaders of the Liberals will hardly put such a construction on your defection from their ranks."

"O, my character is sufficient guarantee that I am only actuated by the purest motives."

"Yes," thought Prudhomme, "such as the purest of gold obtainable by cheques from railroad promoters."

"Madam," continued Screws, "you will no doubt, be surprised to learn that I intend to run as an Independent candidate, provided your husband will accept the Conservative nomination."

Mrs. Pettysham expressed unfeigned surprise at this proposition, which so anticipated her views in regard to her husband's future career and visions of Vice-regal magnificence at Ottawa rose before her. She had longed to leave the country as her children were growing up and required the culture of City life, and that social and professional advancement which it was her dearest ambition to give them.

Screws and the notary divined the thought passing through her mind and the former, as pat as echo to the sound, remarked as he leant forward in his chair and looked at her with earnest impressiveness,

"Such a refined family as yours, madam, accustomed to the advantages and pleasures of town life, must feel dreadfully dull in this quiet place."

The lady bowed an acknowledgment with one of her most gracious smiles. She laughingly admitted Screws' insinuation that her husband was a sort of unemployed Cæsar who only required her persuasive eloquence to cross the Rubicon, and achieve pelf, position and power.

The notary then began to speak in parables regarding the trifling sum required for election purposes, say about \$2,500 to \$3,000, and as his election was almost as

certain as a mathematical proposition, she need have no uneasiness on that score, considering that Mr. Pettysham would be in the hands of friends who would cheerfully advance him any sum required.

Poor Mrs. Pettysham, until then, had been indulging in most fallacious hopes. The thought that high political position required considerable pecuniary outlay never entered into her feminine calculation, as she had heard so much of the vaunted "purity of election" which many politicians indulge in, which vaunting must appear to their supporters like the invectives of the fox against chicken stealing while the feathers are clinging to his whiskers.

The notary thus artfully showed, with all the tropical effusiveness of a real estate auctioneer, how values would run on the competition of the railroad, and mysteriously hinted that the company work shops were to be placed on the "Hardscrabble" estate, and buildings and houses for the workmen would rise on the ground as if by the stroke of the enchanter's wand.

Fortunes like the locomotive on the railway become immensely magnified by the smoke and steam, but considerably diminish when that iron horse has cooled off in the engine room.

The subtle pair, with their Munchausen imagination, soon imbued the lady with their inflated pretensions, and Screws, swollen up with presumption, a vulgarity that belongs more to character than condition, ventured to ask Mr. and Mrs. Pettysham to dinner, which invitation the hostess was at first inclined to refuse, but, considering that it came from an influential man, who could materially advance her husband's interests, graciously accepted.

There is an Arabian custom which makes firm friends of those who have eaten together the bread and the salt. The British are more enlightened. Some one says that if the world were suddenly destroyed by an earthquake, the English would meet somewhere and commemorate the event by a dinner, whereas the more practical Americans would appoint a committee to enquire into the cause. John Bull and those in Canada who imitate him, give dinners to those whom they wish to lead, and more frequently mislead, into commercial transactions. Well does the leper of the lobby, tainting legislation with his touch, know the gastronomical art, and many a representative of the people, over the walnuts and the wine, finds that he has dined with Cæsar

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Borgia. The poison of unlawful gain has entered into his system, and, in ceasing to represent the interests of his constituents, he has become the facile tool of soulless, unscrupulous King Corporation.

The merchant and the man of deeds departed, rejoicing in the fact that Mrs. Pettysham's ambition would eventually arouse her sluggish husband into accepting the nomination for Parliament. And at the last moment, when victory was perching on the Conservative banners, the retreat would be sounded, and Screws, the independent man of integrity, enterprise and high moral principle, would be called upon to represent the people in the councils of the nation.

They stopped at the office of the Consumption *Clarion*, where Douglas was busy writing squibs and other journalistic firecrackers against the municipal authorities and bodies with broad backs and no personal identity to retaliate by a libel suit.

"My dear Douglas, how are you?" unctuously exclaimed Screws. "Why is it you never come around? There should be no enmity between us. I am sure there is no man in Consumption who would be more ready, nay anxious, to serve you than myself."

"Yes," thought the notary, "until after de election dis is von grand hand-shaking time."

"And," continued Screws, "you must have misunderstood my action altogether in regard to the school matter. I merely wished to have an old relative beside me, and worked for his interests in getting the mastership, but at the same time, at the suggestion of the Rev. Mr. Rose, I used my influence in obtaining for you the refusal, as Principal, of a large academy at Thornton, a wider sphere for your commanding abilities."

There is an eternal womanly vanity in all young nature, and Douglas, though he much mistrusted the merchant, was not proof against this seductive flattery.

"Perhaps, Mr. Screws, I was mistaken, and you therefore must pardon the construction I put on your actions."

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow, just let bygones be bygones. But you know I'm all business. What do you think? Your friend, Mr. Peter Pettysham, will be sent to Parliament despite himself?"

"You surprise me. I knew he would get there some day, but hardly as he is situated at present."

"How situated."

"Financially, I mean."

"Oh, friend Prudhomme will see to that."

"Oh yes, *mon ami*," responded the notary, with an Hebraic smile on his thin yellow lips, like a moon in a very poor chromo-premium for a country paper. "I will take care that Monsieur Pettysham represent us dis time in de Parliament."

"Yes, that he shall," exclaimed Screws emphatically, if it costs \$5,000 he must go in. We must have the railroad through Consumption at all cost."

"I hope," laughed Douglas, "that the Consumption railroad will not be so sensitive to public opinion as the one at St. Jerome, when an engine ran into a cow and the stock fell three per cent."

As this juncture, Pettysham himself entered, and Screws, with his usual brutal frankness, exclaimed:

"Pettysham, to Parliament you go, even though you do nothing there, it is better than sitting here."

"I fail to understand you," said the coming statesman, in a cold tone, and an air of offended dignity.

"Why, my dear fellow, have you not an instinctive feeling that you are a born politician? Who knows, but you may yet be Sir Peter Pettysham?"

"I hardly think so, I am not 'posted,' as you merchants say, 'in party's doubtful ways,' and I think with so much railroad corruption prevalent, such titles resemble a Dick Turpin nobility of the rope."

"Pettysham, man! you are too candid, you'll ruin our cause," exclaimed Screws, pettishly. "Do you know that we want to raise heaven and earth at Ottawa, to have the railroad pass through Consumption?"

"But I'm not *there* yet, I am afraid I'm rather domesticated, and am not one of those people with a faculty for germinating excitement who are never more happy than when sitting on a volcano."

"Madame," thought the notary, "will stir you up a little."

"Mrs. Pettysham," thought the merchant, "like Lady Macbeth, will screw your courage to the sticking point. As Job says, 'you're a fool when fed. A pressing debt will do you good.' Strange how often great minds run in the same current!"

"Besides," added Pettysham, "a student's life suits me admirably. Don't it, Douglas?"

"Yes, you certainly improve on a sedentary life, which makes me bilious. You are getting uncommonly broad chested about the waist."

"After the mild laugh had subsided at this

sally of Douglas, the party discussed the question, and Pettysham finally consented to offer himself as a candidate for the suffrage of the people.

Douglas duly announced the fact in the *Clarion*, and turned the electric light of his callow intellect on the subject, dashing off withering sarcasms and disembowelling rebukes at the proud stomachs of the party in power.

There are a good many conceited editors like Douglas who cannot plead youth as an extenuation. They imagine their fulminations to be as terrible as those of Archilochus, whose satires were so fatal as to induce the satirized, after having read them, to go and hang themselves. They imagine that it is all sufficient to write a lengthy leader on any subject, and it is quite unnecessary to repeat the dose.

The dinner at Screws' was a memorable affair, requiring another chapter to do it that justice which such occasions demand. It was a political-financial dinner, when the few fare well at the expense of the many.

CHAPTER XIII.

The dinner at Screws' was regarded as the social event of the season at Consumption. Mr. and Mrs. Pettysham, being *par excellence* the guests, occupied the usual positions of honor, and received the somewhat awkward courtesies of the host and hostess with as much gravity as was possible under the circumstances.

Skimpit, as head clerk of the great mercantile house of Solomon Screws, was one of the guests. Beside him sat Miss Mary Screws, who did her best to entertain her neighbor, Mr. Douglas, while the Rev. Jeremiah and Mrs. Rose found congenial society in the Pettyshams, who were accustomed to all the little social arts that make up that indefinite word known as society.

Screws, forgetful that a minister was present, said grace himself. It was an entire non-committal grace, and one of stinted gratitude. Screws had a habit of depreciating all things except his own. It was a mercantile habit, begotten of a bargaining spirit, and this habit grew so unconsciously on Screws that he carried it often to a ridiculous excess. On this occasion his caution was embodied in a short, sharp, enigmatic grace denoting that time was valuable.

"For what we are about to receive, make us correspondingly grateful."

This grace of Screws was measure for measure, making gratitude correspond to the bounteousness of the repast. The table certainly was well laden with provisions, and if food were the main essential to be thankful for, the amount of gratitude was unbounded.

Miss Mary was more animated than usual, and rather slighted poor Skimpit, who had to play a minor part to Douglas, the chief actor, and the objective point of Miss Mary's blandishments, "The sex is always to the stranger kind," and Douglas had been more than a stranger to the Screws household for a long time.

He rather enjoyed the situation, and knowing that Mary and Florence Rose corresponded, it gave him an opportunity to learn much of the movements of the latter, who was leading a gay life in Montreal, which was then crowded with military men, whose chief object in life seemed to be enjoyment.

"Just imagine, Mr. Douglas, there is Florence Rose, who has only been in Montreal a few months, and she is engaged to be married already. I do think we are living in too fast an age. Engagements are too short now-a-days. What can people know of each other in a few weeks or months' acquaintance?"

Douglas gave no reply, as this unexpected piece of news was too overwhelming. He had entertained some hope that Florence would yet be his wife, and the whirligig of time which sets all things even would afford him the opportunity, under more favorable circumstances, to press his suit.

Miss Mary's information was only too true. In the course of conversation she informed him that the fortunate bridegroom was an officer in the Guards, a Major Ward, very wealthy, and very highly connected. "But Florence says he is as jealous as Blue Beard, and she can hardly show ordinary courtesy to any of her friends without incurring his displeasure. It must be very annoying to be obliged to humor such a jealous disposition."

"Jealousy," replied Douglas, with a faint smile, "is the tribute genuine love must pay to the object of its adoration, and where there is no love there is no jealousy."

"Yes, it is certainly very gratifying to one's vanity, to have a very jealous lover, and if jealousy betokens, as you say, genuine love, Major Ward must be devotedly attached to poor Florence whom I really don't envy. If I had such an eccentric lover, I would invent

some ruse to make him jealous, and keep him in a perpetual ferment."

"That would be very cruel on your part, and rather a dangerous method to pursue with a jealous husband."

"Florence has given me an invitation to visit her after her marriage, which invitation I intend to accept, and if she takes my advice Major Ward will have something to be jealous about. But I see papa has given the signal that the ladies should retire, so I will leave you to your horrid political discussions."

The ladies retired to the drawing-room, where Douglas would feign have followed them, but the host, suspecting he had some intention of deserting the board for the drawing-room, requested him to remain.

Skimpit, who was as eager to hear tidings of the fair Florence, would also have joined the ladies, but being equally anxious to learn the method that his employer and the notary would take to get Pettysham into their toils, he remained. His information might be valuable some day.



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PART II.

CHAPTER XIII.—CONTINUED.

When the men were left to themselves, the scene almost suddenly changed. The real object of the entertainment then became apparent, although the host comported himself with such skill and self-possession as not to betray his design to those who were more directly interested. The dessert was not of the most delicate or fashionable character, but it was abundant; and Screws, for once, went out of his grooves of parsimony to ply his guests with apocryphal wines. Rev. Jeremiah Rose dallied with his glasses, and at no time outstepped the bounds of clerical decorum. Mr. Pettysham was inclined to be dainty at first, but his good-nature prevailed over his fastidiousness, and he glided merrily into the general amusement. Mons. Prudhomme, who was a better judge of *whiskey blanc* than of Burgundy or Bordeaux, was convivial throughout, enlivening the company with anecdote and song, but never for a single moment losing his level head. Skimpit, who sat near the foot of the table, had very little to say, but his eyes were wide open all the same, and not an incident of the whole by-play escaped him. Douglas, who was a little above on the opposite side, was equally attentive, but he joined in the spat more freely, drinking and talking with the best. Screws had most of the speaking to himself, as was his right. The first use which he made of it was to offer a toast.

"Gentlemen," said he, "charge your glasses and join me in drinking the health of our new candidate. Mr. Pettysham has consented to be our standard bearer. I know that he does so at great personal sacrifice, both of his valuable time and of his feelings. But this is an important crisis, and he is equal to it. We have been told that the Conservative party is the party of gentlemen. However this may be, our candidate is every inch a gentleman, and he will be a credit to our county among the best men at Ottawa. Here's to Mr. Pettysham."

The toast was received with all the honors. There was clinking of glasses, and the rattle of knife handles made the table fairly dance. The rollicking old song "For he's a jolly good fellow" followed, and the chorus was taken up with a roar.

Pettysham was keen enough to see the

ludicrous aspect of the scene, but he was far too well-bred to do otherwise than make a pretence of appreciating the compliment paid him. His answer was brief, but in very good taste, and the dashes of humor with which he spiced it, imparted a fresh zest to the prevailing merriment.

It was plain, however, to the mind of the shrewd old notary that the game was not yet fairly caught, and his little ferret eyes flashed signals toward Screws to push the matter a little farther. The host understood at once, and directly set about this duty.

"I say, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "we might as well go to work and map out the plan of campaign. This is as good a time as any, and there need be no secrets among us, as we are all good friends together, are we not, Mr. Douglas?"

Douglas, whose mind was rather far away just at that moment, made a little start on hearing his name called out. He looked in the direction of Screws, and seized an expression on that gentleman's countenance which puzzled him still more. He cut matters short, however, by blurting out: "I guess so. Whoever is a *true* friend of Mr. Pettysham need be no enemy of mine."

The slight emphasis on the adjectival *true* was apparently unnoticed, neither Screws nor Prudhomme making the slightest sign, but Skimpit caught it on the fly, and his eyes sparkled as he settled back in his chair to watch the further progress of the game.

"Very well, then" continued Screws in the most natural tone possible, "let us have another glass all around and then buckle down to business. You know I'm all business, and like to have everything in black and white."

There is no need to go into the particulars of the long conversation which ensued, especially as the sequel will show all its ramifications. Suffice it to say that Screws and the notary played their parts with consummate tact, covering the whole transaction with an air of plausibility that was simply fascinating. Rev. Jeremiah Rose took it all in eagerly and with many an approving word, every now and again shouting out a little compliment to the sagacity and unselfishness of his host. Pettysham looked on almost silently, now smiling, then appearing quizzed, but generally acquiescent. But the two keenest observers were Douglas and Skimpit. Neither uttered a syl-

lable, but both watched intently. The former, however, was rather the gloomier of the twain, and as his interest waxed stronger, he set aside the glasses that were pushed before him. Skimpit was in far lighter spirits, sucking in his breath occasionally as if in the enjoyment of something particular delectable, and tossing off his liquor with edifying regularity.

A message came from the ladies at length, reminding the company of the late hour. Screws glanced at his watch and exclaimed: "Nigh on to twelve, I declare. How time flies when we enjoy ourselves. And the best of it is, our work is done. Well, it's all agreed upon, isn't it? What do you say, Mr. Pettysham."

"Oh, all right," was the off-hand reply.

"Certainly, it is correct and the plan is excellent," said Mons. Prudhomme.

Rev. Jeremiah Rose was profuse in his expressions of approval and admiration, and Screws appeared particularly pleased at being thus backed by the pastor.

"And you, Douglas," he continued "of course we can count on you. You can count on me, sir, standing by my friend Mr. Pettysham everywhere and always," said Douglas rising and speaking in slow deliberate tones.

Screws and Prudhomme apparently took no notice of his manner, however, and nodded as if it were all a matter of course.

Skimpit's advice was not asked nor was his adhesion challenged. But he was "all there" nevertheless, and the way in which he rubbed his hands, as if performing an ablution, was significant of an interest in the plot, which no one present suspected, except, perhaps, the vigilant Douglas.

All moved away from the table, and joined the ladies. Mrs. Pettysham and Mrs. Rose were already dressed for departure. A moment later they had taken their leave and were on their way homeward. The old notary slipped away, almost without being observed. As they stood together on the threshold, Screws slapped his big hand on the shoulder of Douglas, and said laughingly:

"Well, my boy, I rely on you. Now is your chance. We will need your services both in your paper and on the platform. This thing will be the making of you, if you are smart enough to make use of it. Mind, I want no fooling. I am willing to be your friend. Good-night."

He dismissed the young man before the latter had time to edge in a word. It was as well, perhaps, that the reply was not given, as,

judging from Douglas' hard-set features and the lambent fire in his eye, his words might have given rise to provocation. He walked along moodily for awhile, but as he turned into a flowery lane leading to his humble quarters, he stopped a moment to take in the beautiful scene spread out before him. The crescent moon gleamed in the blue, unclouded heavens, like a Turkish scimitar, and the golden stars twinkled like laughing nymphs. The tranquil air of night was sweetened by the perfume of stately field-plants, and afar he heard the music of hidden springs. The heart of the youth was moved by the influences of the time and place. He moved on with lighter step, and a smile played upon his handsome face. The memory of Florence was waked to him like a benison, and he took it in, crooning the fragment of an old love song. For a few brief moments Douglas forgot all his troubles, and he was very happy. But as he reached his home, the illusion was suddenly dispelled. He was only a few steps from the door, when a dark shadow passed rapidly across his path.

"Hello, Douglas."

"Hello."

"Don't you know me?"

"No. Who are you?"

There was a low chuckle, and the figure passed on. Douglas stood looking at the receding form.

"Oh, I see," he muttered, striking his forehead with his open palm. "That's Skimpit. But what the deuce is he doing around here at this hour, a full mile from his house?"

Douglas said no more and went up to his room. Within a quarter of an hour, he was fast asleep, sweetly dreaming of Florence Rose.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next morning at breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Pettysham talked over the situation. The lady disclosed, in fuller detail than she had thought fit to do before, the different points of her interview with Screws in regard to raising the ways and means to carry on the duties of her husband. Pettysham also gave an account of what took place at the dinner the evening previous. Then the twain went more directly to the heart of the subject, with the view of reaching a definite conclusion.

"Have you really set your heart upon this thing?" queried Pettysham. The wife balanced her spoon on the edge of the coffee-

cup, and smiled with that seductive diplomacy of which clever women of the world alone possess the secret.

"Well, I would hardly go that far, my dear," she replied. "It's you that is to be the candidate, not I, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know. But there is such a thing as the power behind the shrine, and in many cases, it is really men's wives that are elected to Parliament."

"I have no such ambition, I assure you. To be *very* candid, however, I must confess that I should be proud to see you in public life."

"And you would also be proud to go to Ottawa yourself."

"Of course. You and I could hold our own there, I think."

"It's rather expensive business, remember."

"Yes, but you forget the sessional allowance."

"A mere globule in a bucket of water. And there is the expense preliminary to the election. Don't forget that."

"I don't forget it, that's the very point we have undertaken to decide, if I mistake not."

"Yes, the very point. And let us come to it at once. Shall we risk the mortgage?"

"Risk, Peter! I see no risk. It is a mere formality."

"This property is our all in life."

"For the present, yes. But we shall have more. You are young, you are talented, and . . ."

"You are ambitious," bowing to his beautiful wife with a pleasant smile.

"Very well, then let me communicate some of my ambitions to you."

"All right. Here goes. I will be a candidate; I will be elected; I will be a great Parliamentary Orator; I will wield large territorial influence; I will become a Minister of the Crown; I will shine as a Privy Councillor. . . and . . . what next?"

"That's quite enough, my dear. My ambition is satisfied. Do all this and I shall be content."

It was through the thin gauze of this innocent badinage that the pair viewed the case of the mortgage, on which the destiny of their lives depended. Whatever misgivings Pettysham may have had were now dispelled, and as to Mrs. Pettysham, the future spread out before her poetic imagination in rosete hues.

When Screws was informed of the success of his scheme, up to this important point, he was delighted, and at once set his wits to work with the object of making assurance

doubly sure. He found a ready and skilful coadjutor in Mons. Prudhomme. These two worthies set their heads together to carry out all the details of the campaign, in such wise that there would be no possibility of a hitch.

Douglas was by no means adverse to the advancement of his friend, and when he learned all the conditions entered into between Pettysham and Screws, he manifested less hesitation than might have been expected from his manner of acting at the dinner. He had all the buoyancy and sanguine expectation of youth, and not being a business man, did not comprehend thoroughly the risk which Pettysham was incurring. Besides that, his mind was made up to secure the election of Mr. Pettysham.

"Here is the chance for me," he thought, "and I'm going to improve it. I will see that this whole business is done squarely, and if all turns out right, why—perhaps—who knows—I may ultimately benefit by it myself."

Nomination day came on at length. According to the time-honored custom, the stand was erected in front of the Parish Church, where the usual formalities were gone through, and there the candidates were expected to address the free and independent electors. It goes without saying that nearly the whole parish was in attendance on the interesting occasion, for besides that country folks are in general very eager to hear political discussion, and will go a great way to indulge their curiosity, in the present case, it was Saturday, or market day as well, so that not only the farmers, but also their wives and children trooped to the village.

Three candidates were put up, the old member, who was a Liberal; Mr. Pettysham, as Conservative, and Mr. Screws, as Independent. The feeling of the County was Liberal, and although Pettysham engaged a large degree of personal popularity, it was necessary to bring in certain influences from the Liberal side, in order to ensure his election. This Screws promised to furnish by splitting the Liberal vote.

An election meeting in an unknown French parish is a sight worth seeing. For the nonce, the speaker is transformed into a superior being, and whatever falls from his lips is oracular. No matter if he is only an understrapper, an unfledged little lawyer from the city, engaged for this work at four or five dollars a day and his expenses, the good simple folks will listen to him with reverential awe, as if he were a superior being.

When he reads passages from that delectable well of light literature, the Blue Book, they say the orator is profound. When he soars off on the wings of imagination, astride of some preposterous figure of rhetoric, which he cannot handle properly, they exclaim that he is sublime. When he reviews some worn-out old joke, that has done campaign service for years throughout the Province, or trots out a superannuated anecdote, of enigmatical humor and still more dubious morality, there is a universal titter, and they rub their hands, declaring that it is really too funny for anything.

On the present occasion, the Liberal candidate was listened to with all the respect and attention due to his long services in Parliament, and much party enthusiasm was evoked. Mr Pettysham also made a favorable impression, his evident superiority not escaping even those obtuse bumpkins. Screws had rather a harder road to travel. He was called upon to explain why he stood up between and against the other two. He did this, however, with an air of candor and a show of plausibility that carried conviction to many of his honest, single-minded hearers. As he got through, Douglas, who had been an attentive listener throughout, understood the exact nature of the game that was about to be played. He was still further confirmed in his suspicions when Mons. Prudhomme was called upon to hold forth to the French portion of the audience. The wily old notary had a subtle role to perform, but he did it admirably. It would not do to go too openly for Screws, or too openly against Pettysham, and, in consequence, he so nicely balanced the measure of blame and praise between them as to leave his audience in a state of happy uncertainty, without, however, stirring any passion. The result was that Screws gained considerable ground in the estimation of the French electors, while Pettysham would appear to require a little closer looking into. Douglas determined that the case should be thoroughly looked into, and he set about this immediately after the meeting. There was no time to be lost. The election took place only eight days after the nomination, and a week was barely sufficient to baffle the machinations of the enemy. He published several extras of his paper, in which he came out squarely and strongly in favor of Pettysham, without even so much as one good word for Screws. This put the latter on the alert, and he sought out an interview with the independent young editor.

"I am surprised, Douglas."

"Surprised at what?"

"At your not sticking to your word?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did you not say you would work with me in this thing?"

"I said I would work with you, so long as it was not against Mr. Pettysham."

"But am I working against him?"

"You know best."

"I know this, that unless you change your tone in the very next number of the paper, you will not only injure Pettysham, but ruin yourself."

"You want to see Pettysham defeated then?"

"I don't want to be defeated myself."

"That amounts to the same thing."

"No, it doesn't. When I put myself forward, it was to break up the liberals and help Pettysham. But now I find that I have a chance against both the other candidates, I don't see why I shouldn't snap at it."

"Snap away, but a bargain is a bargain. I will stand by Pettysham and care nothing for the consequences."

"Beware, young man."

"I'll take care of myself, Mr. Screws. I have felt the effects of your good will, before, you know, and am still alive."

Saying which Douglas turned scornfully in his chair, and resumed the working of a slashing editorial on the conduct of the election. Screws betrayed no undue excitement, as he turned down the narrow stairway into the village street, but there was a fire in his eye that betokened mischief.

After Screws, Douglas had to have an encounter with Mons. Prudhomme. The occasion soon presented itself. It was at a committee meeting where final instructions were to be delivered to the different agents for the final day of battle. The room was lighted by a single lamp, leaving all the corners in darkness. It was also densely packed, so that Douglas stood on the outer edge quite unobserved. The old notary sat at the head of the narrow table, detailing his instructions with a skill and shrewdness worthy of a Talleyrand. At length, in speaking of the measures to be taken to secure Screw's election beyond a peradventure, he said:—

"My friends, here is the *coup de grace*."

The audience listened very attentively.

"Mr. Pettysham is a spiritualist!"

"A spiritualist?" was the general cry.

"Yes, a spiritualis'."

"What is that?"

"A dealer in the black art."
"Oh! Oh!"
"A confederate of the devil!"
"Impossible!"

"I tell you it is true!"
"And I tell you it is a lie," was shouted from the rear in a voice of thunder.

All the company turned around with amazement stamped upon their faces.

"Who is that?" shrieked the notary.
"It is I!" replied Douglas, pressing forward.
"Enough," said Prudhomme, "The meeting is over. Let every one go to his work."

The lamp was suddenly blown out, and the guests departed pell-mell in the darkness.

With such events to enliven the strife, it need not be added that the campaign was thenceforth conducted with the keenest interest and the utmost acrimony. Screws and Prudhomme being unmasked were now open in their hostility to Pettysham, while the latter, understanding the gravity of the situation, was put upon his mettle, and entered personally upon the canvass with the heroic determination to win. Douglas was a host in himself. In his paper, on the platform, in the committee rooms, in door-to-door visits, he labored unceasingly, and with the best results for his friend. The Conservatives stood manfully by their colors, and promised to come forward, an unbroken Macedonian Phalanx, on polling day.

They were true to their word. The ballot was not thought of in those good old times, and the open voting gave occasion to much excitement, as it was so easy to follow the varying tide of the battle.

At noon the votes were about evenly balanced, with the odds slightly in favor of the former member.

At two o'clock, Screws made a leap ahead, leaving Pettysham at the foot of the poll.

At three o'clock the former member fell behind, and Pettysham picked up a bit.

At four o'clock, Screws and Pettysham were almost neck and neck. Now began the tug of war, only one hour remained before the closing of the poll. Vehicles darted right and left bringing in the laggards.

At half-past four, the old members have fallen out of the race, and the figures stood:—

Screws..... 330
Pettysham..... 329

And thus they remained for the last half hour, to about three to five o'clock the excitement was at white heat. If there had been betting men there, the interest would have

been intensely absorbing. The returning officer made ready to fold up his papers, and glancing at the clock was about to close the poll book when an immense cry arose without:—"Five more voters!"

And so they were led in blowing an panting by Douglas.

They gave in their names, all five—for Pettysham, and the result was announced:

Pettysham..... 334
Screws..... 330

Screws, who had watched the whole performance, said not a word, but walked away, darting a glance of infernal flame at Douglas, who only smiled faintly in reply. Then the whole crowd burst away, with the shout:—

"Hurrah for Mr. Pettysham!"

CHAPTER XV.

In us both one soul,
Harmony to behold in wedded pair!
More grateful than harmonious sounds to the ear.
Milton.

While all these exciting scenes were being enacted in the solitude of Consumption, Florence Rose was closing one of the most interesting chapters of her young life. From the moment of her arrival in Montreal she had attracted attention by the beauty of her person and the charms of her character. The circle of her acquaintance widened from week to week, until it grew quite outside the limits of her clerical associations. As we have said, Montreal was then a garrison town, and at the epoch of which we write no less than two regiments were stationed there. Several of the officers, belonging to distinguished families at home, laid themselves out to capture Canadian wives. Among these was Major Ward, who united to the best qualities of a soldier the finest attributes of a gentleman. Although not more than thirty years of age, he had seen thirteen years of service, and having been brilliantly engaged in several campaigns, had risen with uncommon rapidity in his profession. Between him and Florence a strong attachment was formed, from almost the first moment of their acquaintance, and in due time it culminated in a marriage. The match was pronounced by all a most congenial one, although there were a few who fancied that Florence had rather hastily forgotten the friends of her childhood, and some of the attachments which she had made in her country home. The first year of her married life

was, however, so evidently happy that all criticism was disarmed and the handsome couple went through a round of enjoyment in which their popularity was very materially increased. Florence was not unmindful of her family, and when a vacancy occurred in one of the most fashionable parishes of the city, she used her influence to obtain it for her father. The removal of Rev. Jeremiah Rose from the village of Consumption to Montreal was a notable event, inasmuch as it was the first break in the charmed circle of that little community. Mr. Pettysham, after securing his election to Parliament, fancied it would add to his dignity, as well as his influence, to have a city as well as a country establishment, and accordingly took a sumptuous house in Sherbrooke street, as a winter residence. There his brilliant wife was in her glory. She entertained in royal fashion, receiving to her levees the highest representatives of the military, political and commercial world. From the first Major and Mrs. Ward were privileged guests. Mrs. Pettysham took a special interest in Florence, who resembled her in many prominent traits of character. They used to spend many a long afternoon in each other's company. One day Mrs. Pettysham said, rather abruptly:

"Florence, do you remember Douglas?"

"What Douglas?"

"Richard Douglas, the farmer's son."

Florence smiled faintly, and there was a faint glimmer in her eyes.

"Oh, yes, I remember Douglas. What of him?"

"Why, he thinks of coming to the city."

"Oh, I thought he would be a fixture at Consumption. He is always editor of the *Clarion*, isn't he?"

"Not at all. Squills has returned from the West and resumed his goose-quill."

"But is he not practising law as well?"

"He has just been received at the Bar, but my husband thinks that a country place is no field for him, and has laid inducements to have him try his luck in Montreal. He has splendid talents, you know."

"Yes, I think he has, and I hope he will succeed, I'm sure."

This was said in a conventional manner, but Mr. Pettysham imagined that she traced therein a feeble sentiment of interest.

The conversation was about turning into other channels, when Major Ward was announced.

"Why, Major," exclaimed Mrs. Pettysham, "You are a thousand times welcome, but to

what on earth are we indebted for this early visit?"

"Why, madam, with your leave, I am come to fetch Mrs. Ward."

"Fetch Florence. Nothing has happened, I hope."

A smile on the Major's handsome face reassured the two ladies.

"Oh, no, but Florence is wanted at home."

"What for?" asked the wife in her turn.

"A visit, my dear."

"Something grand, I suppose."

"Not exactly, but something nice."

"Not a dowager then," rejoined Florence, with a merry peal of laughter.

"No. A young lady."

"Oh, I see," and Florence laughed again, adding immediately:

"Who is she?"

"Quite a stranger, I assure you."

"Her name?"

"Miss Mary Screws!"

Both ladies broke out again into a ringing laugh.

"Mary Screws," exclaimed Florence; "why, there was no need of so much mystery, Major. She's an old friend of mine."

"So she told me and so I'm glad to know. That's the reason I came for you at once."

"I must go to meet her by all means," said Florence, and she immediately made preparations for departure.

Mary Screws had grown into a very stylish girl. Her country airs were softened into an agreeable gentility, and there was a great deal of ease in her deportment. She had been frequently pressed by Florence to spend some weeks with her, but it was not till the present occasion that she was enabled to accept the invitation.

"Well, here you are at last," said Mrs. Ward, after affectionately embracing her. "But why didn't you write to let me know you were coming?"

"I didn't know it myself till the last moment. You know how queer father is. Besides, I wanted to surprise you."

"You are cordially welcome, all the same, my dear. Make yourself at home, and settle down for a long stay. I am going to keep you till further orders."

Before an hour had elapsed the two friends had well nigh exhausted all the news of the day. Florence was particularly interested to get every scrap of information about her country acquaintance, and Mary was quite prepared to tell her even a great deal more than she knew.

"And Skimpit," said Florence, "why we had almost forgotten him."

"Oh, he can keep," answered Mary, but there was the tell-tale blush on her cheeks.

"Surely, he might have accompanied you."

"That's just what he did, my dear."

"Why didn't you tell me so before? He has returned, I hope?"

"Oh, no, he will be up this evening to pay his respects."

And so he did.

CHAPTER XVI.

Love is a passion whose effects are various;
It ever brings some change upon the soul.
BURKE.

The last time we saw Skimpit was immediately after the Screws' dinner to Pettysham, when he roamed mysteriously during the night, under the very eyes of Douglas. He had watched all the incidents of that entertainment, and came to the conclusion that he could find profit for himself therein. He saw plainly that, while it was the intention of Screws and Prudhomme to place Pettysham in their power, through the terrible agency of a mortgage on "Hardscrabble," it was no less the purpose of Screws to get himself into Parliament over the shoulders of his rival, thus securing two enviable prizes at one stroke. No one understood Screws better than Skimpit, both because of something congenial in their natures, and of their close business relations; when once in possession of so important a secret, Skimpit's position became strong and he could afford to put himself forward without fear. That letter of Screws' to the notary, which he had purloined and treasured ever since, was a talisman whose influence was bound, sooner or later, to become potential and, of course, Skimpit was not the man to neglect any coign of vantage.

He had another string to his bow. He was in love with Mary Screws, or rather, to speak within the strict bounds of truth, Mary was in love with him, and self-interest, no less than sentiment, impelled him to reciprocate. An alliance with the Screws family would further him immeasurably in his projects. While it would secure the favor of Mrs. Screws—a point of no little moment—it would ingratiate him no less with the father. At least, that strange individual would recognize the wisdom of taking his son-in-law into his commercial and financial confidence. Skimpit was in no hurry, however, he bided his time

till all his plans were matured, and Mary, although somewhat more impatient, entered into his views.

It was during this interval that the girl resolved on making her long-promised visit to Florence. Besides the pleasure of meeting her friend, she would obtain an insight into the initial stages of the matrimonial state, at the same time that she quietly visited the shops and made remote preparations for her own trousseau. There is no more acute creature than our country girl who has her eyes all about her and forecasts everything under the mask of rural simplicity and innocence.

Skimpit called on Mrs. Ward, on the day of Mary's arrival at Montreal, but the visit was merely formal and not repeated. Mary met him by appointment the next day, and together they viewed the principal points of the city, not forgetting several of the more fashionable shops. On escorting her back to the Ward house, the couple were met by Florence and her husband as they were about entering their carriage for an afternoon drive. Florence immediately offered to postpone her departure, but neither Mary nor Skimpit would hear of it.

"We shall not be gone longer than an hour," said Florence, "and, perhaps, Mr. Skimpit will await our return."

"Thank you," was Skimpit's reply; "but I cannot delay. I must go back to the country this evening, rather earlier than I expected."

"But you will soon come in again, will you not? There will be a special attraction in the city now, you know."

Mary laughed heartily at this little thrust, but Skimpit looked rather foolish. Indeed, his whole manner was constrained, although he managed to reply in something of his old off-hand way.

"Mary has bargained to enjoy your hospitality for some three months, and I guess we'll have to spare her that long. But you may be sure I'll be here prompt in time to take her back."

"Oh, all right. A great deal of water will flow under Victoria Bridge," said Florence, gaily, as she stepped into her carriage and drove away.

During this whole interview, the Major had not opened his lips. Indeed, he seemed hardly to have given any heed to the conversation. After driving on a little way, he said:—

"What do you call that fellow, Florence?"

"Skimpit!"

"Such a name."

Florence laughed outright.
 "And such a fellow too. You don't mean to tell me he is your young friend's affianced?"

"Why, certainly. And what's more, he once made a set for me."

The Major uttered a low growl and said no more.

On their side, Mary and Skimpit sat together for a while in the Ashton drawing-room.

"Florence appears to be happy," said the latter unconcernedly.

"Oh, yes, I'm sure she is. She told me as much, and I have seen enough already to be convinced of it."

"And what do you think of her husband?"
 Mary smiled, and shrugging her shoulders womanlike, answered evasively:

"He seems devoted to his wife."

Skimpit muttered something to the effect that the Major appeared a little haughty, and left the impression that he did not much like the gallant officer.

"Mind, Mary, that you and I are simple people, and I trust you won't take on any of the military airs of a house like this. I leave you here in the company of Florence, but, if you find that things don't suit you, I will expect you to write and let us know. I will then come for you at once."

Mary reassured him in words that intimated plainly that she was quite able to take care of herself, and after a few more commonplaces, Skimpit rose to depart. The lovers separated without any great effusion on either side, and Mary went up to her room to await Florence's return.

CHAPTER XVII.

The age of jealousy then fired his soul,
 And his face kindled like a burning coal;
 And cold despair succeeding in her stead,
 To livid paleness turns the glowing red.

Dryden.

Mary soon got tired of being alone, and, with pardonable feminine inquisitiveness, wandered into the other apartments, making as minute an inspection of their contents as a practised bailiff would do who had some suspicion that the tenants were on the *qui vive* to smuggle out sundry articles of the seized furniture. On a little buhl console she saw a number of photographs, and her eye was suddenly attracted by that of a handsome young officer, whose autograph was attached to it. On taking it up to examine it more

minutely, she read the name of the officer, Archie Digby. Then a wild freak suddenly seized her with an impulse that was irresistible. She would write a note to Florence in this gentleman's name, and raise a spark of jealousy in her husband's breast.

That would be such a lark. It would signalize the beginning of her visit by a brilliant *coup*. A little scene would follow, explanations would be made, there would be a grand reconciliation, a love feast would celebrate the event, and she would be the heroine of the whole conspiracy. Florence would be the first to laugh heartily over it all, and the Major, who was a sensible man, would think all the more of her, while he would certainly have a high opinion of Miss Mary Screws herself. All these fancies flashed through her mind at once, producing upon her the effect of a fascination. Foolish girl! she forgot the peril of playing with edged tools. She did not realize the danger of sporting with fire. Just then the wire of the door-bell vibrated sharply.

"Oh, my, I shall be caught," she said, thinking it was Florence that had returned. She ran to the window and saw a gentleman in undress uniform walking away from the steps. His face was partially turned, so that she caught a fair sight of it.

"I declare, it is himself," she exclaimed. "Archie Digby himself, what a handsome fellow! just the man for an adventure! Any man would be jealous of him."

There was a slight rap at the door, and the maid entered, holding in her hand a beautiful bouquet.

"This is for the Missus," said the girl, "with the compliments of Captain Digby."

And she proceeded to place it in a Bohemian vase that stood upon the mantel.

Mary did not say a word, but kept her eyes fixed on the flowers, and did not notice the departure of the girl. Then she burst out laughing, clapped her hands together, and fairly danced with excitement.

"What a coincidence!" she said to herself. "This bouquet comes just in time. I will write the note and put it among the flowers. All will look so natural."

Without further hesitation, she tripped over to her own room, took up pen and paper, and indited the following note:

DEAR MADAM,

Please accept these flowers as a token of the deep feeling of regard which I entertain for you. The beautiful lilies of the valley are emblems of the angelic purity

of your character, and the red roses are symbols of the love with which,

I am, dear Madam,
your devoted friend,
ARCHIE DIGBY.

Mary read the lines over carefully and pronounced them good. She also made a critical examination of the penmanship which she found to be a capital imitation. Then, with a chuckle of satisfaction and triumph, she folded the paper as neatly, and into as diminutive a size as possible, and slipped back into the boudoir. Going on tip-toe, and looking about to make sure that she was not spied, she advanced to the mantel, and, in the twinkling of an eye, the skilful fingers had inserted the little note in the body of the bouquet. The trick was so deftly played that the paper was clean hidden out of sight.

Mary had just got through her game of mischief, when the sound of wheels were heard outside, and a moment later the door-bell rang sharply.

"This time it must be Florence," murmured Mary. And so it was.

She entered gaily with her husband, ran up the stairs, and in a few seconds had divested herself of her riding garments. She then went forward to meet Mary, who was quietly sitting in her room, and looking as innocent as possible. The two chatted together very pleasantly for an hour or so, until dinner was announced. At the entrance to the dining-room, they were joined by the Major, who politely offered his arm to Mary and escorted her to her seat. The repast was heartily enjoyed, and the Major especially was in the very best of spirits. He enlivened the conversation by anecdotes and reminiscences of his military life, and while duly attentive to the wants of his guest, had occasion several times to display his tender affection for his wife.

While the table was being cleared for the dessert, Florence happened to inquire of the maid whether any one had called during her absence.

"Beg pardon, Missus, but I declare I quite forgot. Captain Digby called at the door and left a bouquet for you with his compliments."

"Oh! ah!" interrupted the Major. "I say, didn't Captain Digby say he would come for me this evening?"

"No sir. He did not."

"That's strange, he promised to. I'll have to go myself, then, and meet him at the mess."

Prophetic words, whose meaning, however,

no one could foresee, much less the speaker himself.

"Where is the bouquet?" asked Florence.

"Up-stairs, Mum."

"Go and fetch it at once."

Mary listened, and looked as though unconscious.

When the flowers were produced, there was a general cry of admiration.

"Hallo," said the Major, "Digby is a tasty fellow, That's a rare bouquet, Florence, and you ought to be proud of it."

"So I am, I'm sure. It's very kind of the Captain," and she inhaled the subtle fragrance of the central rose.

She was about setting it in a glass before her, when her eye caught sight of the tiny edge of paper, peeping out from among the border of fern leaves.

"Ah! what is this?" she said, cheerily. "The Captain has left a message with the flowers."

And so saying, she opened the note and glanced through it, taking in its contents like a flash. Then with a hearty, honest laugh, she exclaimed:

"The Captain is a poet as well as a florist. That's something sentimental for you, Major. Read it."

And she passed it over to her husband. He took it with the smiling remark that his friend Digby could turn as neat a compliment as any man he knew, which was not odd, seeing the good family to which he belonged. The words had scarcely died on his lips when his eyes fell on the lines and their look instantly turned to a stony stare. He held the paper up before him rigidly, and his face was as pale as ashes, while his broad forehead shone white and cold as marble. Florence was making some playful remark to Mary and not noticing her husband, when suddenly he shot bolt-upright from his seat, made a profound bow, and without uttering one word, darted out of the room, holding the paper in his hand. The movement was so rapid and unexpected, that the two ladies were taken completely aback, and sat looking at each other for a second or two, without knowing what to do. Florence's beautiful face looked bewildered indeed, but neither frightened nor in pain, while there was a very visible smile on Mary's saucy lip. But, all at once, the unerring feminine instinct asserted itself. Florence understood everything in an instant.

"It cannot be possible," she exclaimed, and rising abruptly from her seat she hurried after her husband. But he was gone. His hat

and coat had disappeared from the hall rack, and he was already far away down the street.

With mighty strides he went down Beaver Hall hill and along the thoroughfares, looking neither to right nor left, stopping to speak to no one, and apparently seeing nothing in his path. Right on he strode till he reached Dalhousie Square and turned in toward the stately pile of stone, still standing, then occupied as officers' quarters. He inquired for Captain Digby, of the porter at the entrance, and being informed that that officer was at dinner, he directed his steps forthwith to the mess-room. There was a full attendance that evening, and high mirth prevailed. Digby was seated in the midst of a group of congenial spirits and enjoying himself with the best. The Major's eagle eye singled him out of the crowd, and in an instant he stood lowering at his side.

"Captain Digby!" he said, in a deep low voice.

The officer looked up.

"You sent my wife a bouquet this afternoon."

"Hallo, Ward. Why yes, I did," and he laughed in his old way, not noticing the cloud that lowered on his friend's brow.

"That's very well. And you wrote her a letter, besides."

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"I declare, Ward——"

"I want no words. Here it is," and he thrust the paper before him.

Then only did Archie Digby understand the situation. He was astounded.

"Why, Ward, there must be some mistake."

"Mistake! Isn't this your handwriting?"

"Devilish like it, but not mine, all the same."

"Villain!" shouted the Major, in a voice of thunder, and he smote the Captain on the cheek with a glove.

Instantly the whole room was in an uproar. Those who had witnessed the scene sprang to their feet, while the others ran forward to find out what was the matter. Digby stood up speechless and thunderstruck. Ward made a deep bow to him and the company, and stalked out as silently as he had come.

CHAPTER XVIII.

And thou art dead, as young and fair,
As aught of mortal birth;
And form so soft, and charms so rare,
Too soon returnest to earth!

Tho' earth received them in her bed,
And o'er the spot the crowd may tread,
In carelessness or mirth,
There is an eye which could not brook
A moment on that grave to look.

Byron.

It was a beautiful morning in June. Nature was decked in all the freshness of youthful summer, and the atmosphere was bracing, balmy and bright, as if fraught with a benison from Heaven. The air was redolent of bloom from the gardens, the multitudinous birds chirped in their leafy solitudes, and the buzz of insect life fell upon the ear with the softness of muffled music. It was one of God's perfect mornings, when the very act of breathing is a luxury, and the heart palpitates with hope and contentment. Every thing inspired peace, banishing thoughts of strife, and repelling with a shudder the very suggestion of blood. On such a morning, the invalid, the limp and the halt felt the assurance of renewed existence, and yet on that morning two precious lives trembled in the balance, and two noble spirits were about to stake their all on the chances of a leaden bullet.

Of course, Ward's insult to Digby could have only one issue. The inexorable code had to be carried out. It was in vain that friends interposed, and exhausted every attempt to prevent a hostile meeting. The Captain was too proud to make further explanations, though all his comrades were convinced of his innocence. The Major would listen to no remarks on the subject one way or the other. The die was cast, and a false sense of honor had to be vindicated. Neither the pleadings of a devoted wife, nor the hysterical protestations of Mary Screws, who realized only too late the horror of the situation which her foolishness had created, were of any avail. The day was set, the seconds were chosen, the place was marked out, and the pistol was to decide a case in which two valuable lives were staked.

The eventful day arrived. At the first peep of dawn, the preparations were made on one side and the other. Ward's friends met him at a suburban tavern, where he resided since that eventful evening in the mess room, having abandoned his home, in order to be freed from what he regarded as the importunities of his wife. With his second and a surgeon he drove out, in a closed carriage, to the field of honor. Not a word was spoken on the way. The unhappy man brooded over his sorrow, as he had never done before, and with the culmination of his fate standing clear

in front of him, he felt that he needed to have all his faculties concentrated. Florence had tried to go to him during that terrible interval of two days, but he always denied her, and if, on that morning, he felt some inclination to give his lovely wife a parting kiss, he never betrayed it. He went forth sullen, silent and hopeless.

It was slightly different with the party of Digby and his friends. The Captain was essentially a jovial character, and, after having discussed with himself all the circumstances of the case, and satisfied his own conscience that he had done absolutely nothing unworthy of a gentleman and an officer, he accepted the situation cavalierly enough, as one of those accidents to which every man of the world is exposed. He had done nothing wrong, but appearances were against him, and he was resigned to be the victim of false appearances. Every brave man must be prepared for incidents like this, and Arthur Digby was of the bravest. Although his military career did not extend beyond six years, he had been in the front rank of several sanguinary engagements, and death had no terrors for him. With his second, an officer as young and chivalrous as himself, he rode on horseback to the scene of action. They went along the lower Lachine road, chatting and laughing as if they were going to a picnic. The breezes of the river caressed their hair when they took off their hats to enjoy the freshness of the morning, and far away the green summits of Rouville and Rougemont, bathed in the blue of heaven, looked down upon them with an aspect of benignant force. They drew bridle at length at the Pavilion, a well-known sporting resort of those days. They dismounted, tied their horses to the trunks of trees, and walked forward to the open space where the other party were already in waiting for them.

The two seconds came out to confer together. On a grassy slope fringed by a belt of maples on the one hand, and a small running stream on the other, the ground was marked out. The Major had first desired that the two principals should stand back to back, walk forward six paces, turn and fire. But his seconds demurred to this as a needless display of cruelty and recklessness. After many other propositions, all indicative of a morbid and insatiable hostility on the Major's part, it was finally stipulated that the contestants should stand twenty paces apart, and fire simultaneously at the word of command. The lay of the ground was so selected that

neither had the morning sun in his eyes. They faced each other from the north and south. The snow-caps of the Rapids glistened like diamonds, the fair isle of the Nuns lay like a tranquil green leaf on the bosom of the water, and a soft balmy breeze played on the surface of the waves. What a desecration to mar a scene of such holy quietude by the loud, deadly report of the pistol!

Digby would have spoken a last kind word to the Major, but the latter impetuously refused to hear, so the twain took up their positions. The seconds stood a little to the right of their principals. The surgeon stationed himself under a tree, with his box of instruments open at his feet. The signal was given.

One!

The pistols were up-raised

Two!

The weapons were pointed.

Three!

Two blinding flashes and two sharp reports.

Ward, who was a dead shot, had aimed direct for the heart of his adversary, but the latter being rather thin had left his coat open and turned his body so as to present as small a target as possible. When the smoke had cleared away, Digby was seen pressing his hand hard upon his side, while his lips were clenched, and his eyes glinting like steel, Ward stood upright and unhurt. And no wonder, as the captain had purposely fired over his head. This enraged the Major. He wanted no favors. It was to be a duel to the death. When the two seconds and the surgeon pressed forward to interpose and insist that honor had been satisfied, he repelled them all, and vowed that he must have another shot, and still another after that, until the end of the one or the other had come. Digby stood stock still during this parley, silent and holding his left hand over his heart. The bright red blood crimsoned his fingers, but he moved never a muscle. His second conferred with him a moment.

"That man," he muttered; "is determined to have your life; you are already wounded, and perhaps grievously. But promise me that you will fire straight this time, or I will retire."

"Well, be it so," replied Digby, with a sad smile. "I promise."

Major Ward went back to his place, and the whole scene was enacted again. The captain did not appear to take deliberate aim, but his hand was steady and his eye was bright.

The two explosions were simultaneous.

Digby dropped his pistol arm by his side and remained immovable, Ward gave a leap in the air, turned to the right on his own length, and fell like a stone to the ground. He was shot through the heart.

There is no need to dwell on the scene of desolation. Digby had not the heart to look at the form of his prostrate foe, but, after silently pressing the hand of Ward's second and of the surgeon, who assured him that he had acted like a chivalrous man of honor, he untied his horse and rode back to town with his friend. The shimmering waves still danced in the sunshine, the birds sang in the trees, and sounds of animation were heard all over the green country side, but there was no echo of joy in his heart. He had fulfilled what he deemed a desperate duty, but there was no feeling of satisfaction thereat. Nay, he carried in his youthful bosom a burden that would weigh on him through life—the death of one of his dearest friends.

The funeral of Major Ward was one of the most imposing military displays that ever took place in Montreal, and all our old residents still remember it with emotion: not only the troops, but nearly the whole city joined in the procession, because the dead man was an universal favorite, and because such a domestic and social tragedy had never occurred before.

The scene in the broken home was still more pathetic. Who shall tell the misery of the poor widow, and the despair of the senseless girl who was the first cause of all the mischief? Mary did all she could to repair an irreparable loss, and poor Florence was gentle to her, but not even her forgiveness could soften the grief which both of them experienced. It was a shadow that would pursue them to the grave.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Is the dollar only real? God and truth and right a dream?
Weighed against your lying ledgers must our manhood
kick the beam?"

The days of widowhood passed drearily with Florence, and would have been more drear, were it not for the consoling ministrations of her mother and the friendship of Mrs. Pettysham. Miss Mary Screws had returned to her home in Consumption, but her residence there was to be of brief duration. Screws had a friend, a director in the Bank of Montreal. That director was not over

scrupulous. He was a man who could never see any wrong in one of his own countrymen, or any good in people of another nationality. At that time, there was a young Canadian merchant, who, with a sufficiency of capital, had endeavored to obtain a share of the importing trade, which was wholly in the hands of foreigners. Letters of introduction had been given him by several merchants, to firms in which they dealt at "home," as the British Isles were called. These letters, however, were only blinds, to hide the cupidity and depravity of the writers, who took care to forward by the same mail very ambiguous epistles, which were intended to convey an unfavorable impression. The young Canadian was, of course, coolly received by the British merchants, who favored his rivals of their own nationality.

He paid higher figures for his goods and received shorter terms of credit.

Even thus handicapped in making purchases, he might have successfully competed with his sly, clannish rivals. They, however, had friends at the financial court.

Their friends and relatives had the bank at their feet. Few, if any, Canadians were on the directorate, and, consequently, when their customers' notes, were sent to the board for approval they were passed upon without a question and the manager ordered to discount them. When the Canadians' notes, however, came before this dishonest clannish board, they were systematically declined. Finding himself thus hampered, and knowing by bitter experience the oppressive, cruel power of that foreign mercantile element, he wisely determined to sell out his business and go to the United States, where he subsequently made a large fortune. The bank director gave Screws the hint, and that worthy was not long in becoming owner of the persecuted merchant's business.

Solomon Screws, Esq., of course, got all the credit at the bank he required. In fact, he was treated most generously and a liberal line of discount was given, which enabled him immediately to greatly extend his business. The family moved to Montreal, and Skimpit, now formally engaged to the store-keeper's daughter, was taken in as junior partner, receiving a fair share in the profits, out of which a certain portion was to remain in the business as capital on which he received a fixed rate of interest. Skimpit was not a financier, but he was a good judge of merchandise, and in making a bargain could out-Jacob Jacob in his commercial transaction with Esau.

To delight in making bargains requires a peculiar cast of character. Noble, high-minded men of delicate sensibilities are always placed at a disadvantage when dealing with cool, sly, sharp and not over-scrupulous traders, whose finer feelings have been roughened by attrition to an obtuse, and almost brutal bluntness.

The following anecdote of Daniel Webster illustrates this very happily.

The great statesman, weary of the importunities of clients and the turmoil of politics, announced his determination of visiting England. A merchant of Boston, who had subscribed, with others, a considerable amount to further a private bill in Congress, of which Mr. Webster had charge, and for which he received a large fee, came in alarm to the statesman, and in a very querulous tone interrogated the wayward genius.

"Mr. Webster," he said, "I am surprised to hear that you intend to visit England immediately."

"Yes, such is my intention."

"Pray, may I ask why you visit England at this critical period in our affairs?"

"O, certainly. I am going to England to see the Duke of Devonshire."

"Indeed! If not too inquisitive, may I ask why you wish to see the Duke of Devonshire?"

"I wish to see the Duke of Devonshire," replied the scornful statesman, drawing himself up to his majestic height, and giving his impertinent interrogator a soul-piercing look from his grand dark, eagle eyes, "because I have heard that his grace *never made a bargain in his life.*"

The merchant retired abashed, and "the god-like Daniel," as his enthusiastic admirers called him, was allowed to visit without further questioning, Albion's lordly patrician *who never made a bargain in his life.*

Skimpit was not a Duke of Devonshire in this respect. Indeed, he even carried his mercantile spirit into his devotions, and frequently boasted that his religion cost him less than fifty cents a year, and though attending church regularly, he never, by any accident, put more than a cent in the plate, and if by chance he sat at the head of the pew and had to pass the plate, he invariably forgot to give his own mite offering to the sanctuary.

Screws and he were *ben trovato*. Their small souls, as our American neighbors in their humorous hyperbolic style would say, might travel in a pea-pod as long as the children of Israel were in the desert, and never touch the sides.

It was therefore agreed that Skimpit should be the buyer for the firm. He went armed with many *genuine* letters of introduction, and in order to strengthen his position, had a commission to employ half a dozen clerks.

"But what are you going to do with the hands of the old firm?" queried Skimpit, "they have all been re-engaged for a year."

"That's a matter of no consequence. When the new ones arrive it will not be very hard to get rid of them. Three or four are in the volunteers, and I hear they are ordered to the front, as a Fenian raid is expected."

"If they are not ordered, what then?"

"They are not competent."

"They have the reputation of being steady, able men."

"Drilling interferes with business."

"If dismissed now the firm will be unpopular among the people."

"Not a bit of it, Canadians are only colonists and have no pride or spirit of nationality. But enough of this. When I want to make a place, I never allow sentiment to stand in the way. I say they are not competent."

Skimpit understood his senior partner too well to make further objections, but as Fred Pettysham was among those marked for dismissal, he only stipulated that the young man, being useful to him in a social way, giving him the entrée of the Pettysham household where he met many "nice people," should be retained. To this the senior partner consented.

"By the way," said Screws, as if speaking of a mere side issue in a not very important business affair, "my daughter Mary has mentioned that you have made matrimonial proposals?"

Skimpit admitted the tender impeachment, and as his senior partner, like most old country people, was a man of family-founding instinct, he thought it well to unite his commercial and social interest with the house and home of Screws, who could advance his interests.

It was therefore agreed in family council that Mary and Samuel should be united on the latter's return. The happy day was duly fixed, and the expected bride's trousseau was ordered from England, as nothing in this country was considered good enough for the merchant's daughter. The lovers spent the last evening together eating sugar plums out of a brown paper bag, French *bonbons* being too expensive. They talked of love, bridal veils, affection, flounces, sentiment, silk dresses,

and heaven knows what besides. He took a more lively interest in the toilette than did his fair companion, who was tearfully sentimental, while he scanned the list of the trousseau, and debated whether a plain silk would not look as well as a gros grain, and be ever so much cheaper. Samuel, though in the midst of a delightful courtship, had a frugal mind, and wished to instil into his future bride that the chief end of man was to practise small economies, and make them the staple article of conversation on all occasions.

The morning came and Samuel's little person, less baggage, were driven to the station. He carried just enough baggage to give him a change of flannel shirts during the voyage, "As everything you know could be purchased so much cheaper on the other side."

"Good-by, Samuel," said Mary, tenderly, with tear glistening eyes.

"Good-by, Mary, take good care of yourself. Here, here, hold on driver. Mary, I forgot my wash list; here it is, clothes get mouldy if they are not washed. You'll attend to it, Mary, won't you?"

Mary nodded, and before she could decide whether to be amused or disgusted, her provokingly practical lover was out of sight. She read the wash list, which was characteristic of its writer. Among the items were "½ doz. 3 ply linen-faced collars, ¼ doz. pair of double heeled lisle thread ½ hose, 3 shirts, linen bosom and cuffs." The other items were as technically particularized.

An assuredly sweet souvenir.

At the time the fatal duel, recorded in the previous chapter, took place, he was tossing on the broad Atlantic, and, as Mark Twain says, was "heaving up his immortal soul" or as much of that article which was not out at a usurious interest. A great many people in this world put their souls out to interest which yields in the hereafter Dead Sea fruit.

He found no difficulty on the other side in obtaining all the goods required. The merchants pressed them upon him, dined, wined and fêted him to his heart's content. They knew the oppressive clan which held mercantile Montreal under its grinding hoof was at his back, and no matter what commercial crisis might sweep over Canada, the Bank directors would see their favorites through. Skimpit never received so much distinguished attention in his life before, and not fully appreciating the real motive for these diplomatic civilities, attributed them to his personal merit. Every day he was waited on by

merry portly gentlemen connected with one or other of the large mercantile houses, who almost fought for the special privilege of his edifying society.

How immoderately they laughed at all his absurd and wicked little stories, applauding to the echo any asinine comparison he might make between Canada and England! These affable gentlemen were the touters of the establishments whose business it was to wait on buyers from Canada and the United States. And these exceedingly plausible persons showed the young traveller the sights of London, but not in patrician circles. They were more at home in very questionable places, where coarse buffoonery passed for humor and obscenity for wit.

One morning while sitting in the coffee-room, concealed in one of those boxes peculiar to English coffee-rooms, he overheard one of his companions of the night previous say to his *vis-a-vis* at the breakfast-table:

"What an infernal way your little Canadian buyer makes of him. Can't you give him a hint to dress more like a civilized being than a backwoodsman."

The rest of the conversation was inaudible, but Skimpit, with ready tact, slipped quietly and unobserved out of the room, but soon reappeared. Walking up to the box where the two gentlemen were taking breakfast, he saluted them, and of course was most graciously received.

"Jones, old fellow, could you recommend me to a tailor. I'm almost ashamed to be seen in this outlandish suit, it was good enough, you know, to cross the Atlantic, and I brought very little with me, as we get the fashions in Canada long after you have discarded them here?"

Of course Jones knew a tailor, and as Jones got a liberal discount from the knight of the shears for the customers he brought, was never backward in suggesting to provincials and colonials that their costumes were hardly in the fashion.

Skimpit arrayed himself in the loudest of check pants, tight buttoned frock coat and a high silk hat, the first he had ever worn. The little wretch managed in a few weeks to raise his voice a key higher, and speak in the bluff commanding English style, and soon acquired the noble British habit of bullying servants and inferiors.

As he was commissioned to employ several salesmen for the firm of Screws, Skimpit & Co., he felt his importance and, like a skillful politician, with ten offices in his gift made

a hundred imagine they were to obtain them. Late hours, fast life, heavy drinking, and the whirl of commercial travel were novelties, and, as was said of Alfred de Musset, he was not content to inhale the fragrance of the rose, leaf by leaf as it were, but tore it asunder, that he might exhaust its perfume at a single breath.

Did thought of his fiancée, Mary Screws, lessen his dissipated life?

No, she was seldom in his thought, and if in an idle moment her form passed before him, it was soon banished by a plunge into pleasure or business.

The *Times* lay in the coffee room. A telegram from Moville announced that the Allan Steamship "Peruvian," had been sighted the day previous. The skimping waiter made his appearance while Skimpit was pursuing this intelligence, and on the tray with his breakfast lay his letters.

His partner's epistle was all business from date to signature, but underneath was the apologetic postscript. "Mary will give you all the news."

Her *billet-doux* gave every detail of the dreadful duel and its unhappy termination, with the exception of the part she played in fomenting it. He re-read the letter, and when sure that Major Ward was killed, exclaimed aloud. "Then Florence is free."

CHAPTER XX.

"The means to do dark deeds,
Make dark deeds done."

Skimpit was himself again. The duel had put a new phase on matters. For the next ten days he was the incarnation of business which was pressed so rapidly forward that he could leave the shores of Albion fully ten days sooner than he had at first calculated. His answer to Mary's affectionate letters were of the coldest and briefest kind, and with a woman's bookless lore of instinct she felt that his feelings towards her were changed. Perhaps he had met some florid English beauty and had forgotten the sun-tanned Canadian.

In those days the lordly merchant and his imported employees were not condescending enough to marry loveable economic Canadian girls. They had no dash, no style, were not sufficiently accomplished, and failed to shine in society, as society was then constituted with its deep military and patrician

coloring. Professional gentlemen and a few wholesale merchants were only tolerated by the military and the civil service, while traders were completely ostracised. A paltry St. Francois Xavier street broker assumed precedence over the wealthy retail merchant who had the mortification to find that his family were ostracised and black-balled at a miserable shed called a rink on Shuter street. One very agreeable, highly educated gentleman was actually black-balled by a pack of dissipated worthless English snobs in the uniform of British officers, because his father was a partner in a very wealthy tailoring establishment. Cockney Cads economic of his in the right, and prodigal in the wrong places, came out and were received into families simply because they were Englishmen, and these imported specimens of unbounded assurance were more arrogant and exclusive than the young noble through whose veins coursed "the blood of all the Howards." In a word everything British was more appreciated then than now. We have got bravely over that mania, and are getting more self-reliant. The young merchant now, if he wants to succeed in life, had much better marry a suitable Canadian girl than bring out a gushing British belle. Many a merchant in times not so long past would have avoided the bankrupt court had he not listened to the counsels of an aspiring wife who imitated Belgravia on an income that could barely secure suburban comfort.

For true hearted women in every phase of life, the fair Canadian against all the world.

In due time the travelled, gorgeously apparelled Skimpit bustled into the St Paul street warehouse, and soon made every one feel he was unapproachable. With a talent for low intrigue and an unscrupulous disposition that could stoop to the basest meanness to attain its ends, he was not long in weeding out the Canadians, and filling their places with British importations, whose ill-breeding was only equalled by their assurance.

Screws was energetic, and though backed liberally by the bank with its board of foreign directors, yet his ambition and haste to be rich carried him beyond the bonds of prudence, and a large proportion of his immense importations lay at the Custom House stores, as he was unable to pay the duty.

This would never do. True, many of his rivals were in the same position, but Screws, being fully impressed that Canada was the promised land for those of his nationality, managed to have the upper portion of his

store converted into a bonded warehouse. A large number of cases of expensive goods, on which the duty was very high, were accordingly stored in this private bonded warehouse.

Screws was the financial head of the concern, and Skimpit looked after the sales department.

Many said it was quite edifying to hear the "dear fellow" call off a parcel of goods. He did it in such a business-like manner since he visited England.

No martinet colonel of a well disciplined regiment could take such pride in giving the word of command as Sammy did in calling off the goods.

It was truly sublime to hear the Anglicized voice of Skimpit wafted on the air heavy laden with odors of merchandise, uttering these words of high import:

"One piece of grey cotton, fowty-four a 'awf yawds, h'eight a 'awf cents."

"One piece of moire antique," "now boy look shawp, don't spell antique with a K. Canadians are such duffers you'd get the sack in Lunnen, you know, if you had'n't a good h'education an could'nt spell."

Here Skimpit, after the piece of goods was entered, marked the parcel, "O. K.," which stands for the initials of the words all correct. These cabalistic letters had their origin in the store of a London draper, who, many years ago, instructed one of his educated clerks to write all correct on parcels of goods. The young man first spelt out the words, "oll kerrect," but getting tired merely put the initials "O. K.," which symbols for accuracy passed down from generation to generation of business men, few of whom knew what they meant or how they originated.

Skimpit's lecture to the unfortunate entry clerk was here cut short by a messenger bearing the tidings:

"Mr. Screws wishes to see you."

Samuel made his appearance in the counting-room, where he was not often seen. Screws beckoned to him, and they both entered the private office, the door of which was carefully closed after them.

"Skimpit, I'm in a tight fix. The bank manager won't allow us to exceed our line of discount. Here are nearly \$20,000 worth of orders from Upper Canada, which we *must* fill before to-morrow morn or they will be taken to Mackay Bros. or Mackenzie's. I see no means of raising the sum sufficient to pay the duty to get them out of bond."

"Yes, this is a pretty bad fix."

"The goods are in the bonded warehouse,

upstairs?" asked Screws in a low tone of voice.

"They are."

"The lock is sealed with the broad arrow of the custom house."

"Yes, but it is fastened by a mere barn door bolt. I was thinking how very insecure it was yesterday."

"Ah, indeed! Suppose you return to the store after tea?"

Skimpit bowed, but made no reply.

"Just tell the storeman that you have some neglected work to finish, and get the key."

Skimpit nodded and departed.

The pair worked with a will that night, and before daylight had set in, many thousand dollars worth of valuable goods had been abstracted from the bonded warehouse, the cases nailed up again and carefully replaced.

Just as the last screw was being driven home in the bolt, a muffled figure passed them unperceived and disappeared in the gloom of the darkened store.

The two men, now completely exhausted with their night's efforts, wended their way to the lower story. Skimpit turned the lock in the front door and hardly had he opened it, when a figure rushed past him and disappeared in the street.

"Is that you, Mr. Screws!" he cried in terror.

"What's the matter," replied Screws from behind.

"I thought it was you who rushed past me just now."

"Not I; you are excited, your imagination has been playing you a trick. 'Twas only the wind."

"The wind has pretty sharp elbows then for it gave me such a dig that my ribs feel sore."

"Nonsense, nonsense, it was only the handle of the door. You'd be a failure as Jack Sheppard."

Screws laughed at his comparison, and the pair who had excused themselves at home for the night's absence, turned up St. Francis Xavier street, took rooms at the St. Lawrence Hall, and leaving orders to be called at ten o'clock, retired to enjoy a few hours' repose before the business of the day commenced.

The orders were filled, much to the chagrin of several rival firms, who also had the goods in bond, but were not in sufficient funds to pay the duty.

The firm in the course of a few days got remittances in the shape of notes from the persons to whom the goods were sent, which

Screws immediately discounted and hastening to the Custom House, took all the goods in the private warehouse out of bond, and the sleepy official, with an owl's look of excessive wisdom and vigilance, duly inspected the removal of empty cases.

Overhearing one of the clerks say that the cases were very light, he was on the point of having one opened, when Skimpit, with ready tact, interposed:

"Men be careful with that case; don't put it in a damp place, or all the starch will be taken out of the light muslin trimmings."

This satisfied the Custom House official, whom Screws immediately engaged in conversation on the subject of the former's application for a higher position under the government which Screw's influence eventually obtained for him.

Under such circumstances the officer could hardly give the firm the unnecessary trouble of opening suspiciously light cases.

CHAPTER XXI.

Florence Ward, after her husband's death, "broke up housekeeping," and resided with her father, the Rev. Jeremiah Rose, who had succeeded in getting a call from a fashionable church on Dorchester street. She spent most of her time, however, at Mrs. Pettysham's; in fact a room was reserved for her, and she as frequently slept beneath the Pettysham roof as she did under that of her father.

The family were sitting around the early breakfast table on the morning that Screws and Skimpit were winding their way for a few hours repose at the St. Lawrence Hall, after having surreptitiously removed the merchandise from the private bonded warehouse.

"Fred, you look very pale this morning," said Mrs. Pettysham; "why were you not home to dinner?"

"You know, mother, I was out at the Gaults' party the night before last, and it was nearly four o'clock before I got home. We had a hard day's work at the store, as a large quantity of goods were coming in and going out. I stood it pretty well in the morning, but after lunch I got so tired that I could hardly keep my eyes open, so I slept away to take half-an-hour's sleep behind some bales of cotton in the upper story. I must have slept for a long time, for when I woke all was darkness. I then remembered what had occurred, and by the ray of a moonbeam could make out my surroundings. Making the best of

this adventure, I lay down again and was on the point of going to sleep when I heard the found of approaching footsteps. Through the gloom I saw two men approach the lattice work that divides the store from the bonded warehouse. They had an oil lamp which they placed on a dry goods case directly in front of me. Just imagine how astonished I was to see Mr. Screws and Mr. Skimpit at that late hour. I lay perfectly motionless and watched their every movement, Mr. Skimpit drew a screw-driver from his pocket

"That will do, Fred," interposed Mr. Pettysham, with a look that insured obedience, "I will hear the rest of this story in the library after breakfast."

Mrs. Pettysham and Florence, though having the due share of curiosity natural to the sex, refrained from urging Fred to continue, but the younger members of the family were urgent until their father, with the affectionate admonition, "that will do, my dears," which conveyed more of sharp reproof than paternal love, silenced their importunities, and Fred was allowed to finish his breakfast in undisturbed rumination.

After the meal father and son retired to the library, when Fred continued the story of his adventures on the previous night:

"Skimpit soon displaced the lock and both went hastily to work to remove the lids of the cases with a chisel and mallet. They made but little noise, as a pad of thick cloth over the head of the chisel deadened the sound. They carried the goods on their shoulders down stairs. When I first perceived them I was about to make myself known, but that idea was soon dispelled when I saw the stern, forbidding look on Screws' countenance. The night-air was very chilly, and though there was a pile of blankets near me, I dared not move. My teeth chattered, and with the greatest difficulty I refrained from coughing."

"We have enough," I heard Screws say. "Now put the lids on the cases, and leave everything as it was, and I'll take the rest of these goods down stairs."

The cases were soon fastened, and Skimpit who looked terribly frightened, hurriedly replaced the bolt. What if they should catch me here, I thought. This is some crime, and cough I must. Skimpit started and looked around nervously, and was just on the point of examining my retreat, when Screws called up through the hoist in a hoarse whisper:

"Put out the lamp and hurry, it is almost

CHAPTER XXII.

daylight. Don't forget the key of the front door, I laid it beside the lamp."

My curiosity got the better of my fears, and going in advance of Skimpit, I hurried softly down stairs and was soon on the ground floor, near the door.

When Skimpit opened it I rushed past him, nearly knocking him over, and when I got home this morning it was broad daylight and I felt tired and sick; and no wonder mother thought I looked pale at breakfast.

"Fred," enjoined Mr. Pettysham, "promise me you will not mention this matter to a living soul." This is a most valuable piece of information. I must tell you that this man Screws has it in his power to make us absolute beggars. He holds a mortgage on "Hardscrabble," and since we have lived in the city, I have been under the necessity of borrowing a great deal of money from him, which I expect to pay as soon as the railroad bill passes the Senate. There is some opposition, but if it succeeds, the shares I hold will be of considerable value, and they will probably enable me to get from under this tyrannical man's heel."

Fred promised, and then hurried to the store, as Skimpit was a little martinet, and never failed to make some disagreeable remark when any of the employees arrived late.

Skimpit was not at his usual post. In a few hours, however, he turned up and bustling around soon accomplished the task of filling the orders. He was particularly gracious to young Pettysham and about noon asked him to have lunch at Alexander's. The young man was suspicious that Skimpit knew that he was being watched the night previous, and this made him feel somewhat uncomfortable, but his host was after other game. He knew that Florence was in the habit of visiting Mrs. Pettysham, and that the families were on intimate terms, and learning from Fred that she was spending a few days at their house he proposed that, as he and Fred had been doing some very hard work lately they should take a drive around the mountain.

"Perhaps the ladies would like to go; suppose we ask them?" insinuated Skimpit.

Of course Fred acquiesced, and strolling over to a livery stable on Bonaventure street, Skimpit ordered the handsomest turnout in the establishment. This equipage belonged to a British officer in the Guards who had been quartered in Canada, but finding provincial life too monotonous had exchanged into the battalion quartered in London.

"They often have revealed their passion to me;
But tell me whose address thou favorest most:
I long to know."

Addison.

Florence was much in the society of Mrs. Pettysham, who ministered to her grief and comforted her loneliness with all the delicacy and tact that are the unerring instincts of the female heart. In course of time the friendship of the two grew so close that they were pretty much continually in one another's society, and Florence, as we have said, used to spend whole weeks at the Pettysham mansion on Sherbrooke street. With Mary Screws her intercourse was less frequent and intimate. Although she had forgiven, in a true Christian spirit, the author of her misfortune, the latter could not so easily forgive herself, and she could not divest herself of a certain constraint in the presence of Florence. Furthermore the coldness and growing indifference of Skimpit was soon associated in Mary's mind with the superior attractions of the lovely widow. These little rivalries are sooner detected, and go further with women than with men. It is only just to say that Florence herself was for a long time unconscious of all this. But gradually, as the days of mourning passed by, and the gloom of solitude lifted its sombre curtains, the sunshine of life crept back into her heart, the hunger of a new love insensibly developed itself, and she began to look about her to those changes which were inevitable in the case of a young woman like herself.

Mrs. Pettysham was a true friend and the best confidant that Florence could have under the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed. Douglas had done, like all the rest of the Consumption people who have been introduced in this story, and removed to Montreal, where he had succeeded, within a short space, in creating quite a practice for himself as a lawyer. He had been among the first to sympathize with Florence in her sorrow, and had greatly assisted her with his counsel in the arrangement of her affairs. Major Ward had left a considerable estate, the whole of which was willed to his widow, but when Douglas came to unravel it, he found that it was considerably involved. When all the legal technicalities were settled, there remained to Florence only a small annuity, with the prospects of further allotments, when the parents of her deceased husband had passed away.

In the course of these negotiations, Douglas was naturally thrown a great deal in Florence's company, and naturally the old feeling that existed between them, blossomed and bore fruit. Florence could not be blind to the attractions and merits of the talented young lawyer, and Mrs. Pettysham was perfectly aware of that fact. But neither could the attentions of Skimpit be overlooked. Without being exactly assiduous in his visits, he had made several calls and was well received. Florence was in particularly good spirits when Skimpit made his call with Fred. She had no objection whatever to the drive provided Mrs. Pettysham accompanied the party. Mrs. Pettysham, taking in the situation at a glance, readily consented, and the four were soon bowling along St. Lawrence Main street, in the direction of Mile End. After passing the toll-gate, they advanced through the leafy arcades of Mount Royal Avenue, till they reached a quaint-looking old building on the right, which attracted the attention of the ladies.

"Why, that looks like Peggotty's ark in *David Copperfield*," exclaimed Florence, as she looked at Skimpit.

That worthy, who had never heard of Peggotty or Copperfield, smiled warily and replied:

"It looks to me like a boat cabin."

"A boat cabin! That's it exactly," broke in lovely Master Fred, who knew all about the old fisherman and little Em'ly.

And the young archaeologist, much to his mother's delight, explained, that the structure was no less than the upper works of one of the old Molson steamboats, which lay there high and dry, after doing much good service in the primitive days of St. Lawrence navigation. And it was a snug and cosy hostelry, surrounded by beautifully shaded grounds.

Skimpit proposed that they should stop there for a few moments' repose, and some refreshments. The ladies were agreeable and the whole party got of the carriage.

They were shown to a pavilion in the garden, embowered in grapevines and honeysuckle. There they partook of sherbet and cakes, and indulged in agreeable conversation. The summer air was calm and laden with the sweet scent of flowers. Even the mercenary soul of Skimpit was softened by the influence of the time and place. He stole glances of furtive imagination at the handsome figure of Florence, seated beside him, her beauty mellowed and deepened by the heavy mourning weeds in which she was enveloped. The

long black veil thrown aside over her shoulders, imparted an impressive charm to her attractive face. A thousand thoughts rose to Samuel's mind, a thousand feelings buzzed at his heart. He felt that the time was propitious to say, to do something, he hardly knew what, to advance his suit. The opportunity was afforded him by Mrs. Pettysham proposing a stroll through the garden. She took the arm of her son and walked forward, Skimpit found himself in the company of Florence lagging behind. Not soft of speech was Master Samuel, neither was he versed in the art of courtship, but he seized his opportunity nevertheless, and managed to utter a few words that revealed his heart to Florence. Did she laugh at him? Did she stare in blank amazement? Did she repel him by look or gesture? None of these. Her eyes wandered out wistfully over the fair landscape spread before her, decked in all the alluring charms of a mild summer's evening. She listened, not as in a dream, indeed, for that would have been far too romantic, but with a passive kind of attention, and a faint smile that hovered over her rosy lips, was the indefinite answer which Skimpit interpreted as not altogether unfavorable to him. Thus encouraged, Samuel continued to speak, and a certain rude eloquence and fervor accompanied his speech. When after making the rounds of the garden, Mrs. Pettysham and Fred came up to the twain, he was not averse to meet them, for he felt satisfied that he had gotten on very well for a beginning. Mrs. Pettysham shot a sly look at him, and a cunning smile showed that she suspected something. She avoided looking at Florence who stepped forward with Fred, in the direction of the garden gate.

"Well Mr. Skimpit, shall we move along?" asked Mrs. Pettysham jauntily, "Florence has had enough of your company, I should think. Now, it's my turn."

"Oh, Mrs. Pettysham!" exclaimed Samuel with a gulp. "I hope you will be my friend."

"Ah, Mr. Skimpit," rejoined Mrs. Pettysham with a hearty laugh. "and has it come to this?"

Skimpit saw that the clever woman understood everything, and there was something about her demeanor which gave him hopes that he might find in her a powerful ally. Brooding over these thoughts, he reached the carriage, helped the ladies in and the drive around the mountain was continued very agreeably. Florence was quite lively in her conversation, and almost familiar with Skimpit, acting in a way that reminded him of the

old days in the country, and when they separated after reaching home she thanked him warmly for his kindness, and invited him to call again.

"She shall be mine yet!" exclaimed Skimpit.

And he drove away triumphant.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Passion unpitied and successful love
Plant daggers in my heart.

Mary Screws sat all alone in her room at home. Doleful and wistful was poor Mary, with her keen woman's eyes, she had been no stranger to what was going on around her. The coldness of Skimpit was not new to her. At first, she was not disposed to resent it, imagining that she might fly at higher game, than at her father's clerk—a lawyer, perhaps, or even a military man. But when Skimpit had come back from England with such flaming new clothes, and such lofty ideas, she thought better of it and concluded that she could not do better than stand by him. Both her father and mother encouraged the alliance and that was a further motive. She prided herself that she could combat his indifference and overcome it, when she discovered the causes of it. But when at length she did discover it, she was in a worse quandary than before. Samuel loved Florence! well, that was a joke. Ah! if it had been only a joke. Unfortunately, it was something far worse. Mary, though she was the child of a wretched father, had a keen appreciation of the fitness of things, and many delicate sensibilities. She sat alone in her room and reflected:—

"What does this mean?" she murmured. "Sam is in love with Florence! I could not believe it at first, but there is no use of deceiving myself any longer. It is only too true."

She rocked herself in the arm chair for a while longer, then resumed the course of her reflections:—

"This is very strange. It is more than strange, it is dangerous. What have I done to Samuel that he should treat me so? What have I done to Florence that—"

Then she rocked herself with more animation and her eye was aflame.

"Florence!—Samuel!—Samuel!—Florence!"

She stopped the motion of her chair and remained immovable for a moment. Her eyes were fixed with a wild painful stare on some object directly in front of her. It was

a bouquet of flowers on the mantle. How innocent those blossoms looked, and what a soft perfume they shed throughout the room. But to her disordered senses they shot a poison as deadly as that which took away the senses of Maxaniello, in the proudest day of his Neapolitan triumph.

"Retribution!" she exclaimed, abruptly, rising, "I fired Major Ward with jealousy against Florence. Florence is firing me with jealousy against Samuel. These flowers are the tokens of revenge."

She made a rapid step toward the mantel, seized the bouquet in her trembling hand, raised the sash with a renewed exertion, and dashed the flowers into the street.

Poor Mary! It was a retribution indeed, but she was wofully mistaken in connecting Florence therewith. Florence would have smiled sadly at the bare idea of such a consummation.

In the meantime, Skimpit was agitated too, but in quite another way. For the name Mary was altogether out of his thoughts, and his sordid soul was basking in sweet dreams of love, of which the central figure was the beautiful widow. He determined at all hazards to pursue the advantage which he fancied he had gained in the drive around the mountain, and the interview in the garden.

"Mrs. Pettysham is my main stand-by," he murmured, "and I must come to conclusions with her."

And accordingly he went to see Mrs. Pettysham. He found that lady very cordial and affable. Indeed, he fancied that she divined the object of his coming, and was ready to meet him half way. What transformations there are in the causes of love. Here was this clown bearing himself as well in the presence of Mrs. Pettysham, as if he had been a gentleman born and bred. His awkwardness, and sheepishness vanished as by enchantment, and he poured out his story with a facility and force which astonished himself, while it amused the lady.

"There is one obstacle in the way," said Mrs. Pettysham, kindly, after listening to all his arguments.

"What is that, madam?"—eagerly.

"Florence may not care to marry again."

"Oh! Mrs. Pettysham, don't say that. So young, so beautiful!"

"Or perhaps——"

"Well?"

"Her heart may be given to another."

"I hope not, madam. Indeed, I know it is not. She gave me to understand as much."

"Perhaps, then, she is still undecided; may not have thought about it, and——"

"That is just it, dear Mrs. Pettysham. That is just it. Just where I want your assistance. Speak for me, work for me, and I will do anything for you."

There was just the faintest curve of disdain on Mrs. Pettysham's lips at these words—as if Skimpit could do anything for her? The idea!

Skimpit seized her thought at once, and, with a stroke of genius, determined to clinch the argument.

"Mrs. Pettysham," he exclaimed, "I am in possession of a secret."

"A secret, sir!" murmured the lady, elevating her eyebrows.

"An important secret," madam.

"An important secret? sir. You astonish me."

"A secret that concerns yourself."

Mrs. Pettysham sat perfectly immovable, and there was a cold stare in her clear gray eyes.

Skimpit was not slow to seize the opportunity. He intuitively saw his advantage.

"Mrs. Pettysham, do you remember the mortgage?" he exclaimed.

"Mortgage? what do you mean," very severely.

"Oh, madam, do not feign to misunderstand me, I mean the mortgage on the Hard-scrabble estate."

Mrs. Pettysham saw something coming, and said gently, without, however, altering her reserved manner.

"And what of it, sir?"

"Mr. Screws has got it."

"Yes, I believe he has."

"And will keep it."

"Oh, I hope not."

"You don't know Mr. Screws."

"He is an honorable man, I hope."

"You know him best."

"He is the man to hold that mortgage, madam."

"Not if we clear it."

"He will see that you do not clear it."

"This is strange language, Mr. Skimpit."

"It is truthful, madam."

Mrs. Pettysham paused in the dialogue, closed her eyes, and reflected for one rapid moment. What did the man mean? What object had he in view? Was he prepared to exchange an important secret for his love to Florence? She resumed quietly:—

"Mr. Skimpit, you astonish me just a little. Why this turn to our conversation?"

Samuel stopped a minute, then said abruptly:—

"I'm a business man, madam. I come to make a bargain with you."

"A bargain, Mr. Skimpit?" said Mrs. Pettysham, merrily.

"Yes, a bargain. That mortgage was a conspiracy."

"Ah!"

"Intended to ruin your husband."

"Oh!"

"And it will ruin him."

"The proof, sir," sternly.

"Here it is."

And Skimpit drew from a side pocket the letter of Screws to Prudhomme, which he had purloined long ago.

Mrs. Pettysham folded her arms and looked at Skimpit keenly.

"That letter is yours, madam."

Mrs. Pettysham held out one hand, cautiously.

"It will reveal the whole plot and enable you to counteract it."

Mrs. Pettysham's eyes softened, but there were hard lines about her mouth.

"This letter is mine, sir? On what conditions?"

Here Samuel lost his balance a bit, at the sight of those sharp, inquiring eyes.

"No conditions, madam. The letter is yours, absolutely. Only——"

Mrs. Pettysham's lips broadened into a genial, knowing smile. She understood everything at a glance.

"Only——" she repeated.

"That you will do what you can for me, madam, with Florence."

Mrs. Pettysham laughed outright at this, and tapping Skimpit's shoulder with the letter, she said:

"We will do what we can, Mr. Skimpit, you can't ask anything better than that."

Samuel did not reply, but bowing himself out of the room, he hurried away, with the foolish assurance in his heart that all was well, and that Florence Ward was his very own.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Meantime Pettysham was getting on very well in the world at politics. As soon as he entered Parliament, it became apparent to his friends that he was destined to make his mark, and he himself had a vague confidence that public life was destined to be the crown-

ing sphere of his fortune. During the first session, he maintained his own counsel, taking no part in debate, but keenly observing men and things. He was not slow to make acquaintances and form friendships, and by the end of the first year Pettysham was quite a figure at the Capital. His wife was an efficient factor in his success, her accomplished manners, agreeable conversation, and rare knowledge of the world, contributing in a marked degree toward attracting the most influential society to her residence. The Pettyshams resided habitually in Montreal, but during the session of Parliament, they kept open house at Ottawa, where their receptions and entertainments were among the chief festives of the season.

It was during the second session that the great railway project, of which mention was made in the earlier part of this story, and which was the principal issue in the electoral contest that ended in Pettysham's return, was brought up prominently before the House. It was then that Pettysham burst out in all his glory, revealing his whole character, and showing conclusively the stuff that was in him. Not only was that railway necessary to his county but to the whole district to which the county belonged, but it was a matter of the greatest importance to himself both politically and financially. If he succeeded in carrying it through, according to his ideas, he would become the idol of his constituency, a power in the state and—what was not the least consideration—a man of commanding wealth.

But he could not succeed by his own individual efforts. He must needs get assistance from outside. Eloquence was something, but not nearly enough. There was downright hard work to be done in the committee rooms, and members had to be button-holed in the corridors. In fact the final triumph could be achieved only in the lobbies. Lobbying is an institution in all legislative bodies, but in Ottawa it has been raised to the proportions of a science. Nowhere, except at Washington, is the system so admirably managed, and nowhere does it produce such extraordinary results.

The only other curiosity that can hold a candle to it is our Civil Service. Canadians would imagine in their simplicity that the Civil Service was established and kept going for their special behoof, for the best men among themselves, and for their children after them. They would fancy it was meant to be an opening for the rising talent of the country.

But there never was a more egregious mistake. The Civil Service of Canada is used as a kind of asylum for English refugees. If a deputy head of a department is wanted, or a chief clerk, or a specialist of any kind is wanted, straightway application is made "at home," and the want is supplied. Engineers on public works, superintendents of military colleges, commanders of militia, surveyors of mineral lands and other such high officials are not supposed to grow in the uncongenial climate of Canada, but must be transplanted from British soil. Public opinion, so far, has had little or no fault to find with this beautiful system, and when our institutions of learning in Ontario and Quebec want a professor, they never for a moment suspect that they can find such among their own alumni, but instinctively turn to the English Universities for the same.

Nor are our Civil Service men entirely foreign to the lobby. On the contrary, they are often the active agents therein, their knowledge of the inner workings of the several departments being a material advantage to them and their friends. There is nothing in the world to prevent an official of this kind supplementing his large salary by a goodly amount of pickings during the year. It is easy for him to cloak his actions, and nobody can prevent him doing a little for himself outside of office hours. So long as he does not betray a state secret, he may make indirect use of the information in his possession without let or hinderance.

In the present instance, it is not necessary to our purpose to detail the interference of these gentlemen. Suffice it to say that the lobby for the railway was a powerful one, and that what a contemporary Canadian Statesman has picturesquely termed "human devices" were not wanting. That very convenient and handy contrivance denominated a syndicate was called into existence for the nonce. A wonderful conglomeration is a syndicate. It is as sinuous and multiform as a polype, and has as many tentacles as a devil-fish. It rakes in all influences, and is compounded of all elements. But always and everywhere, the the irrepressible Scotchman predominates. The slogan sounds, the clans muster, and from every quarter of the compass the Sandies are seen coming with gray eyes ashine and nostrils upturned, scenting the prey. They meet in conclave, dine and wine each other, and over their Glenlivet, concoct the clever schemes that put the fattest jobs in the land within their grasp, with the assurance of col-

ossal returns. Sandy goes into the syndicate of this kind with only a few bawbees in his pocket, and comes out a stunning millionaire. It is a thousand pities that all this wealth does not broaden his sympathies and lessen his greed.

Pettysham consorted well with his Scotch associates. He was as sharp as themselves, and they recognized from the first that his leadership was necessary to their success. But there was another man who thought he had a right to have a finger in the pie, that was Screws. He had interested himself in the railway long before Pettysham went to live at Consumption, had run for Parliament in order that he might control it himself, and it was not in human nature that he would abandon his hold, even if circumstances had somewhat gone against him. He therefore paid frequent visits to the capital. At first the Sandies tried to shake him off, but soon found that his grip was as firm as theirs. Pettysham, too, attempted the game of bluff, and even went so far as to snub him on one or two occasions; but Screws was like the Duke of Wellington, never knew when he was beaten, and he gave Mr. Pettysham so broad a hint about the Hardscrabble mortgage, that that gentleman immediately dropped the policy of obstruction. He went further and took Screws into the Syndicate with every mark of cordiality.

"Very well, sir," said Screws. "As far as I'm concerned that's all right, but there's something more."

"Something more?" replied Pettysham with astonishment. "What is that?"

"I have a partner."

Pettysham thought of Skimpit and smiled. Screws understood him at once and broke out:

"Oh, I don't mean Sam. He's with me only in the store. He's nothing to do with my outside business."

"Whom then do you mean, Screws?"

"I mean my friend Prudhomme. He's able, influential and has money."

Pettysham winced as he remembered the letter which Skimpit had delivered to his wife.

"There's another enemy of mine, in this thing," he said to himself, "and I don't half like it."

But he understood that, for the time being, he was helpless, and so had to put on the best face possible.

"Very well, Screws; let Prudhomme come in. You are a guarantee for him, are you not?"

Screws' lips were tortured into a grin as he replied:

"Oh, yes, Prudhomme will come in as my partner. But he is able to take care of himself."

Then Prudhomme was introduced, and a queer interview took place between the three men. The wily little notary was all smiles and sallies, but before he got through, the contract was drawn up by him in due form and he got the necessary signatures appended. He thanked Pettysham effusively, and they parted with the semblance of the best of friends.

On the way to the hotel, Prudhomme glaring through his spectral glasses, whispered:

"And the mortgage, Screws?"

"I will hold on to that, in spite of all, and Pettysham, big as he feels, is still in my power."

And Screws' face looked very wicked.

CHAPTER XXV.

"The fairest action of our human life
Is scorning to revenge an injury;
For who forgives without a further strife
His adversary's heart to him doth tie."

CAREW.

The railway bill passed at length, and Pettysham's fortune was made. The event gave him all the importance that he had anticipated, and even his most sanguine hopes were more than fulfilled. He rose from step to step up the ladder with wonderful rapidity. From a simple member of Parliament, representing an obscure rural constituency, he stood in the public eye as one of the leaders of his party. From a common country Squire, burdened with debts, and handicapped by a mortgage on his family patrimony, he found himself a man of large wealth, and the broadest financial expectations. His friends were loud in their praise of his abilities, and his political adversaries gave him credit for having taken clever advantage of a remarkable stroke of luck.

The Syndicate set to work without delay. They determined to reap a harvest while the sun of prosperity was shining full upon them. It was a wonder where all the money came from, but they seemed to get as much of it as they wanted without the least difficulty. They bought a magnificent building in St. James street; fitted up luxurious offices, and opened business with all the magnificence of nabobs and all the shrewdness and thrift of canny Scotchmen. They flooded the market with

their bonds and debentures, secured by an extravagant grant of government lands, and the leading bank of the country acted as their agent. The secretary had as many favors to distribute and wielded as much power as a Cabinet Minister. The road was soon built and from the first yielded large dividends. Everybody was in high good humor over the result of the venture. The Sandies purred and chuckled over their toddy. Prudhomme rubbed his hands and his spectacles gleamed. Screws figured up his columns of profit with sardonic delight. Pettysham went backwards and forwards, from Ottawa to Montreal, and from Montreal to Consumption, receiving with complacency the felicitations of his friends and the adulations of his sycophants. There was no more elegant indolence or aristocratic leisure for him. His whole time was employed. His mind was always on the stretch toward that ultimate goal which bore so rich a promise for him and his.

A further promotion soon came to pass. A change took place in the Cabinet of the day. One of those Ministers who have always an eye to some fat office that shall keep them comfortable for life, at the public expense, had pleaded his claim to a vacancy on the Bench of his Province, and had his claim allowed. He resigned his portfolio, and was inducted into his new functions and settled down with a blessing to Heaven that he was so well provided for, away from the storms that wreck the strongest of Governments, and blast the fondest hopes of politicians. Here was Pettysham's chance. The empty seat in the Cabinet might be his if he only knew how to go about obtaining it. His individual merits and his public services were recommendations enough of themselves, but these do not always weigh in the choice of Ministers. There must be wire-pulling and lobbying there too. Pettysham was perfectly aware of this and acted accordingly. He got his friends to send up a strongly-worded and numerously signed petition to the Prime Minister. His electoral district prepared a similar document of their own. Then he made several visits to Ottawa on the same mission. There was considerable delay owing to the number of rival claimants, but he triumphed in the end, and one fine Saturday the *Canada Gazette* came out with his appointment to the Privy Council and to the department of Secretary of State. According to constitutional usage he had to go to his constituents for re-election, and this he did within a fortnight after his appointment.

"Will I have any opposition, Screws?" he asked, laughingly, on the eve of nomination day, as he was packing his portmanteau, for a journey to Consumption.

"Why, who would oppose you?"

"Yourself, for instance," laughing again slyly.

Screws was not a bit abashed.

"Pshaw! By opposing you I helped you in your election."

"You did, eh?"

"The result proved it."

"That's a queer way of looking at it, but I guess we had better let that drop."

Screws thought so too, and there was a grim manner about him which showed that he did not relish the allusion. He said to himself, that a year before Pettysham would not have dared to recall the event of his election, and the desreputable part that Screws played therein.

"He is rich and powerful now, and no longer afraid of me. I must dissemble, however, and bide my time."

After making these reflections Screws informed Pettysham that he intended to go with him to Consumption, and assist in making his triumph as complete and brilliant as possible. And he kept his word to the letter. The whole country turned out to meet its representatives. A platform, decorated with bunting and evergreens, was set up in front of the parish church, and from that elevation the returning officer announced to the assembled hundreds that Mr. Pettysham was the sole candidate on the lists, and that the time regulated by law having expired without any opposition being offered, that gentleman was duly elected to represent them in Parliament. An immense acclamation was the response to this announcement, followed by loud cries for Pettysham. He stood upon the platform and his presence was the signal for a fresh out-burst of applause. The burden of his speech, after the preliminary expression of his thanks, was that he had henceforth a double opportunity of serving his country, both as a member of Parliament and as a Minister of the Crown. He added the promise—promises are very cheap with politicians—that he would exercise this dual prerogative in their behalf with all the energy of his nature; whereupon there was more applause. Then a procession of vehicles of every kind, buggies, coaches and carts, was formed, some two hundred strong, and the Minister was escorted through the village to the railway station, where he took final leave of his friends, amid the ringing of bells, the

tooting of engines and the wild yells of the crowd.

Pettysham returned to Ottawa and entered upon his new duties with ardor. His administrative talents had a field for development and he profited by the occasion. The office of Secretary of State is one of the least important in the Cabinet, and it soon became apparent that as soon as a change took place, Pettysham would receive a further promotion. This change came about within the year. The cards were shuffled and the Secretary of State became Minister of Railways, the most important and responsible position after that of Premier and Minister of Finance. Nor was this all. Within a few months after his appointment, the Government had need of a large amount of money for the prosecution of certain public works, and the Minister of Railways was deputed to go to England to negotiate the loan. His wife accompanied him on the voyage, and they resided abroad about three months, during which Pettysham succeeded admirably in the object of his mission. He had occasion also to mingle in the best society of London, where Mrs. Pettysham won many admirers and he made many friends. Indeed the popularity of the couple was so great that Mrs. Pettysham laid her plans for securing to her husband a substantial token of regard from the Crown. This was nothing less than a decoration and a patent of Knighthood for her husband. A little before the order of St. Michael and St. George had been revived and made a field of competition for colonists throughout the Empire.

"How nice 'Sir Peter' would sound," mused Mrs. Pettysham, and then added with a smile of ineffable complacency,

"And how grand to be called Lady Pettysham!"

It was a beautiful dream, almost too good to be realized.

"But who knows?" the lady would say again. "Strange things have happened."

And strange as it was, the thing did happen. A few months after his return to Canada, Pettysham was given to understand that he might expect a mark of royal favor as a reward for his able administration. On the Queen's birthday, at Montreal, the whole militia force turned out, and there was a grand review and sham fight, in presence of the Governor-General. To give the celebration still greater *eclat*, His Excellency had been commissioned to initiate several prominent men in the order of St. Michael and St.

George. Pettysham was among them. The ceremony of installation took place in one of the leading hotels, according to all the rites prescribed for such occasions, and in the presence of a chosen circle of friends and relatives of the recipients. When all was over, Sir Peter Pettysham was met with congratulations on all hands. The Governor saluted him, his colleagues in the Cabinet gave him the accolade, and his wife threw herself upon his neck in an ecstasy of joy.

Sir Peter Pettysham.

Lady Pettysham.

It was no dream now, but a golden reality. There was the title in black and white on the grand old parchment. There was the royal seal. There was the cross and the other insignia. The triumph of the man was complete, but there was something almost pathetic in the exultation of the woman.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Women are more far-seeing than men. Much as she enjoyed the honors which had been heaped upon her husband, Mrs. Pettysham did not forget that his position was not as secure as it might be. Sir Peter did not give that matter a thought. Feeling his political strength, and conscious of his ability to meet all financial engagements, he was willing to let his affairs stand, without inquiring too closely into the past. Mrs. Pettysham resolved to rouse him from his apathy.

They were sitting one day together in the breakfast room, he, reclining in an arm chair, in shirt sleeves and slippers, with the morning paper on his knee, and she, gently rocking herself.

"Well, what is there new?" she inquired, looking up from the King Charles that lay curled at her feet.

"Oh, nothing much."

"Nothing from Ottawa?"

"No. The Government are all away you know, the other members, like myself, being off on their holidays."

"Nothing from Quebec?"

"No. The old place seems to be as sleepy as ever."

"Nothing local?"

"Not the least accident, crime or catastrophe. No fire, no flood."

"Oh, you don't know how to read a paper. Come, let me have it and you'll soon see."

He handed her the sheet, and she had scarcely glanced at it, when she exclaimed with a smile,

"Well, here's a big item, the first thing. Don't you call that news?"

Sir Peter's eye fell on Prudhomme's name in the column of legal notices.

"Ah! and what is the notary doing now?" he asked, with just the faintest show of curiosity.

"Doing? Why, he is at one of his old tricks again."

"Selling some poor fellow out?"

"Exactly."

And she read out aloud the notice of a sheriff's sale of a valuable piece of property, under a mortgage held by Prudhomme.

Pettysham listened carelessly, puffing blue rings of smoke to the ceiling from a fragrant Golden Eagle.

His wife laid the paper on her lap, and looked at him a moment. Then she said quietly:

"Don't you think, my dear, that this little notice is a reminder to ourselves?"

"You can take it that way," was the negligent reply.

"And so ought you take it that way. There is no reason why we should allow that mortgage to hang over our heads any longer. Hardscrabble is the family homestead. We have the means to redeem it. We owe this redemption to ourselves as well as to our children."

"I agree with you that we have the means and....."

"And we should use them. We cannot read the future. This good fortune may not always last. Misfortune may fall upon us as suddenly as came the rise of our good fortune."

"You are right, my dear," said the statesman, bracing himself up in his chair and looking serious. "I will look to this matter without further delay."

While this conversation was going on in the Pettysham mansion, on Sherbrooke street, Mons. Prudhomme sat in his dingy little office, off St. Vincent street. His table was littered with papers, a few old books stood slanting on the shelves. The floor was uncarpeted, and a few rickety chairs were scattered about the room. The ceiling was black with dust and smoke, the window panes were clouded with accumulated dirt, and festoons of cobweb dangled gracefully in the low corners. He was peering intently through his glasses at a voluminous document spread out before him, while his lips were puckered by a cunning smile.

"This was a tough case," he muttered to

himself, "but it's all right now. *C'est correct.*"

And another ghastly smile flitted over his face.

Just then, there was a timid rap at the door.

"Come in!" cried out the notary, in his shrill, piping voice.

A middle aged woman, with two young children, entered.

"Are you Mons. Prudhomme?" was the hesitating inquiry.

"That's my name, madam, at your service."

"Might I speak to you a moment?"

"Certainly, take a seat."

And the little man, rising from his desk, set out three chairs.

The woman was poorly, but neatly dressed. She looked fifty, but might have been, as indeed she was, much younger, her features bearing the traces of premature age. The two children were likewise simply clad, and wore a serious, troubled mien. The oldest, a boy, was about twelve years of age. The younger, a girl, was not more than ten. They were both very handsome—blue eyes, golden hair, and delicately chiseled features.

"Well, madam, what can I do for you?" asked Prudhomme, after having scrutinized the three for a minute or two.

"I have come to see you, sir, about a most painful matter. It is not for myself, but for these poor little children —"

Prudhomme's aspect suddenly changed. He appeared to have caught a new idea.

"What is your name, madam?" he asked, abruptly.

"Belair, sir."

The big spectacles flashed, and the old man sat bolt upright in his chair.

"Oh, indeed!" he said, after a pause, "I know now what brings you here."

"Yes, he knew only too well. The woman who sat before him, was the widow of a wealthy farmer in the environs of Montreal. After doing very well for several years on the paternal acres, this man was smitten with the mineral fever that raged at that time in the West, and went off to better his fortunes, leaving his wife and two little ones to the care of an elder brother, whom he appointed sole guardian of his estate during his absence, and sole executor in the event of his death. The adventurer prospered in the land of the setting sun. Every three months he remitted considerable sums to his family, and in the course of two years, quite a competence had been accumulated. Then, at the instance of his wife, he resolved to return and devote his

savings to the comfort of home and to the education of his children. When he had settled all his affairs in the West, he wrote that he might be expected within a month from the date of the letter. But he never came. On his way, a terrible railway collision took place, and the poor fellow was among the victims. It was a terrible shock for the widow, of course, but after the first outbursts of grief were over, she found some comfort in the thought that at least her little ones were not left unprovided for. It was there that she counted without her host. Her brother-in-law took hold of the whole property, managed it in his own way, and never accounted for it to her in any particular. If she ventured to make inquiries occasionally, she was put off, and never could get any satisfaction. It was in vain that she pleaded later on, as suspicions arose in her mind, and once or twice when she made feeble threats at the instigation of friends who knew more or less about the law, the fellow laughed her menaces to scorn. At last, the whole truth came to light. The man had invested all his brother's money in a large property, which had proved unremunerative, and on which he had piled up mortgages to suit his own purposes. All these mortgages were in the hands of Prudhomme, who had obtained them at a fabulous discount from clients and other parties. Then he advertised the property to be sold, as we have seen, and from it, expected to realize a handsome profit. It was on the eve of this sale that the widow with her children, called upon him. No wonder he was disturbed when he saw them. But he was disturbed only for a moment. He recovered his self-possession at once, and his heartless craft displayed itself in its full colors. We must draw a veil over the scene that ensued. There is no need to detail the sorrowful supplications of the poor woman, nor the silent appeals of the orphan children. All was lost on Prudhomme. He had the law on his side, and that was enough for him. The statute is inexorable, and notaries are not expected to have souls. The rights of minors are all very well to be sentimental about, but they have no protection in the Province of Quebec. A man, after working hard, may leave a competence to his children; but, if that estate is badly administered, squandered or diverted from its legitimate channel, there is no recourse, and the children must go either penniless or with such scraps as they may, by accident, recover.

In an hour's interview, Madame Belair became painfully aware of the situation. She

saw it yawning before her in all its horror.

"Well, Mons. Prudhomme, it is all over then?" she sobbed.

"Alas! madam."

"You can do nothing?"

"Nothing."

She gathered her little ones to her, and went out weeping hysterically.

"On the threshold, she met a gentleman who was about entering the notary's office.

"What is it madam?" he asked, instinctively.

"Oh, sir, do not ask me. It is too terrible."

The stranger was Sir Peter Pettysham.

CHAPTER XXVII.

For should you to extortion be inclined,
Your cruel guilt will little booty find.

DRYDEN.

The gallant Knight saw at once that he was in the presence of some dreadful misfortune, and hesitated only one moment in the fear that perhaps the matter was of so private a nature, that it would be impertinent on his part to interfere. The helpless look of the little children decided him.

"Is there anything I can do for you, madam?" he inquired.

"Alas! sir, nothing."

"How so?"

"Mons. Prudhomme has told me that nothing could be done, and as he is both a notary and personally interested in the matter, he ought to know."

These words struck Sir Peter. Was it some further act of spoliation on the part of Prudhomme? And what if this case was the one referred to in the papers? In any case, he was determined to find out. If the matter was all correct, a few words of sympathy would not come amiss. If there was rascality at the bottom of it, his position as Minister of the Crown might help him in circumventing or punishing it.

He led the woman down the stairs to the open area in front of the building, and there asked her to tell him all her trouble.

"Confide in me, madam; I may be able to assist you."

Thus encouraged, the widow repeated, in pathetic language, all the facts that we mentioned in the preceding chapter. Pettysham listened without interrupting her once, but his attention was closely fixed, and not a single detail escaped him. When the story was told, he said:—

"Madam, you did well to speak to me thus. I am no stranger to you; I knew your husband."

Sir Peter had known Belair in former days, and distinctly remembered how industrious and honorable he was. This was an additional inducement with him to take up the case and befriend the widow as far as he could.

"You say that Mons. Prudhomme holds the mortgages on your property?"

"He does, sir, indeed."

"And you know that he was thoroughly cognizant of all the doings of your brother-in-law?"

"He was, sir."

"And he will not relent?"

"Not the least, sir."

"Did you make him any offer?"

"I had none to make. I have nothing. I am penniless, and these poor orphans are beggars. I could only appeal to his mercy."

"And —?"

"He told me distinctly he could do nothing."

Pettysham's eyes were moist as he heard this harrowing tale, and he immediately made up his mind what to do.

"Madam, leave this matter in my hands. I am just going to Mons. Prudhomme, and will see him about it. Go home and take heart. I will see you again in the course of the day."

Saying which, he produced his card and handed it to the woman. On reading it, she looked up in surprise.

"Oh, sir, is it possible? You can help me if anybody can. It is a providence that I met you."

And, renewing her thanks, she moved away with her children, who had listened to the whole colloquy with that innocent wonder and vague look of sorrow that make the sufferings of the young so irresistibly pathetic.

In two bounds Pettysham ascended the steps to Prudhomme's office. He was rather off-handed in his manner, setting aside all the little compliments, ceremonies and blandishments of the wily notary. He had come on business and must transact it at once. He declared that he wanted to settle the mortgage on his Hardscrabble estate, and was ready to pay the whole of the money down. It was in vain that Prudhomme feigned surprise, and assured him that there was no hurry at all, that he never thought of asking for settlement, and that it would be better to let things remain as they were, for a little while longer at least. Pettysham would allow no delay. The

property was his, and he wanted it. The mortgage was Prudhomme's and Screws', and here was the money to cover it. Prudhomme tried all his artifices, but they only served to convince Pettysham still more of the deep designs of the man. When every argument had failed, the notary hinted at resistance to the demand. Besides, he said he would have to see Screws.

"Never mind, Screws. I will settle the matter with him. It's your consent I want."

"What if I don't give it?" squeaked the little fellow, mustering up all the courage of his nature.

"Oh, you *must*," quietly said Pettysham.

"Must, must?" squeaked the notary again, jumping up and fairly dancing in front of his desk.

Pettysham looked at him with a bitter smile.

"Prudhomme, this farce must end. You once had me in your power, and you would like to keep me there now. If fortune had not favored me, you would have crushed me, as you have done the poor widow who has just left here——"

"What, what?" piped out the notary.

"Never mind, we'll talk about this widow presently, you and Screws would ruin me if you could, but you can't, you see."

"Ruin you? What do you mean, Sir Peter? This is the language of slander and I might invoke the law."

"But I have proof," said Pettysham sternly.

"Proof? what proof?"

"Ah, Mons. Prudhomme, you are very cunning, but you cannot hide all your tricks. One ought to be very careful about his letters."

"Letters, letters? You have none of mine."

Pettysham very quietly put his hand in his breast pocket, very quietly produced a bundle of letters, very quietly undid the red tape that bound the letters, very quietly selected one paper, very quietly opened it, and very quietly held it up before the glare of the notary's glasses.

The little man's face was a picture. It was surprise at first, then perplexity, then fear, then indignation.

"Where did you get this?" he cried out, almost beside himself.

"Never mind, look at it. Do you recognize it?"

He recognized it only too well. It was the note which Screws had written him about the Hardscrabble property and which Skimpit had purloined, subsequently delivering it to Lady Pettysham.

The old man looked at it more closely, then, as if finding a clue, he brightened up and exclaimed :

"Oh, but I didn't write that letter."

"No, you didn't write it, but it was written to you, and you acted on it."

That was conclusive. The notary had nothing more to say. He was defeated and he knew it. There remained only acquiescence to the demand of Pettysham, and that acquiescence was given with as good grace as he could manage to show under the circumstances.

Pettysham followed up this victory by another. He at once introduced the case of the poor widow. Taking advantage of the notary's discomfiture, he assumed a high tone, and exaggerated his knowledge of the particulars. He even went the length of threatening Prudhomme with prosecution if he did not settle the matter honestly and at once. Then and there papers were drawn up returning the property to the widow, and his own account against it was immediately settled by Pettysham. Sir Peter, satisfied with the day's work, immediately repaired to the house where the poor woman was anxiously awaiting his arrival; when she saw him coming, with a smile on his lips, and a broad paper in his hand, she felt that the hour of deliverance had come. There is no need to dwell upon this scene, three hearts were happy that evening which were plunged in sorrow when the morning sun arose, and one man had the proud consciousness of having wrought a good deed.

Pettysham's interview with Screws was as satisfactory as had been that with Prudhomme. The old merchant, after a few minutes of resistance, was thrown off his balance when informed that Prudhomme had given in. He was further put aback when the purloined letter was spread out before him. His defeat was complete, when Pettysham informed him that his son was a witness in his and Skimpit's Custom House rascality.

When Sir Peter reached home that evening, he was met at the threshold by his wife.

"Well?" she asked anxiously.

"We are free!" he exclaimed, and as he told her all that had happened, she shed copious tears of joy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Why will you fight against so sweet a passion,
And steel your heart to such a world of charms.

ADDISON.

AND where was our friend Douglas all this time? Do not be uneasy about him, gentle

reader. Douglas has taken good care of himself, and comes forward thoroughly equipped for the battle of life. He had studied hard and worked assiduously, building up quite a lucrative practice in his profession. His abilities soon gave him a position at the bar, and his oratorical talent brought him forward as a candidate for political honors. He took his position under the standard of Reform. His friend Pettysham tried hard to press him into the ranks of Conservatism, but without success. Douglas had higher aims. He would do away with the trammels of effete partisanship; would deliver his country from the swathing clothes of Colonial tutelage, and give her a place among the nations of the earth. To accomplish this, independence was necessary—not only commercial, but political independence. At the time of which we write, Douglas was preparing to secure a nomination to Parliament on that ticket. That was his ambition, and he was determined to fulfil it. But he had other designs to fulfil as well. He had not lost sight of Florence, nor she of him. He had sympathized in her misfortunes—had helped her in her troubles, in the early days of her widowhood, and had occasion to admire the noble qualities which she displayed in her terrible misfortune. And then her beauty had ripened. The bud had blossomed into flower, and the flower had developed into rich, mellow fruit. On her side, Florence had followed the career of Douglas with tender interest. His brilliant talents, his noble character, his physical advantages enlisted her warmest sympathies.

Meantime, Skimpit continued his attentions. The more he saw of Florence, the more he was in love with her. In his calls on her he often met Douglas, and while the latter was reserved, the former was effusive; so that his game was quite apparent to the young lawyer. If Douglas had taken the trouble to analyze his feelings, he could have found therein no trace of jealousy against Skimpit. He would never have regarded him as a serious rival. His relations to Florence were in no wise disturbed by the presence or the suit of Master Samuel. But the situation was not so clear for Florence. She saw herself between two fires—interest and love. Of course, she did not put it before herself so crudely. She did not dislike Skimpit, and his fortune was by no means his only merit in her eyes. She did indeed love Douglas, but that affection had not yet become so ardent as wholly to counterbalance other deficiencies. She was in that transition state

when, one day, the subject came up between Lady Pettysham and herself.

"I was thinking about you, this morning," said Lady Pettysham, as the two sat together in the latter's boudoir.

"Well, and what did you think about me?"

"I thought that you ought to come up with us to Ottawa, and spend the next session there."

"I am very much obliged to you, I'm sure. If nothing interferes I shall be happy to accept the invitation. Indeed, I should be very lonely when you go, as you will be gone at least six months."

"Lonely?" echoed Lady Pettysham, with a merry laugh.

"Why, certainly."

"You need never want for company, and if you remained here I shouldn't be surprised to find quite a change when I return."

This was said slyly, Florence pretended not to understand it, but she failed egregiously.

The two friends took up this cue, and the conversation turned on the relative merits of Douglas and Skimpit. Lady Pettysham, mindful of her bargain with the latter, a bargain laughingly made when the purloined letter was delivered into her hands, took a malicious pleasure in exalting the merits of Samuel. Florence listened rather more attentively than her friend expected, and although the subject had often been jestingly broached between them before, Lady Pettysham imagined that Florence had increased instead of lessened her leaning for Skimpit. This did not suit her ladyship at all. She could not bear the idea of such a noble woman as Florence throwing herself away on so despicable a creature. She was too loyal, however, to interfere farther, as by contradicting her own words, she would be throwing ridicule upon what was for Florence, a very serious matter. She determined, however, to watch the situation more closely, for that purpose, she further insisted upon Florence accompanying her to Ottawa. As they were speaking, Sir Peter came in with the intelligence, that the member for a strong Reform Constituency had just resigned, and that Douglas was going to get the nomination in his stead. If nominated, he would surely be elected.

"Oh, how glad I am to hear that!" exclaimed Florence, with the illumination of love in her beautiful eyes.

"And so am I," chimed in Lady Pettysham, "yes," she continued, "and that settles it. You will have to come to Ottawa now."

Florence at once consented with a sweet smile.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I do contest
As hotly and as nobly with thy love,
As ever in ambitious strength I did
Contend against thy valor.

SHAKESPEARE.

Things came to pass precisely as Sir Peter Pettysham had expected. The Parliamentary vacancy was offered to Douglas. At first he was inclined to refuse the honor, on the ground that he was not sufficiently blessed with this world's goods to justify himself in neglecting his profession. But this objection was waived when it was represented to him, that his constituency being a rural one, he would not be called upon to devote so much time and attention to it, as he otherwise might have to do. Before giving a final answer, however, he asked leave to consult his friends. Chief among these was Pettysham.

"Well, what do you think of it, Sir Peter?"

"Oh, I'm hardly the man to tell you," was the laughing reply.

"How do you mean?"

"You are my enemy."

"Oh!"

"You would fight me tooth and nail."

"I would that."

"Then, how could I counsel such a terrible fellow, such a dangerous enemy to enter Parliament?"

"Why, you want just such fellows to keep you straight. You are altogether too strong, and require to be checked as much as possible."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do. I believe your powerful government wants to be curbed, in its own interest as well as in that of the public."

"There may be something in that. At all events, my dear Douglas, I have only one word to say in your case."

"What is that?"

"Accept the nomination."

"But my age?"

"There are younger than you in the House, and some of those youngsters put on the most airs and have the most to say."

"I have no experience."

"You will acquire it."

"And my profession?"

"It will take care of itself. Your Parliamentary duties will keep you away from Montreal not more than three months of every

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year, and even during those three months, there is nothing to prevent your working at your briefs. Besides this, your very Parliamentary duties will enlarge your legal knowledge, as all kinds of technical questions come up before the Committees and the House."

"But I have got no money."

"Parliament is just the place to make it, my dear fellow," said Pettysham with a hearty laugh. "In the first place, you get your sessional allowance, which is \$1,000. That's not so bad for three months' work, eh? Then you can make fees by draughting measures and pushing them through committees."

"But isn't that directly against the spirit of the Independence of Parliament Act?"

"Independence fiddlestick! I'll venture to say that one half the members of the House double their salary at Ottawa by this kind of work. Of course I don't speak of a lot of old fools, who have not sense enough to think or speak for themselves, and are only voting machines, but the bright fellows are all in the way of making money."

"That is a pretty picture," said Douglas with a sarcastic laugh.

"It is real, my dear boy. The only trouble you will find is the competition among the host of lawyers who are members of Parliament. But I fancy you will be able to hold your own even there."

"I hope so."

"Then there remains for me only to repeat my advice."

"Namely?"

"Accept the nomination."

Douglas did not feel altogether convinced, but he thanked his friend very warmly all the same.

"There is more," said Sir Peter. "I will give you all the assistance I can, both as a friend and as a politician. You know I had just as little experience as yourself when I first entered Parliament, and I have got on pretty well, considering."

"Aye, but your party was in power, you were on the winning side."

"Not at all. For a pushing young fellow, the Opposition is a much better school than the Ministerial side. It brings out the stuff that is in him. But let that pass. I repeat that I will give you all the help in my power. Political differences do not interfere with friendships, you know."

"At least they should not."

"They will not in our case, I assure you. People imagine from reading the papers that because we go for each so heavily in the

House, the Ministerialists and Oppositionists cannot possibly be on speaking terms. Some of my dearest friends are my political opponents, and you will be among these. You may abuse the government as much as you like, you may criticise my own department as sharply as you know how, it will make no difference, and you will always be a welcome guest at my table."

"Thank you, very much, I did not expect any less of you. I will consider the matter a little more, and let you know my decision."

While Sir Peter Pettysham's arguments have gone far toward convincing Douglas of the wisdom of entering public life, he thought he could not do better than consult Mrs. Pettysham herself about it, having the most implicit confidence in the soundness of her judgment, and the sincerity of her friendship.

The lady did not give him time to broach the subject, but opened out herself:—

"Allow me to congratulate you, my dear Douglas," she exclaimed, holding out both hands to him.

"Thank you, milady. But I came for advice, rather than congratulation."

"Why, you don't mean to say you are still undecided?"

"Not if you insist that I shall accept the offer made me."

"Oh, but you must accept. It will be the making of you. We want just such young men in public life, you would be surprised to know how many dull fellows there are in Ottawa. You can count the really clever men on your fingers' ends."

Douglas felt flattered, of course, but proceeded to inquire whether her ladyship seriously thought he ought to forego his profession for the chances of a public career. In reply, she went over pretty much the same ground as her husband had done, but put the argument in such a new light that the imagination of the young man was fired, and he then and there made up his mind.

"Then, there's another thing, Douglas," said Lady Pettysham, with a most winning smile.

"What is that, madam?"

"We are going to have a gay time at Ottawa this winter—balls, parties, concerts, private theatricals, receptions and what not."

"That will be an attraction, certainly."

"Yes, and I will look to you to assist us in enlivening our own household entertainments."

"Oh," said Douglas, with a gesture of modest deprecation.

"There is no 'oh' about it; you are just the man we want."

"I'll do my best, I'm sure."

"You will not want for assistance."

"I don't doubt that."

"But special assistance, I mean," and there was fun gleaming in the beautiful eyes.

Douglas looked up inquiringly.

"Don't you know?" asked her ladyship, what I intend doing this winter?"

"Well, not particularly, I must say."

"I intend having a young lady to help me do the honors of my house."

Douglas smiled.

"And we are going to have a special reception to celebrate your election to Parliament, and that lady will be the presiding goddess on the occasion."

Douglas looked at his friend, as though to make sure that she was not quizzing him.

"Can't you guess who it is?"

Douglas gave a short laugh, and said:

"You don't mean she is going up to Ottawa?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Then that settles it; I will go at once to announce my acceptance of the nomination."

Douglas went off with a bird of joy fluttering at his heart, and a sky irradiated with hope spreading its bright wings above and around him.

CHAPTER XXX.

You love me for no other end
But to become my confidant and friend;
As such I keep no secret from your sight.

DRYDEN.

Through the kind offices of Sir Peter Pettysham, the writ was issued without unnecessary delay. Douglas was nominated, and elected unopposed. The news was telegraphed at once all over the Province, and the first despatch which the new member received, was from Sir Peter, at Ottawa, congratulating him on his return. A second message, couched in the most delicate terms, was signed by Florence. Douglas was a very happy man that day. Life opened before him with a broad illuminated horizon, and he felt that he had reaped the reward of many years of patient hardship and toil. On his return to Montreal, his first visit was to Lady Pettysham, who had not yet taken her departure for Ottawa, and he was received with unfeigned cordiality.

"I am glad you took my advice," said his friend, "and I am sure you will not regret it.

You begin your career under the happiest auspices. Your party is in need of able men, and it depends on yourself to take a front rank among them from the very start. You must stop to dinner with me. Florence, who has heard of your arrival in the city, will be here presently, and will join me in offering you her felicitations."

Of course, that was an inducement which Douglas could not resist. Nor had he long to wait. Florence was soon announced, and on her appearance in the drawing-room, went up to Douglas with a radiant countenance, offering him her hand, which he grasped with warmth.

"An M.P., I declare. Why, we shall not be able to stand you after this, you will look down on us from the height of your new dignity."

Douglas protested that he felt not at all elated, that he would remain always the same, and that he was quite flattered by the kind opinion of his friend.

"And so you are going to Ottawa for the session, Florence," said Douglas, after dismissing the usual commonplaces.

"I? Who told you so?"

"Never mind, I know it."

Lady Pettysham smiled, as she exclaimed: "He caught you there, Florence!"

It was the young widow's turn next.

"And you are going to Ottawa, also, after all."

"After all?"

"Yes. It took you some time to make up your mind, did it not?"

"I must confess it did."

Lady Pettysham broke out into another laugh, and said:

"She caught you there, Douglas."

The two young people looked at each other and there was deep meaning in their coy glances.

Lady Pettysham exclaimed:—

"You are both arrant hypocrites. I am going to tell on each of you, now."

"Oh, please don't," cried Florence, with empurpled cheeks.

"Madam, I entreat you," cried Douglas, with a gesture of mock apprehension.

"Yes, I will," cried Lady Pettysham, louder than either of them.

"Douglas!"

"Milady!"

"What persuaded you to accept a nomination, and thus determine your visit to Ottawa?"

"Your kind advice."

"What next?"

"Sir Peter's friendly argument."

"Come, now, what else?"

Douglas hesitated.

"Speak out, like a man. Confession is good for the soul, you know."

"The assurance that Florence would be at Ottawa during the session."

"Oh, my! who ever heard of such a thing?" exclaimed Florence, clapping her white hands together and blushing to the roots of her golden hair.

"Florence!" said Lady Pettysham, with a delicious affectation of severity.

"Madam!"

"What made you consent to spend the session with me at Ottawa?"

"Your gracious invitation."

"What else?"

"The promise of balls, parties, and all manner of festivities."

"What else?"

Florence pretended to pout.

"Speak like a brave girl. Tell the truth and shame—yourself."

"The intelligence that Douglas was going to be elected and that he would spend the session with us!"

"Good gracious! what an idea!" exclaimed Douglas, pretending to be awfully astonished.

Lady Pettysham enjoyed her ruse immensely. She had played her game to perfection. The two victims reproached and upbraided her, but the more they scolded, the more she was delighted. Tears ran down her cheeks.

"It's a shame!" cried Florence.

"It's an outrage!" cried Douglas.

"Go on," said Lady Pettysham, hardly able to articulate for laughter. "Go on. I can stand it."

After bantering the twain a little longer, she displayed her exquisite tact by turning the conversation into a more serious channel.

"I am really happy," she said, "that things have turned out so well. I could not have expected a better result. Your stay at Ottawa will thus be materially agreeable. Florence secures a *cavalier* who will escort her to all the entertainments to which she will be invited. Douglas has a companion to grace all the festivities which he will be called upon to attend. And as for me, I own that I have been a little selfish in this matter, I shall be able to count upon two assistants, who, I am certain, will vie with each other in making my house a pleasant place of reunion."

"What could be wiser than all that?"

Douglas and Florence could not help admitting, with smiles, that the combination was a clever one.

"And shake hands over it," said Lady Pettysham.

They shook hands.

"And promise you will do your best."

They promised.

Florence's cheek was on fire, and there was a lambent gleam in Douglas' honest eye.

The evening passed off very gaily, the dinner was thoroughly enjoyed, and when all was over, the three joined in the feeling that a good day's work had been done.

Later on, as Lady Pettysham sat by herself before the grate, in her chamber, wrapped in a snowy white night-dress, and rehearsing the several details of the scene just described. She suddenly stamped her embroidered slipper on the floor, and exclaimed, with a merry peal of laughter:

"And poor Skimpit! Clean forgotten! His name not mentioned once, and perhaps not thought of, certainly not by me. What a shame! And after my bargain with him! It is really too bad! How shall I ever reconcile my conscience to such base treachery?"

Then she remembered that Skimpit had promised to call the next day to show her some samples of goods which he had just imported, and which, he said, were intended expressly for her choice.

"Oh, I guess I can manage him," she said to herself, with another little laugh, and then upon she retired to a placid slumber.

Skimpit did call the next day. His samples of silks and satins were superb and her ladyship gave him a large order. This put the fellow in such capital humor that he felt disposed to talk. He rattled on for quite a while, when Lady Pettysham abruptly asked him whether he had heard the great news.

"What news, Milady?"

"About Douglas' election?"

"Douglas elected? To what?"

"To Parliament, of course."

Skimpit could not conceal his surprise and disappointment.

"Yes, Douglas is elected and we shall have the pleasure of his company during the whole of the approaching session at Ottawa."

Skimpit did not say anything in response, but his face brightened up perceptibly.

Lady Pettysham read him right through. She saw he rejoiced in the belief that Douglas' absence during three months would leave Florence all to himself, and she at once took a malicious pleasure in disabusing him.

"Do you ever go to Ottawa, Mr. Skimpit?"

"Never, madam. I'm too busy."

"We shall have plenty of attractions there, this winter."

"Is that so?"

"And our house, to which I invite you, will have a bright, particular attraction. Can you guess it?"

Skimpit's cunning eye sparkled.

"We are to have Florence with us the whole session."

Skimpit's visage fell, and he could not help showing that he was wholly discomfited.

A few minutes later, as he left the house with his samples under his arm, he muttered to himself:

"By thunder! I, too, will go to Ottawa."

CHAPTER XXXI.

How heroes rise, how patriots set,
Thy father's bloom and death may tell;
Excelling others, these were great;
Thou greater still, must these excel.

PRIOR.

The session was a brilliant one. A number of very important measures, both of a public and private character, came up for consideration, enlisting the strength of both parties, and bringing out the talents of the more conspicuous men. Outside of Parliament there was a round of festivities, Lent being late that year, and what is known in Canada as the Carnival season, correspondingly long. The incumbent of Rideau Hall displayed a princely hospitality; the Ministers, each in their turn, gave dinners and conversaciones, while several of the wealthier members entertained their friends in the hotels. For many of the members of our Parliament the sessional allowance is a boon. There are some who have nothing else to live on during the year, and the consequence is that they spend as little as possible at Ottawa. Others consider the allowance as so much pocket-money, and go through it freely. But there are a few to whom the money is the merest trifle, and the expenses of these are very heavy.

It is the etiquette of the House that, after a new member has taken the oath, he is presented to the Speaker by two of the principal representatives of his party.

"I should be only too happy to be your sponsor," said Sir Peter Pettysham to Douglas, "but unfortunately you are a Grit, and I must therefore introduce you to two good men of your own side."

And he did so. When Douglas took his seat he was greeted with loud applause from every quarter of the House, his reputation for learning and eloquence having preceded him. Lady Pettysham and Florence had made it a point to be present in the ladies' gallery, and after the adjournment they were the first to meet him in the lobby and offer their congratulations.

It is not necessary to follow Douglas more closely in his Parliamentary career. Suffice it to say that although he occupied a back seat, and remained habitually silent, as became a young man and a new member, he was a very attentive listener and a close observer of everything that went on. The result was that he soon became thoroughly acquainted with Parliamentary forms, and made himself master of every subject that came up for discussion. He was also a frequent visitor to the library, where he was known to study works on Canadian history and constitutional law, and delve into those mines of dull, official information—the Blue Books.

"In society he shone no less. There was a quiet grace and dignity in his bearing that carried him with uniform success through the different ordeals of fashion; and though he lacked some of the accomplishments of the mere man of the world, his many mental and physical gifts made him a welcome guest in the very highest circles.

The session was about two months old, when an incident occurred which brought Douglas forward into still greater prominence. A most important question was under debate, on which the very existence of the government depended. The House was crowded as it generally is on the most exciting field days. Not only were all the galleries filled, but there were numbers gathered on the floor of the chamber around the Speaker's chair. While all the ministers were subjects of criticism the fire of the opposition was centred against Sir Peter Pettysham whose department was particularly involved. The Minister of Railways was a fearless man, striking back blow for blow, and having braced himself up for one supreme effort, passed hot shot into the ranks of his enemies, but these were so numerous that he could not possibly make a speech in reply to each one of them in succession. After standing the torrent of abuse for three or four consecutive hours, he had occasion to absent himself from the House for a time and while he was away, one of the speakers wound up a terrific tirade by launching a most damaging charge against his per

sonal honor. The effect was tremendous. The ministers looked aghast. There was an expression of triumph on the faces of the Opposition leaders. During the brief pause that ensued, a pin might have been heard to drop. Suddenly, away back from the farthest Opposition bench, a voice was heard saying: "Mr. Speaker," and that word pierced the stillness like an arrow.

"Mr. Speaker, I cannot allow the Honorable Minister to be thus attacked in his absence. Furthermore, I protest against the outrageous accusation just made against him. However I may differ from him on public questions, I know that a more honorable man does not breathe in this House, and if my party is privy to this attack upon his character, I say emphatically, that it disgraces itself."

This was said calmly, slowly, without hectoring or any explosions of voice; every eye was turned upon the speaker. For a moment there was a breathless pause, then a thunder of cheers broke forth, rocking the House.

A whisper ran through the galleries:

"Who is it?"

And the answer was flashed back all around the circle:—

"Douglas, member for —!"

There were two ladies sitting in the gallery, one was as pale as death, and the hot tears coursed down her cheeks. The face of the other was flushed, her eye was aflame, and she waved a white kerchief in token of exultation. The former was Lady Pettysham the latter was Florence.

From that day, Douglas' political future was made.

"That's a noble fellow. Too good for a Grit," said the Conservatives.

"An independent fellow. He will have to be consulted, hereafter, if we expect to retain him," said the Reformers.

That same evening there was a reception at Government House, where Douglas was the observed of all observers. With Florence, radiant in her pride of him, hanging on his arm, he moved about modestly, but still conscious of the homage that was paid him. Sir Peter and Lady Pettysham, who arrived late, went straight up to him and silently grasped his hand, with tears in their eyes, amid the murmured applause of all around.

This event set the seal upon Florence's affection for Douglas. If she hesitated before, she could do so no longer. Skimpit, true to his vow, had run up to Ottawa three times during the two months, spending several days at each visit, and attending differ-

ent parties at the Pettysham mansion, where he was very assiduous in his attentions to Florence. She received him kindly, as did also the lady of the house. Indeed, the poor fellow thought so well of his reception, that he went away on each occasion confident of ultimate success.

"I shall call again once more before the close of the session," said he, "and pop the question. The coast is yet quite clear, and Douglas has not done half the damage that I expected. The goose is dabbling too deep in politics to bother himself much about love."

There is no need to say that when he did call again, a couple of weeks later, his eyes were opened to the situation. He did not want anybody to tell him how things stood for he, were only too painfully apparent. He was dumbfounded, and for a while did not know what to do. Recovering a little, he went off whimpering to Lady Pettysham, but got scant comfort from her. Although receiving him with kindness and politeness, she gave him to understand that she could not interfere in the matter. When she was foolish enough to insist upon her intervention, she went further and delicately hinted to him that he was not worthy of Florence, and that the best thing he could do was to fulfil his long-standing obligations to Mary Screws. Skimpit got furious. He left the house in a rage, breathing vengeance against everybody, but especially against Douglas.

"He shall not enjoy his triumph in peace," growled Skimpit, between his teeth, on the way to the station, "I'll be even with him yet."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Believe me, friends, loud tumults are not laid
With half the easiness that they are raised.

Ben. Jonson.

MARY SCREWS has purposely been left in the back ground. The part she took in the most lamentable episode of this story, naturally required that she should retire for a time into seclusion. She had shown herself guilty to an inexcusable degree. She had trifled with the friendship of a loving and trusting companion. She had abused the hospitality of two confiding hearts. She married a happy honeymoon, was the cause of a tragic death, and might have blighted another existence forever, but for the merciful intervention of favoring circumstances. Indeed, if Florence had not been gifted with a buoyant spirit, or if she had not found in the Pettyshams that tenderness and sympathy

which imparted a gradual alleviation to her grief, at the same time that they encouraged the hopes of the future, she might have remained a broken thing, whose life would have been the heaviest of burdens.

It must be said, however, for Mary Screws, that she bore herself well in the dreadful ordeal. She was intelligent enough to understand the real nature of the mischief she had wrought, and she had sufficient sensibility to experience all the pangs of a terrible remorse. She did not hesitate to do everything in her power to make amends for her fault. She stood by Florence during the darkest days, watched over and attended her as devotedly as if she had been her slave. These good offices were, of course, not lost upon the young widow, and the two might have continued to be inseparable companions, if the other events which we have described had not interfered to throw Florence more in the society of the Pettyshams. Mary had in consequence to fall back upon herself, and as she did not succeed to any extent in widening the circle of her acquaintance, her solitude was almost complete.

Of course, Skimpit was neither forgotten nor overlooked. He could not well be, seeing that he was virtually a member of the family, and almost continually within sight or hearing. It had been understood all along that if he succeeded in ingratiating himself into Screw's affections, and seconding him in his financial and commercial transactions, that he would be entitled to have the daughter of the house for a wife. That Skimpit succeeded in the double object for which he was brought into Screw's employ, the reader must have sufficiently discovered for himself. Indeed, Samuel was a fellow after Screws' own heart. The two supplemented and completed each other. What one lacked the other possessed, and between them they presented a combination which it was well nigh impossible for an ordinary man of the world to circumvent. The consequence was that the men understood each other, and the strength they wielded. They might differ on details, and even quarrel, but they could not afford to break from one another. Here is an example, bearing directly on the evolution of this story.

One day Skimpit was sitting in the front part of the warehouse, going over the inventory of a large consignment of goods which he had sold that morning at an extraordinary profit. Presently he felt a warm breath near his ear, looking up he saw Prudhomme. The little notary's face was pale and drawn down,

while his eyes seemed to be completely quenched.

"Hello! Prudhomme, what brings you here to-day?"

"Is Screws in?"

"Yes, in the private office. But what is the matter? you look troubled."

"Oh, nothing much. Only I want particularly to see Screws."

Skimpit chuckled, as he watched the notary shambling away in the direction of Screws' office. Although the two often worked together, and were confederates in many a crooked transaction, they disliked each other.

"I wonder what he is after now," murmured Skimpit. "He looks as if he had got the worst of it for once."

Samuel had divined correctly.

The notary was precisely going to confer with Screws, after the sharp interview with Pettysham in which he had been constrained to knock under unconditionally. He found the old merchant in pretty much the same mood of mind as himself, for he, too, had just got through with Sir Peter, after being forced to back down at every point.

Prudhomme was about to speak, when Screws raised his hand and said:—

"Not a word. I know all."

And in a few words of explanation, the whole matter was explained.

"Well, what is to be done?" asked Screws, after a moment.

"To keep quiet," responded the notary.

"We can do nothing for the time being, and it depends entirely on ourselves to have the thing buried out of sight forever."

"What about Pettysham?"

"He is not vindictive."

"But there are others."

This made the two men reflect.

Yes, there was another, and with him lay all the trouble.

"I wonder how Pettysham got hold of that letter of yours to me." I did not carry it about, and therefore did not lose it. It must have been stolen from my office."

"Who brought it to you?"

"Skimpit, so far as I remember."

"Then, let us see Skimpit. He may possibly remember something about it, and give us a clue."

Skimpit was called into the little office, and, on entering, saw at once that something out of the common was in deliberation. Instinctively, he braced himself up, feeling that he was to be called upon to say or do things

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upon which the whole drift of his life depended.

Interrogated about the letter in question, he replied off-handedly, that he remembered all about it. He had seen Screws write it, had himself brought it to Prudhomme, and had seen the notary read it, of course, he did not know what was in it—he was not the man to pry into the correspondence of others. Of course, too, when asked if he had any idea what had become of it, he replied with some sharpness, that he was not the keeper of the office. This answer was satisfactory enough on the surface, but it did not deceive the two old men. They said nothing, but only exchanged glances, and drew their own inferences. These men all understood each other. It was a triangular fight among them. Diamond was set to cut diamond. Each one understood his strength, as well as his weakness. The notary was implicated in the mortgage business, and there both Screws and Skimpit had him. Screws was implicated in that and in the Customs' burglary, and there Skimpit had him, while he was equally guilty himself. Neither of them could turn about on the others, and the three were necessary to each other.

At this time, Skimpit was in love with Florence and fondly imagined that his delivering of the compromising letter to Lady Pettysham would be the means of winning his suit. He felt, therefore, no compunction at having thus betrayed his friends, the only important point being that they should never find him out. If either of them did that he would be ruined, even if he did drag down the two with him in his downfall. On his side, did Screws make up his mind to secure the marriage of Skimpit with his daughter Mary. He knew, of course, from his wife and from Mary herself, that Samuel had his eyes turned upon Florence, but he had hitherto paid no attention to that circumstance. Now, however, he understood thoroughly that the best, if not the only way, of keeping his secret inviolate, and of attaching Skimpit to his fortunes irrevocably was to make him his son-in-law. To this end he worked strenuously, but with little apparent effect, until the event narrated in the preceding matter, put a new face on the situation and led to other results.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

It may have appeared singular to some of our readers that Skimpit was admitted on

terms of familiarity in the Pettysham family. The reason is to be found in the political position of Sir Peter, who could not afford to break with such men as Skimpit, even when their rascality was unveiled. The trouble with him was, as we have seen, that he fell into the hands of sharpers from the initial stages of his public career, and indeed, but for their assistance, given indirectly, might not have attained to a seat in Parliament at all. For a considerable time after he was in their power, and when finally he emancipated himself, as we have described, there were further considerations which prevented him from estranging those fellows altogether. In the case of Skimpit, more particularly, there was this further complication that Florence really entertained some regard for him, and at one time seriously balanced in her mind the chances of joining her fate with his. Such being the case, Lady Pettysham could hardly deny her house to this suitor, especially when she remembered the quasi bargain she had made with him on the delivery of the Screws-Prudhomme letter.

Sir Peter had rather objected to her inviting him up to Ottawa. But her reply was that this would precisely answer the purpose of putting an end to the whole trouble. The event proved that she was wise—the appearance of Douglas upon the scene, his fine manner, and his Parliamentary success, brought about an absolute change. The very removal of Florence to Ottawa was likewise beneficial, imparting to her mind new views, and altering her sentiments in many important particulars.

When Samuel left the capital in high dudgeon, after his last interview with Lady Pettysham, the latter rather pitied him, in spite of her evil opinion of him.

"Poor fellow," she said, "It is hard to be dismissed in that fashion. There is no doubt he loved Florence, and there may be some good in him after all. However, I have nothing to reproach myself with. I did my duty by my friend and feel relieved that the strain is over."

When she mentioned the matter to her husband, he drew a long sigh of relief.

"That is the last of him, I hope," he said. "He must not darken our door again. We shall not be compromised any longer by his visits. I can now snap my fingers at the whole crew of them."

When Florence heard of the occurrence just the slightest shadow passed over her beautiful countenance.

"It's all for the best," murmured Lady Pettysham, kissing her on the forehead.

"So it is, and I am indebted to you for everything."

Douglas only smiled grimly when the incident was mentioned to him. He knew everything and feared nothing; only a few days before, Sir Peter had appointed him his private and confidential lawyer, and had laid all his papers before him.

"If these three fellows attempt to give me any further trouble, you will be there to help me," he said.

And Douglas promised him that he would.

The whole Screws family were perfectly acquainted with the object of Samuel's trips to Ottawa, and, on his return from his last visit, they naturally noticed that he was taciturn and ill-humored. The circumstance was all the more remarkable, that he had been in high feather for several days after each of his preceding journeys. Old Screws was the first to turn the conversation in that direction, by bluntly asking Skimpit how he was getting along with his suit. The latter adroitly evaded the question, by making inquiries into the standing of Douglas.

"Oh, we can do nothing with him," said the merchant. "He's hand in glove with Pettysham now, and the two make a pretty strong team. Besides, young Douglas is no fool, Sam."

Samuel knew very well that he was not, as the events of the preceding few days abundantly proved. He knew very well, also, that he could not undermine him through Sir Peter and Lady Pettysham, for the latter had the fatal letter in her possession, and the former was well aware of his participation in the Custom House affair. He was simply in a quandary, and the more he thought over it, the darker his prospects appeared. Finally, he bethought himself of the last words Lady Pettysham had spoken to him.

"Fulfil my obligations to Mary!" he mused; "yes, that is just what she said. If I could not have Florence, there was Mary waiting for me. Now, what are my obligations to Mary?"

For having thought of them so late, they were no less vivid to his mind. He remembered that the two had been intended for each other from childhood, that he had made frequent advances to her, that the old people fully expected the match to take place, and the only wonder was, that they had not insisted upon it long before. A further wonder was, that Mary had not pressed him, nay,

had looked with seeming indifference on his intentions to Florence. What was he going to do? How was he to manage the new situation to the best advantage? It was evident to him that he could not engage Screws to work for him against Douglas. Might he secure Mary's help to take revenge upon Florence? The idea at first glittered before his eyes like a fantastic mirror. But his own good sense soon persuaded him of his error. Mary could not raise a little finger against the woman whom she had so terribly wronged. Indeed, that fact explained why Mary never interfered by word or gesture in his relations with the young widow. If Samuel could get Florence, she, of all others, had not a single obstacle to interpose, however much her own career might have been blighted by it. Skimpit saw all this clearly, when he set himself to think it all over, and he saw as clearly that Lady Pettysham's advice was the best course for him to pursue—fulfil his obligations to Mary Screws.

He was in this frame of mind, when Screws came up to him, saying that he wanted to have a little private talk.

"Sam, you and I are business men and we understand each other. Don't we?"

"We ought to."

"Well, I have come to talk business."

Skimpit was just a trifle disconcerted, but recovering himself, he asked what the business might be.

"About Mary," said the old man.

"Well—"

"Our Mary is getting on, Sam. In a year or two she will be an old maid. That would never do, you know, Sam."

Sam emphatically declared that if there was one thing on earth that he objected to, it was an old maid.

"Exactly, and it depends on you, Sam, that she won't be an old maid."

Full explanations followed. Old Screws was quite eloquent, and instead of showing anything like peremptoriness, he was kind, gentle and persuasive. By a singular perversity, Samuel was belligerent and hostile throughout. The arguments that had convinced a little before when addressed to himself by himself, he combated strenuously when urged by Screws. In the course of the discussion, Screws incidentally made use of the words:

"Remember your obligations to Mary."

This fired Skimpit. What meant that coincidence with the language of Lady Pettysham? When all was said and done, what

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right had Screws thus to force his daughter upon him? In his inner soul, Skimpit knew that he was shamming, and had no solid ground to stand on, but there was a devil in him just then that prompted him to force an issue.

"Obligations to Mary?" he said, "what do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say."

"How far do those obligations go?"

"To marriage, my boy."

"But suppose I don't want to marry?"

"You must."

"Why?"

"You just said, Sam," whispered Screws, in his insinuating manner, "that an old maid was a most pitiful object. The next most pitiful object is an old bachelor. You couldn't be that, you know, Sammy."

Sammy would not be persuaded, and blurted out, that he did not care to be pushed in a matter of such importance. Then Screws sprang a mine upon him. He declared that he knew who had delivered his letter to Lady Pettysham. A scene ensued. Recrimination upon recrimination followed. But it was of no use. Screws triumphed, and Samuel had to promise that he would fulfil his obligations to Mary.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"So let us this change of weather view,
Change eke our minds to former lives amend;
The old year's sins forepast let us eschew,
And fly the faults with which we did offend."
Spenser.

The reader will not have forgotten our old Scotch friend and his Spiritualist son from Boston. The latter has found his new creed a source of material profit. He, too, removed from the quiet village of Consumption and took up his residence in Montreal. He became quite an oracle among a certain class of simpletons, and was frequently consulted on knotty matters of social, domestic or religious needs. He was not slow to appreciate the classes that were spread out before him, and determined to make the most of them. With a rare combination of Scotch shrewdness and Yankee craft, he supplemented his spiritual interpretations and ministrations by the vending of patent medicines. His "Quintessence of Vitality," the invention of his own unaided genius, was a rare and valiant compound, wonderfully and fearfully made. It professed to cure every mortal ailment under the sun, and when administered in connection with

evolutions of the spirit was omnipotent in its results. It is needless to add that our friend speedily acquired a name at the same time that he bettered his fortunes. The world teems with fools that take a superlative delight in being humbugged. The patent medicine-man increased his profits by establishing an American printing office in the city, through which he scattered broadcast a series of almanacs and fly-sheets, filled with infallible predictions of the weather, which Vennor must have studied, unflinching household receipts, and a lot of social maxims of the most orthodox description. All this did not prevent him from carrying on a nice little smuggling business across the lines. He got his raw material from the other side, passed it through without paying duty, and by the simple addition of Canadian water in generous quantities, he manufactured his nostrums at a profit of nearly seventy-five per cent. No qualms of conscience had he in pursuit of this dishonorable traffic. It takes your intensely spiritual people to play pranks of that kind without wincing. If the world were purged of the oleaginous hypocrites who trade upon their good name and sanctimonious reputation, the world would suddenly find itself shorn of a moiety of its inhabitants.

One day Skimpit called upon the Charlatan. He was in great distress of mind. Things were going badly with him inside and outside of his business. The fever of extravagant speculation which had raged throughout the country had well nigh spent itself, and a financial crisis was at hand. Like so many prosperous houses, his firm had gone into over-importation, and found itself glutted with unsalable goods. Both he and Screws had also dabbled heavily in land investments, which suddenly became a drug on the market. If the reader will recall to mind the tremendous crash of 1873, he will have some idea of the condition in which Skimpit found himself. It must not be inferred, however, that he was totally ruined. He and Screws being far too cunning to allow themselves thus to run down. But because he had lost much and grieved exceedingly over his loss, he thought he would pay a visit to the spiritualist, with a view of getting some comfort and counsel from his wisdom. It is needless to enter into the details of this conversation, but the close deserves to be noted, as bearing with singular directness on our story.

"It is peace of mind you chiefly want," was what the man said to Skimpit.

"That I never knew."

"No, your mind has been too active in the pursuit of gain. You have no conception of the bliss of spiritual fruition."

"What must I do to get this?"

"Contract the lines of your business and content yourself with normal profits in a single legitimate sphere of trade."

Coming from a smuggler this was particularly rich advice.

"That's what I intend to do," said Skimpit.

"But there is something else."

"What?"

"You must learn to commune with the spirit world."

Skimpit replied, with a coarse humor, that he knew nothing about spirits, except Usquebaugh and Glenlivet.

"Oh, but you can be taught."

"All right. What next?"

The seer looked very wise for a moment then said with becoming solemnity,

"You will have to contract an alliance."

"An alliance?"

"Yes, I mean a marriage."

"Is it a spiritual marriage, you mean?" and Skimpit burst out laughing. "That will never do for me; I am a practical man, you know."

"I intend something practical."

"Well, what is it?"

"Take a wife."

Skimpit uttered a low growl, thinking he had no need to go as far to learn that. But he was struck all the same, and resolved to question his friend more closely.

"Well, what kind of a wife would you choose for me?"

The clairvoyant replied by a series of queries.

"Is there not some female that you particularly fancy?"

"I won't say no."

"And have you reason to believe that she fancies you?"

"I think she does."

"Furthermore, is there not a female to whom you owe certain obligations?"

"Humph," thought Skimpit, "what does the fellow mean? What is he driving at?"

Then looking at his interlocutor, he blurted out:—

"Well, suppose I have?"

"If you have, marry her."

"Marry her?"

"Yes, and you will be happy."

The reader may laugh at this singular scene, but it is drawn from life, and none the

less striking, because of its burlesque surroundings.

Skimpit was taken completely aback. It appeared passing strange to him that, from three different sources, he should be reminded of his obligations to Mary Screws. A light dawned upon his sordid soul, and he felt in the presence of the soothsayer, a different man from what he was when he went.

On his return he walked straight to the old notary's office.

"Good morning, Prudhomme."

"Good morning, Sam. How is business to-day?"

"Oh, about the same, but I don't care about business just now."

"Don't care about business?" echoed the notary, thinking that something must certainly be up with his comrade.

"No, I don't, but I did come on business all the same."

"Oh, I thought so," said Prudhomme, laughing.

"Yes, I want you to draw up a contract for me."

"Certainly, what kind of a contract?"

"A marriage contract."

"*Mille tonnerres!*" exclaimed the notary, laughing aloud and slapping his thigh, "has it come to that at last, Sam?"

"Yes, it has."

"Who, pray, is the fortunate one?"

"Oh, you know."

"But, still—"

"Why, Mary, of course."

"Good. Give me your hand, my boy. And Screws? You are aware that a notary must ask these questions."

"None of your fooling, Prudhomme. You are perfectly well acquainted with Screws' feeling in the matter."

"Oh, yes. And Mary?"

"Pshaw, she is all right. Hurry up and make that contract. We will fill in the blanks at the house to-night."

There was a family meeting at Screws' that evening, where the preliminaries of the marriage were settled to the satisfaction of all concerned. Within a week, Samuel and Mary were man and wife. The event was the making of Skimpit, who became a respectable citizen, and went into a legitimate business, on the retirement of Screws, whom he bought out.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"When all the bravery that eye may see,
And all the happiness that heart desire,
Is to be found—"

Spenser.

The session was over. It had lasted over three months, and during it both Pettysham and Douglas had continued to distinguish themselves. They were well tired out, too, and hailed prorogation as a relief.

"Where shall we spend the summer?" was Sir Peter's query to his wife. "I have earned my holidays, and want to make them as enjoyable as possible."

Lady Pettysham smiled.

"You will have to give me at least one whole month in Montreal before we proceed elsewhere," she said. "Oh, my! I shall be ever so busy."

"Busy? At what?"

"Don't be so inquisitive. This is a woman's affair."

"Exclusively?"

Sir Peter knew his wife thoroughly, and immediately guessed what she was up to.

"Not exclusively. No. But the preliminaries are all in my hands, and don't you enquire any further."

"You will let me know in time?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Very well, then. This is the fourth of May. I give you to the fifteenth of June. Your grand event must take place by that time. Immediately after we will go down to the seaside."

Sir Peter took his leave, and Florence entered the apartment.

"We start for Montreal to-morrow, my dear. Make ready."

"But, Sir Peter—"

"He will not be ready for a week or two yet. He has to wind up the routine work of his department, and attend a few cabinet meetings, where the odds and ends of legislation will be gathered together and stowed away until next session. But we don't need him, do we, Florence?"

"Not just yet," said the young widow, with a smile and a blush.

"No, only a little later on. For the present, Douglas will do."

Florence smiled and blushed again, and repeated the operation several times, as, in the course of conversation, Lady Pettysham unfolded her plans. They were going to Montreal at once, in the company of Douglas, and make due preparations for the grand event,

which our readers have doubtless anticipated.

One month was surely not too much for the accomplishment of all that she contemplated.

Florence would have preferred less pomp and circumstance of fashion, but her friend would not hear of anything else.

"I will yield on the question of privacy," said Lady Pettysham. "The wedding will take place quietly, in the presence of only a few friends of the family. But as to style, my dear, I mean that you shall be arrayed as the Queen of Sheba in all her glory."

There was nothing for it but Florence must yield, knowing, as she did, that her friend meant for the best, and would do the best.

The days glided by ever so fast. And how busy we were? The needle was plied both night and day, and mountains of silks, satins, cambrics and cloths were deftly transformed into the daintiest of garments.

"Oh, we shall never get through," exclaimed Florence.

"Yes, but we will though," triumphantly replied Lady Pettysham, "and with several days to spare."

Down came Sir Peter from Ottawa in due time, and he was in the best of spirits, having got through his work for the summer.

"I am yours to command, old boy," he said, tapping Douglas on the shoulder. "Let us make all necessary preparations on our side."

And they did. The two were inseparable during the ensuing fortnight.

At length the great day made its appearance. The sun shone forth in all its splendor, as if in welcome and felicitation, and the air was redolent of perfume from all the gardens of Sherbrooke street. The ceremony was performed with great solemnity, in presence of a chosen few. Sir Peter stood up for Douglas, and the nuptial blessings were pronounced by Florence's father. It was an impressive spectacle. After the wedding, a sumptuous breakfast was partaken of at the Pettysham mansion. One toast was offered and one reply was made. Sir Peter drank to the health of the married couple, had a few words of graceful eulogy for both, and concluded by wishing that their path through life might be strewn with even sweeter roses than those that blushed upon the board.

Douglas made a touching answer.

"I take this occasion," he said, "in the presence of those whom I love best, and care most for, to proclaim my sense of deep indebtedness to Sir Peter and Lady Pettysham.

It is mainly to them that the union which has just taken place is due, and them must I specially thank for the happiness which I this moment enjoy. I cannot say more, but here, Sir Peter, is my hand; I am your friend forever."

The two hands were fervidly clasped, while tears stood in the manly eyes.

"Lady Pettysham, allow me to kiss your hand, in token of obeisance and gratitude."

Douglas bent over her like a cavalier, and the diamond ring on the soft white hand, flashed a pencil of light into his face and illumined it.

Florence could not resist the impulse of her husband's example. She arose swiftly from her chair, and with both of Sir Peter's hands in her's murmuring words of affectionate ac-

knowledgment, then fell upon the neck of Lady Pettysham, where she remained for several seconds unable to contain her emotion.

The rest is soon told. After the bridal tour, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas repaired to Trois Pistoles, as the guests of the Pettyshams at their summer villa. A few weeks later Douglas went down to Restigouche on a salmon fishing expedition with Sir Peter. In September all returned to Montreal, and the work of life was resumed. There we leave all our friends in the enjoyment of that domestic peace and material prosperity which their patient labor won, and which their trials and sorrows went far to sanctify. Douglas and Florence still live in Montreal, while the position of the Pettyshams is ever high in the land.

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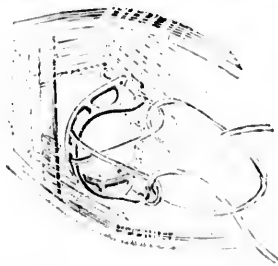
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