

# **Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II**

Thomas Preskett Prest



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**Thomas Preskett Prest**

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For a brief space let us return to Flora Bannerworth, who had suffered so much on account of her affections, as well as on account of the mysterious attack that had been made upon her by the reputed vampyre.

After leaving Bannerworth Hall for a short time, she seemed to recover her spirits; but this was a state of things which did not last, and only showed how fallacious it was to expect that, after the greivous things that had happened, she would rapidly recover her equanimity.

It is said, by learned physiologists, that two bodily pains cannot endure at the same space of time in the system; and, whether it be so or not, is a question concerning which it would be foreign to the nature of our work, to enter into anything like an elaborate disquisition.

Certainly, however, so far as Flora Bannerworth was concerned, she seemed inclined to show that, mentally, the observation was a true one, for that, now she became released from a continued dread of the visits of the vampyre, her mind would, with more painful interest than ever, recur to the melancholy condition, probably, of Charles Holland, if he were alive, and to soul-harrowing reflections concerning him, if he were dead.

She could not, and she did not, believe, for one moment, that his desertion of her had been of a voluntary character. She knew, or fancied she knew, him by far too well for that; and she more than once expressed her opinion, to the effect that she was perfectly convinced his disappearance was a part and parcel of all that train of circumstances which had so recently occurred, and produced such a world of unhappiness to her, as well as to the whole of the Bannerworth family.

"If he had never loved me," she said to her brother Henry, "he would have been alive and well; but he has fallen a victim to the truth of a passion, and to the constancy of an affection which, to my dying day, I will believe in."

Now that Mr. Marchdale had left the place there was no one to dispute this proposition with Flora, for all, as well as she, were fully inclined to think well of Charles Holland.

It was on the very morning which preceded that evening when Sir Francis Varney called upon Charles Holland in the manner we have related, with the gratifying news that, upon certain conditions, he might be released, that Flora Bannerworth, when the admiral came to see them, spoke to him of Charles Holland, saying,

"Now, sir, that I am away from Bannerworth Hall, I do not, and cannot feel satisfied; for the thought that Charles may eventually come back, and seek us there, still haunts me. Fancy him, sir, doing so and seeing the place completely deserted."

"Well, there's something in that," said the admiral; "but, however, he's hardly such a goose, if it were so to happen, to give up the chase -- he'd find us out somehow."

"You think he would, sir? or, do you not think that despair would seize upon him, and that, fancying we had all left the spot for ever, he might likewise do so; so that we should lose him more effectually than we have done at present?"

"No; hardly," said the admiral; "he wouldn't be such a goose as that. Why, when I was of his age, if I had secured the affections of a young girl like you, I'd have gone over all the world, but I'd have found out where she was; and what I mean to say is, if he's half such a goose as you think him, he deserves to lose you."

"Did you not tell me something, sir, of Mr. Chillingworth talking of taking possession of the Hall for a brief space of time?"

"Why, yes, I did; and I expect he is there now; in fact, I'm sure he's there, for he said he would be."

"No, he ain't," said Jack Pringle, at that moment entering the room; "you're wrong again, as you always are, somehow or other."

"What, you vagabond, are you here, you mutinous rascal?" -- "Ay, ay, sir; go on; don't mind me. I wonder what you'd do, sir, if you hadn't somebody like me to go on talking about."

"Why, you infernal rascal, I wonder what you'd do if you had not an indulgent commander, who puts up even

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with real mutiny, and says nothing about it. But where have you been? Did you go as I directed you, and take some provisions to Bannerworth Hall?" — "Yes, I did; but I brought them back again; there's nobody there, and don't seem likely to be, except a dead body."

"A dead body! Whose body can that be?" — "Tom somebody; for I'm d — — d if he ain't a great he cat."

"You scoundrel, how dare you alarm me in such a way? But do you meant to tell me that you did not see Dr. Chillingworth at the Hall?" — "How could I see him, if he wasn't there?"

"But he was there; he said he would be there." — "Then he's gone again, for there's nobody there that I know of in the shape of a doctor. I went through every part of the ship — I mean the house — and the deuce a soul could I find; and as it was rather lonely and uncomfortable, I came away again. 'Who knows,' thought I, 'but some blessed vampire or another may come across me.'"

"This won't do," said the old admiral, buttoning up his coat to the chin; "Bannerworth Hall must not be deserted in this way. It is quite clear that Sir Francis Varney and his associates have some particular object in view in getting possession of the place. Here, you Jack." — "Ay, ay, sir."

"Just go back again, and stay at the Hall till somebody comes to you. Even such a stupid hound as you will be something to scare away unwelcome visitors. Go back to the Hall, I say. What are you staring at?" — "Back to Bannerworth Hall!" said Jack. "What! just where I've come from; all that way off, and nothing to eat, and, what's worse, nothing to drink. I'll see you d — — d first."

The admiral caught up a table-fork, and made a rush at Jack; but Henry Bannerworth interfered.

"No, no," he said, "admiral, no, no — not that. You must recollect that you yourself have given the, no doubt, faithful fellow of yours liberty to do and say a great many things which don't look like good service; but I have no doubt, from what I have seen of his disposition, that he would risk his life rather than that you should come to any harm.

"Ay, ay," said Jack; "he quite forgets when the bullets were scuttling our nobs off Cape Ushant, when that big Frenchman had hold of him by the skirf of his neck, and began pummelling his head, and the lee scuppers were running with blood, and a bit of Joe Wiggins's brains had come slap in my eye, while some of Jack Marling's guts were hanging round my neck like a nosegay, all in consequence of grape-shot — then he didn't say as I was a swab, when I came up, and bored a hole in the Frenchman's back with a pike. Ay, it's all very well now, when there's a peace, and no danger, to call Jack Pringle a lubberly rascal, and mutinous. I'm blessed if it ain't enough to make an old pair of shoes faint away."

"Why, you infernal scoundrel," said the admiral, "nothing of the sort ever happened, and you know it. Jack, you're no seaman." — "Werry good," said Jack; "then, if I ain't no seaman, you are what shore-going people calls a jolly fat old humbug."

"Jack, hold your tongue," said Henry Bannerworth; "you carry these things too far. You know very well that your master esteems you, and you should not presume too much upon that fact." — "My master!" said Jack; "don't call him my master. I never had a master, and don't intend. He's my admiral if you like; but an English sailor don't like a master."

"I tell you what it is, Jack," said the admiral; "you've got your good qualities, I admit." — "Ay, ay, sir — that's enough; you may as well leave off well while you can."

"But I'll just tell you what you resemble more than anything else." — "Chew me up! what may that be, sir?"

"A French marine." — "A what! A French marine! Good-bye. I wouldn't say another word to you, if you was to pay me a dollar a piece. Of all the blessed insults rolled into one, this here's the worstest. You might have called me a marine, or you might have called me a Frenchman; but to make out that I'm both a marine and a Frenchman, d — me, if it isn't enough to make human nature stand on an end! Now, I've done with you."

"And a good job, too," said the admiral. "I wish I'd thought of it before. You're worse than a third day's ague, or a hot and a cold fever in the tropics." — "Very good," said Jack; "I only hope Providence will have mercy upon you, and keep an eye upon you when I'm gone, otherwise, I wonder what will become of you? It wasn't so when young Belinda, who you took off the island of Antiggy, in the Ingies, jumped overboard, and I went arter her in a heavy swell. Howsumdever, never mind, you shook hands with me then; and while a bushel of the briney was weeping out of the corner of each of your blinkers, you says, says you, — "

"Hold!" cried the admiral, "hold! I know what I said, Jack. It's cut a fathom deep in my memory. Give us your fist, Jack, and — and — " — "Hold yourself," said Jack; "I know what you're going to say, and I won't hear you

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say it — so there's an end of it. Lor bless you! I knows you, I ain't a going to leave you. Don't be afraid; I only works you up, and works you down again, just to see if there's any of that old spirit in you when we was aboard the Victory. Don't you recollect, admiral?"

"Yes — yes; enough, Jack." — "Why, let me see — that was a matter of forty years ago, nearly, when I was a youngster."

"There — there, Jack — that'll do. You bring the events of other years fresh upon my memory. Peace — peace. I have not forgotten; but still, to hear what you know of them, if recited, would give the old man a pang." — "A pang," said Jack; "I suppose that's some dictionary word for a punch in the eye. That would be mutiny with a vengeance; so I'm off."

"Go, go." — "I'm a going; and just to please you, I'll go to the Hall, so you sha'n't say that you told me to do anything that I didn't."

Away went Jack, whistling an air, that might have been popular when he and the admiral were young, and Henry Bannerworth could not but remark that an appearance of great sadness came over the old man, when Jack was gone.

"I fear, sir," he said, "That heedless sailor has touched upon some episode in your existence, the wounds of which are still fresh enough to give you pain." — "It is so," said the admiral; "just look at me, now. Do I look like the hero of a romantic love story?"

"Not exactly, I admit." — "Well, notwithstanding that, Jack Pringle has touched a chord that vibrates in my heart yet," replied the admiral.

"Have you any objection to tell me of it?" — "None, whatever; and perhaps, by the time I have done, the doctor may have found his way back again, or Jack may bring us some news of him. So here goes for a short, but true yarn."

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## Chapter LXVII. THE ADMIRAL'S STORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL BELINDA.

Just at this moment Flora Bannerworth stole into the room from whence she had departed a short time since; but when she saw that old Admiral Bell was looking so exceedingly serious, and apparently about to address Henry upon some very important subject, she would have retired, but he turned towards her, and said, —

"My story, my dear, I've no objection to your hearing, and, like all women folks, a love story never comes amiss to you: so you may as well stay and hear it." — "A love story," said Flora; "you tell a love story, sir?"

"Yes, my dear, and not only tell it, but be the hero of it, likewise; ain't you astonished?" — "I am, indeed."

"Well, you'll be more astonished then before I've done; so just listen. As Jack Pringle says, it was the matter of about somewhere forty years ago, that I was in command of the Victory frigate, which was placed upon the West Indian station, during a war then raging, for the protection of our ports and harbours in that vicinity. We'd not a strong force in that quarter, therefore, I had to cut about from place to place, and do the best I could. After a time, though, I rather think that we frightened off the enemy; during which time I chiefly anchored off the island of Antigua, and was hospitably received at the house of a planter, of the name of Marchant, who, in fact, made his house my home, and introduced me to all the elite of the society of the island. Ah! Miss Flora, you've no idea, to look at me now, what I was then; I held a captain's commission, and was nearly the youngest man in the service, with such a rank. I was as slender, ay, as a dancing master. These withered and bleached locks were black as the raven's plume. Ay, ay, but no matter: the planter had a daughter."

"And you loved her?" said Flora — "Loved her," said the old man, and the flush of youthful animation came to his countenance; "I loved her, do you say! I adored her; I worshipped her; she was to me — but what a d — — old fool I am; we'll skip that if you please."

"Nay, nay," said Flora; "that is what I want to hear." — "I haven't the least doubt of that, in the world; but that's just what you won't hear; none of your nonsense, Miss Flora; the old man may be a fool, but he isn't quite an idiot."

"He's neither," said Flora; "true feelings can never disgrace any one." — "Perhaps not; but, however, to make a long story short, somehow or other, one day, Belinda was sitting alone, and I rudely pounced upon her; I rather think then I must have said something that I oughtn't to have said, for it took her so aback; I was forced, somehow or other, to hold her up, and then I — I — yes; I'm sure I kissed her; and so, I told her I loved her; and then, what do you think she said?"

"Why," said Flora, "that she reciprocated the passion." — "D — n my rags," said Jack, who at that moment came into the room, "I suppose that's the name of some shell or other."

"You here, you villain!" said the admiral; "I thought you were gone." — "So I was," said Jack, "but I came back for my hat, you see."

Away he went again, and the admiral resumed his story.

"Well, Miss Flora," he said, "you haven't made a good guess, as she didn't say anything at all, she only clung to me like some wild bird to its mother's breast, and cried as if her heart would break." — "Indeed!"

"Yes; I didn't know the cause of her emotion, but at last I got it out of her." — "What was it?"

"Oh, a mere trifle; she was already married to somebody else, that's all; some d — — d fellow, who had gone trading about the islands, a fellow she didn't care a straw about, that was old enough to be her father."

"And you left her?" — "No, I didn't. Guess again. I was a mad-headed youngster. I only felt — I didn't think. I persuaded her to come away with me. I took her aboard my ship, and set sail with her. A few weeks flew like hours; but one day we were hailed by a vessel, and when we neared her, she manned a boat and brought a letter on board, addressed to Belinda. It was from her father, written in his last moments. It began with a curse and ended with a blessing. There was a postscript in another hand, to say the old man died of grief. She read it by my side on the quarter-deck. It dropped from her grasp, and she plunged into the sea. Jack Pringle went after her; but I never saw her again."

"Gracious Heavens! what a tragedy!" — "Yes, tolerable," said the old man.

He arose and took his hat and placed it on his head. He gave the crown of it a blow that sent it nearly over his eyes. He thrust his hands deep into his breeches pockets, clenched his teeth, and muttered something inaudible as

he strode from the apartment.

"Who would have thought, Henry," said Flora, "that such a man as Admiral Bell had been the hero of such an adventure?" — "Ay, who indeed; but it shows that we never can judge from appearances, Flora; and that those who seem to us the most heart-whole may have experienced the wildest vicissitudes of passion."

"And we must remember, likewise, that this was forty years ago, Henry, which makes a material difference in the state of the case as regards Admiral Bell."

"It does indeed — more than half a lifetime; and yet how evident it was that his old feelings clung to him. I can well imagine the many hours of bitter regret which the memory of this his lost love must have given him."

"True — true." I can feel something for him; for have I not lost one who loved me — a worse loss, too, than that which Admiral Bell relates; for am I not a prey to all the horrors of uncertainty? Whereas, he knew the worst, and that, at all events, death had claimed its victim, leaving nothing to conjecture in the shape of suffering, so that the mind had nothing to do but to recover slowly, but surely, as it would, from the shock which it had received."

"That is worse than you, Flora; but rather would I have you cherish hope of soon beholding Charles Holland, probably alive and well, than fancy any great disaster has come over him."

"I will endeavour to do so," replied Flora.

"I long to hear what has become of Dr. Chillingworth. His disappearance is most singular; for I fully suspected that he had some particular object in view in getting possession for a short time of Bannerworth Hall; but now, from Jack Pringle's account, he appears not to be in it, and, in fact, to have disappeared completely from the sight of all who knew him."

"Yes," said Flora; "but he may have done that, brother, still in furtherance of his object."

"It may be so, and I will hope that it is so. Keep yourself close, sister, and see no one, while I proceed to his house to inquire if they have heard anything of him. I will return soon, be assured; and, in the meantime, should you see my brother, tell him I shall be at home in an hour or so, and not to leave the cottage; for it is more than likely that the admiral has gone to Bannerworth Hall, so that you may not see anything of him for some time."

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## Chapter LXVIII. MARCHDALE'S ATTEMPTED VILLANY, AND ITS RESULT.

Varney the vampyre left the dungeon of Charles Holland amid the grey ruins, with a perfect confidence the young man would keep his word, and not attempt to escape from that place until the time had elapsed which he had dictated to him.

And well might he have that confidence, for having once given his word that he would remain until he heard the clock strike two from a neighbouring church, Charles Holland never dreamt for a moment of breaking it.

To be sure it was a weary time to wait when liberty appeared before him; but he was the soul of honour, and the least likely man in all the world to infringe in the slightest upon the condition which he had, of his own free will, acceded to.

Sir Francis Varney walked rapidly until he came nearly to the outskirts of the town, and then he slackened his pace, proceeding more cautiously, and looking carefully about him, as if he feared to meet any one who might recognize him.

He had not proceeded far in this manner, when he became conscious of the cautious figure of a man gliding along in the opposite direction that which he was taking.

A suspicion struck him, from the general appearance, that it was Marchdale, and if so, he wondered to see him abroad at such a time. Still he would not be quite certain; but he hurried forward, so as to meet the advancing figure, and then his suspicions were confirmed; and Marchdale with some confusion in his looks and manners, accosted him.

"Ah, Sir Francis Varney," he said, "you are out late." — "Why, you know I should be out late," said Varney, "and you likewise know the errand upon which I was to be out."

"Oh, I recollect; you were to release your prisoner." — "Yes, I was."

"And have you done so?" — "Oh, no."

"Oh, indeed. I — I am glad you have taken better thought of it. Good night — good night; we shall meet to-morrow." — "Adieu," said Sir Francis Varney; and he watched the retreating figure of Marchdale, and then he added, in a low tone to himself, —

"I know his object well. His craven spirit shrinks at the notion, a probable enough one, I will admit, that Charles Holland has recognised him, and that, if once free, he would denounce him to the Bannerworths, holding him up to scorn in his true colours, and bringing down upon his head, perhaps, something more than detestation and contempt. The villain! he is going now to take the life of the man whom he considers chained to the ground. Well, well, they must fight it out together. Charles Holland is sufficiently free to take his own part, although Marchdale little thinks such is the case."

Marchdale walked on for some little distance, and then he turned and looked after Sir Francis Varney.

"Indeed!" he said; "so you have not released him to-night, but I know well will do so soon. I do not, for my part, admire this romantic generosity which sets a fox free at the moment that he's the most dangerous. It's all very well to be generous, but it is better to be just first, and that I consider means looking after one's self first. I have a poniard here which will soon put an end to the troubles of the prisoner in his dungeon — its edge is keen and sharp, and will readily find a way to his heart."

He walked on quite exultingly and carelessly now, for he had got into the open country, and it was extremely unlikely that he would meet anybody on his road to the ruins.

It did not take many minutes sharp walking now to bring him close to the spot which he intended should become such a scene of treacherous slaughter, and just then he heard from afar off something like the muttering of thunder, as if Heaven itself was proclaiming its vengeance against the man who had come out to slay one of its best and noblest creatures.

"What is that?" said Marchdale, shrinking back a moment; "what is that — an approaching storm? It must be so, for, now I recollect me, the sun set behind a bank of clouds of a fiery redness, and as the evening drew in there was every appearance in the heavens of some ensuing strife of the elements."

He listened for a few moments, and fixed his eyes intently in the direction of the horizon from where the muttering sounds had proceeded.



## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

He had not long to wait before he saw a bright flash of blue lightning, which for one instant illumined the sky; then by the time he could have counted twelve there came the thunder which the flash preceded, and he felt terribly anxious to complete his enterprize, so that he might get back to the town and be safely housed before the storm, which was evidently approaching, should burst upon him.

"It is sweeping on apace," he said; "why did I not come earlier?"

Even as he spoke he plunged among the recesses of the ruins, and searching about for the old stone which covered the entrance to the dungeon, he was surprised to find it rolled from its place and the aperture open.

"What is the meaning of this?" he said; "how negligent of Sir Francis Varney; or perhaps, after all, he was only jesting with me, and let the prisoner go. If that should be the case, I am foiled indeed; but surely he could not be so full of indiscretion."

Again came a dazzling flash of lightning, which now, surrounded by the ruins as he was, made him shrink back and cover his eyes for a moment; and then followed a peal of thunder with not half the duration of time between it and the flash which had characterized the previous electric phenomenon.

"The storm approaches fast," said Marchdale; "I must get my work done quickly, if indeed my victim be here, which I begin seriously to doubt."

He descended the intricate winding passage to the vault below, which served the purpose of a dungeon, and when he got very nearly into the depth of the recesses, he called aloud, saying, —

"Ho! what ho! is there any one here?" — "Yes," said Charles Holland, who fancied it might be his former visitor returned. "Have you come to repent of your purpose?"

"Ah!" said Marchdale to himself, "Sir Francis, after all, has told me the truth — the prisoner is still here."

The light from without was not near sufficient to send the least ray into the depths of that dungeon; so that Marchdale, when he entered the place, could see nothing but an absolute blackness.

It was not so, however, with Charles Holland, whose eyes had been now so long accustomed to the place that he could see in it as if a dim twilight irradiated it, and he at once, in his visitor, saw his worst foe, and not the man who had comparatively set him free.

He saw, too, that the hand of his visitor grasped a weapon, which Marchdale thought that, favoured by the darkness, he might carry openly in perfect security.

"Where are you?" said Marchdale; "I cannot see you." — "Here!" said Charles, "you may feel my grip;" and he sprung upon him in an instant.

The attack was so sudden and so utterly unexpected, that Marchdale was thrown backwards, and the dagger wrested from his grasp, during the first impulse which Charles Holland had thrown into his attack.

Moreover, his head struck with such violence against the earthen floor, that it produced a temporary confusion of his faculties, so that, had Charles Holland been so inclined, he might, with Marchdale's own weapon, have easily taken his life.

The young man did, on the impulse of the moment, raise it in his hand, but, on the impulse of another thought, he cast it from him, exclaiming —

"No, no! not that; I should be as bad as he, or nearly so. This villain has come to murder me, but yet I will not take his life for the deed. What shall I do with him? Ha! a lucky thought — chains!"

He dragged Marchdale to the identical spot of earth on which he had lain so long; and, as Sir Francis Varney had left the key of the padlock which bound the chains together in it, he, in a few moments, had succeeded in placing the villain Marchdale in the same durance from which he had himself shortly since escaped.

"Remain there," he said, "until some one comes to rescue you. I will not let you starve to death, but I will give you a long fast; and, when I come again, it shall be along with some of the Bannerworth family, to show them what a viper they have fostered in their hearts."

Marchdale was just sufficiently conscious now to feel all the realities of his situation. In vain he attempted to rise from his prostrate position. The chains did their duty, keeping down a villain with the same means that they had held in ignominious confinement a true man.

He was in a perfect agony, inasmuch as he considered that he would be allowed to remain there to starve to death, thus achieving for himself a more horrible death than any he had ever thought of inflicting.

"Villain!" exclaimed Charles Holland, "you shall there remain; and, let you have what mental sufferings you may, you richly deserve them."

He heeded not the cries of Marchdale — he heeded not his imprecations any more than he did his prayers; and the arch hypocrite used both in abundance. Charles was but too happy once more to look upon the open sky, although it was then in darkness, to heed anything that Marchdale, in the agony to which he was now reduced, might feel inclined to say; and, after glancing around him for some few moments, when he was free of the ruins, and inhaling with exquisite delight the free air of the surrounding meadows, he saw, by the twinkling of the lights, in which direction the town lay, and knowing that by taking a line in that path, and then after a time diverging a little to the right, he should come to Bannerworth Hall, he walked on, never in his whole life probably feeling such an enjoyment of the mere fact of existence as at such a moment as that of exquisite liberty.

Our readers may with us imagine what it is to taste the free, fresh air of heaven, after being long pent up, as he, Charles Holland, had been, in a damp, noisome dungeon, teeming with unwholesome exhalations. They may well suppose with what an amount of rapture he now found himself unrestrained in his movements by those galling fetters which had hung for so long a period upon his youthful limbs, and which, not unfrequently in the despair of his heart, he had thought he should surely die in.

And last, although not least in his dear esteem, did the rapturous thought of once more looking in the sweet face of her he loved come cross him with a gust of delight.

"Yes!" he exclaimed, as he quickened his pace; "yes! I shall be able to tell Flora Bannerworth how well and how truly I love her. I shall be able to tell her that, in my weary and hideous imprisonment, the thought alone of her has supported me."

As he neared the Hall, he quickened his pace to such an extent that soon he was forced to pause altogether, as the exertion he had undertaken pretty plainly told him that the imprisonment, scanty diet, and want of exercise, which had been his portion for some time past, had most materially decreased his strength.

His limbs trembled, and a profuse perspiration bedewed his brow, although the night was rather cold otherwise.

"I am very weak," he said; "and much I wonder now that I succeeded in overcoming that villain Marchdale; who, if I had not done so, would most assuredly have murdered me."

And it was a wonder; for Marchdale was not an old man, although he might be considered certainly as past the prime of life, and he was of a strong and athletic build. But it was the suddenness of this attack upon him which had given Charles Holland the great advantage, and had caused the defeat of the ruffian who came bent on one of the most cowardly and dastardly murders that could be committed — namely, upon an unoffending man, whom he supposed to be loaded with chains, and incapable of making the least efficient resistance.

Charles soon again recovered sufficient breath and strength to proceed towards the Hall, and now warned, by the exhaustion which had come over him that he had not really anything like strength enough to allow him to proceed rapidly, he walked with slow and deliberate steps.

This mode of proceeding was more favourable to reflection than the wild, rapid one which he had at first adopted, and in all the glowing colours of youthful and ingenious fancy did he depict to himself the surprise and the pleasure that would beam in the countenance of his beloved Flora when she should find him once again by her side.

Of course, he, Charles, could know nothing of the contrivances which had been resorted to, and which the reader may lay wholly to the charge of Marchdale, to blacken his character, and to make him appear faithless to the love he had professed.

Had he known this, it is probable that indignation would have added wings to his progress, and he would not have been able to proceed at the leisurely pace he felt that his state of physical weakness dictated to him.

And now he saw the topmost portion of Bannerworth Hall pushing out from amongst the trees with which the ancient pile was so much surrounded, and the sight of the home of his beloved revived him, and quickened the circulation of the warm blood in the veins.

"I shall behold her now," he said — "I shall behold her now! A few minutes more, and I shall hold her to my heart — that heart which has been ever hers, and which carried her image enshrined in its deepest recesses, even into the gloom of a dungeon!"

But let us, while Charles Holland is indulging in these delightful anticipations — anticipations which, we regret, in consequence of the departure of the Bannerworths from the Hall, will not be realized so soon as he supposes — look back upon the discomfited hypocrite and villain, Marchdale, who occupies his place in the

dungeon of the old ruins.

Until Charles Holland actually had left the strange, horrible, and cell-like place, he could scarcely make up his mind that the young man entertained a serious intention of leaving him there.

Perhaps he did not think any one could be so cruel and so wicked as he himself; for the reader will no doubt recollect that his, Marchdale's, counsel to Varney, was to leave Charles Holland to his fate, chained down as he was in the dungeon, and that fate would have been the horrible one of being starved to death in the course of a few days.

When now, however, he felt confident that he was deserted -- when he heard the sound of Charles Holland's retreating footsteps slowly dying away in the distance, until not the faintest echo of them reached his ears, he despaired indeed; and the horror he experienced during the succeeding ten minutes, might be considered an ample atonement for some of his crimes. His brain was in a complete whirl; nothing of a tangible nature, but that he was there, chained down, and left to starve to death, came across his intellect. Then a kind of madness, for a moment or two, took possession of him; he made a tremendous effort to burst asunder the bands that held him.

But it was in vain. The chains -- which had been placed upon Charles Holland during the first few days of his confinement, when he had a little recovered from the effects of the violence which had been committed upon him at the time when he was captured -- effectually resisted Marchdale.

They even cut into his flesh, inflicting upon him some greivous wounds; but that was all he achieved by his great effort to free himself, so that, after a few moments, bleeding and in great pain, he, with a deep groan, desisted from the fruitless efforts he had better not to have commenced.

Then he remained silent for a time, but it was not the silence of reflection; it was that of exhaustion, and, as such, was not likely to last long; nor did it, for, in the course of another five minutes, he called out loudly.

Perhaps he thought there might be a remote chance that some one traversing the meadows would hear him; and yet, if he had duly considered the matter, which he was not in a fitting frame of mind to do, he would have recollected that, in choosing a dungeon among the underground vaults of these ruins, he had, by experiment, made certain that no cry, however loud, from where he lay, could reach the upper air. And thus had this villain, by the very cautions which he had himself taken to ensure the safe custody of another, been his own greatest enemy.

"Help! help! help!" he cried frantically. "Varney! Charles Holland! have mercy upon me, and do not leave me here to starve! Help, oh, Heaven! Curses on all your heads -- curses! Oh, mercy -- mercy -- mercy!"

In suchlike incoherent expressions did he pass some hours, until, what with exhaustion and a raging thirst that came over him, he could not utter another word, but lay the very picture of despair and discomfited malice and wickedness.

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## Chapter LXIX. FLORA BANNERWORTH AND HER MOTHER. -- THE EPISODE OF CHIVALRY.

Gladly we turn from such a man as Marchdale to a consideration of the beautiful and accomplished Flora Bannerworth, to whom we may, without destroying in any way the interest of our plot, predict a much happier destiny than, probably, at that time, she considers as at all likely to be hers.

She certainly enjoyed, upon her first removal from Bannerworth Hall, greater serenity of mind than she had done there; but, as we have already remarked of her, the more her mind was withdrawn, by change of scene, from the horrible considerations which the attack of the vampyre had forced upon her, the more she reverted to the fate of Charles Holland, which was still shrouded in so much gloom.

She would sit and converse with her mother upon that subject until she worked up her feelings to a most uncomfortable pitch of excitement, and then Mrs. Bannerworth would get her younger brother to join them, who would occasionally read to her some compositions of his own, or of some favourite writer whom he thought would amuse her.

It was on the very evening when Sir Francis Varney had made up his mind to release Charles Holland, that young Bannerworth read to his sister and his mother the following little chivalric incident, which he told them he himself had collated from authentic sources: --

"The knight with the green shield," exclaimed one of a party of men-at-arms, who were drinking together at an ancient hostel, not far from Shrewsbury -- "the knight with the green shield is as good a knight as ever buckled on a sword, or wore spurs." -- "Then how comes it that he is not one of the victors in the day's tournament?" exclaimed another. -- "By the bones of Alfred!" said a third, "a man must be judged of by his deserts, and not by the partiality of his friends. That's my opinion, friends." -- "And mine too," said another.

"That is all very true, and my opinion would go with yours, too; but not in this instance. Though you may accuse me of partiality, yet I am not so; for I have seen some of the victors of to-day by no means forward in the press of battle -- men who, I will not say feared danger, but who liked it not so well but they avoided it as much as possible."

"Ay, marry, and so have I. The reason is, 'tis much easier to face a blunted lance, than one with a spear-head; and a man may practise the one and thrive in it, but not the other; for the best lance in the tournament is not always the best arm in the battle."

"And that is the reason of my saying the knight with the green shield was a good knight. I have seen him in the midst of the melee, when men and horses have been hurled to the ground by the shock; there he has behaved himself like a brave knight, and has more than once been noticed for it."

"But how came he to be so easily over thrown to-day? That speaks something." -- "His horse is an old one."

"So much the better," said another; "he's used to his work, and as cunning as an old man." -- "But he has been wounded more than once, and is weakened very much; besides, I saw him lose his footing, else he had overthrown his opponent."

"He did not seem distressed about his accident at all events, but sat contented in the tent." -- "He knows well that those who know him will never attribute his misadventure either to want of courage or conduct; moreover, he seems to be one of those who care but little for the opinion of men who care nothing for him."

"And he's right. Well, dear comrades, the health of Green Knight, or the Knight with a Green Shield, for that's his name or the designation he chooses to go by." -- "A health to the Knight with the Green Shield!" shouted the men-at-arms, as they lifted their cups on high.

"Who is he?" inquired one of the men-at-arms, of him who had spoken favourably of the stranger. -- "I don't know."

"And yet you spoke favourably of him but a few seconds back, and said what a brave knight he was!" -- "And so I uphold him to be; but, I tell you what, friend, I would do as much for the greatest stranger I ever met. I have seen him fight where men and horses have bit the dust in hundreds; and that, in my opinion, speaks out for the man and warrior; he who cannot, then, fight like a soldier, have better tilt at home in the castle-yard, and there win ladies' smiles, but not the commendation of the leader of the battle."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"That's true; I myself recollect very well Sir Hugh de Colbert, a very accomplished knight in the castle-yard; but his men were as fine a set of fellows as ever crossed a horse, to look at, but they proved deficient at the moment of trial; they were broken, and fled in a moment, and scarce one of them received a scratch."

"Then they hadn't stood the shock of the foeman?" -- "No; that's certain."

"But still I should like to know the knight, -- to know his name very well." -- "I know it not; he has some reason for keeping it secret, I suppose; but his deeds will not shame it, be it what it may. I can bear witness to more than one foeman falling beneath his battle-axe."

"Indeed!" -- "Yes; and he took a banner from the enemy in the last battle that was fought."

"Ah, well! he deserves a better fortune to-morrow. Who is to be the bridegroom of the beautiful Bertha, daughter of Lord de Cauci?" -- "That will have to be decided: but it is presumed that Sir Guthrie de Beaumont is the intended."

"Ah! but should he not prove the victor?" -- "It's understood; because it's known he is intended by the parents of the lady, and none would be ungallant enough to prevail against him, -- save on such conditions as would not endanger the fruits of the victory."

"No?" -- "Certainly not; they would lay the trophies at the foot of the beauty worshipped by the knights at the tournament."

"So, triumphant or not, he's to be the bridegroom; bearing off the prize of valour whether or no, -- in fact deserve her or not, -- that's the fact." -- "So it is; so it is."

"And a shame, too, friends; but so it is now; but yet, if the knight's horse recovers from the strain, and is fit for work to-morrow, it strikes me that the Green Shield will give some work to the holiday knight." \* \* \* \*

There had been a grand tournament held near Shrewsbury Castle, in honour of the intended nuptials of the beautiful Lady Bertha de Cauci. She was the only daughter of the Earl de Cauci, a nobleman of some note; he was one of an ancient and unblemished name, and of great riches.

The lady was beautiful, but, at the same time, she was an unwilling bride, -- every one could see that; but the bridegroom cared not for that. There was a settled sorrow on her brow, -- a sorrow that seemed sincere and lasting; but she spoke not of it to any one, -- her lips were seldom parted. She loved another. Yes; she loved one who was far away, fighting in the wars of his country, -- one who was not so rich in lands as her present bridegroom.

When he left her, she remembered his promise; it was, to fight on till he earned a fortune, or name that should give him some right to claim her hand, even from her imperious father. But alas! he came not; and what could she do against the commands of one who would be obeyed? Her mother, too, was a proud, haughty woman, one whose sole anxiety was to increase the grandeur and power of her house by such connections.

Thus it was pressed on by circumstances, she could no longer hold out, more especially as she heard nothing of her knight. She knew not where he was, or indeed if he were living or dead. She knew not he was never named. This last circumstance, indeed, gave her pain; for it assured her that he whom she loved had been unable to signalize himself from among other men. That, in fact, he was unknown in the annals of fame, as well as the probability that he had been slain in some of the earlier skirmishes of the war. This, if it had happened, caused her some pain to think upon; but such events were looked upon with almost indifference by females, save in such cases where their affections were engaged, as on this occasion. But the event was softened by the fact that men were continually falling by the hand of man in such encounters, but at the same time it was considered an honourable and praiseworthy death for a soldier. He was wounded, but not with the anguish we now hear of; for the friends were consoled by the reflection that the deceased warrior died covered with glory.

Bertha, however, was young, and as yet she knew not the cause of her absent knight's silence, or why he had not been heard of among the most forward in the battle.

"Heaven's will be done," she exclaimed; "what can I do? I must submit to my father's behests; but my future life will be one of misery and sorrow."

She wept to think of the past, and to dream of the future; both alike were sorrowful to think upon -- no comfort in the past and no joy in the future.

Thus she wept and sorrowed on the night of the first tournament; there was to be a second, and that was to be the grand one, where her intended bridegroom was to show himself off in her eyes, and take his part in the sport. \* \* \*

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Bertha sat late — she sat sorrowing by the light of the lamps and the flickering flame of the fire, as it rose and fell on the hearth and threw dancing shadows on the walls.

"Oh, why, Arthur Home, should you thus be absent? Absent, too, at such a time when you are more needed than ever. Alas, alas! you may no longer be in the land of the living. Your family is great and your name known — your own has been spoken with commendation from the lips of your friend; what more of fame do you need? but I am speaking without purpose. Heaven have mercy on me."

As she spoke she looked up and saw one of her women in waiting standing by.

"Well, what would you?" — "My lady, there is one who would speak with you," said the hand-maiden.

"With me?" — "Yes, my lady; be named you the Lady Bertha de Cauci."

"Who and what is he?" she inquired, with something like trepidation, of the maiden. — "I know not, my lady."

"But gave he not some token by which I might know who I admit to my chamber?" — "None," replied the maiden.

"And what does he bear by way of distinguishing himself? What crest or device doth he bear?" — "Merely a green shield."

"The unsuccessful knight in the tournament to-day. Heaven's! what can he desire with me; he is not — no, no, it cannot be." — "Will you admit him, lady?"

"Indeed, I know not what to do; but yet he may have some intelligence to give me. Yes, yes, admit him; but first throw some logs on the fire."

The attendant did as she was desired, and then quitted the room for the purpose of admitting the stranger knight with the green shield. In a few moments she could hear the stride of the knight as he neared the apartment, and she thought the step was familiar to her ear — she thought it was the step of Sir Arthur Home, her lover. She waited anxiously to see the door open, and then the stranger entered. His form and bearing was that of her lover, but his visor was down, and she was unable to distinguish the features of the stranger.

His armour was such as had seen many a day's hard wear, and there were plenty of marks of the battle about him. His travel-worn accoutrements were altogether such as bespoke service in the field.

"Sir, you desired to see me; say wherefore you do so, and if it is news you bring." The knight answered not, but pointed to the female attendant, as if he desired she would withdraw. "You may retire," said Bertha; "be within call, and let me know if I am threatened with interruption."

The attendant retired, and then the knight and lady were left alone. The former seemed at a loss how to break silence for some moments, and then he said, —

"Lady — " — "Oh, Heavens! 'tis he!" exclaimed Bertha, as she sprang to her feet; "it is Sir Arthur Home!"

"It is," exclaimed the knight, pulling up his visor, and dropping on one knee he encircled his arm round the waist of the lady, and at the same moment he pressed her lips to his own.

The first emotion of joy and surprise over, Bertha checked her transports, and chid the knight for his boldness.

"Nay, chide me not, dear Bertha; I am what I was when I left you, and hope to find you the same."

"Am I not?" said Bertha. — "Truly I know not, for you seem more beautiful than you were then; I hope that is the only change."

"If there be a change, it is only such as you see. Sorrow and regret form the principal causes." — "I understand you."

"My intended nuptials — " — "Yes, I have heard all. I came here but late in the morning; and my horse was jaded and tired, and my impatience to attend the tournament caused me a disaster which it is well it came not on the second day."

"It is, dear Arthur. How is it I never heard your name mentioned, or that I received no news from any one about you during the wars that have ended?" — "I had more than one personal enemy, Bertha; men who would have been glad to see me fall, and who, in default of that, would not have minded bribing an assassin to secure my death for them at any risk whatever."

"Heavens! and how did you escape such a death from such people, Arthur?" — "By adopting such a device as that I wear. The Knight of the Green Shield I'm called."

"I saw you to-day in the tournament." — "And there my tired and jaded horse gave way; but to-morrow I shall have, I hope, a different fortune."

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"I hope so too." — "I will try; my arm has been good in battle, and I see not why it should be deficient in peaceful jousts."

"Certainly not. What fortune have you met with since you left England?" — "I was of course known but to a few; among those few were the general under whom I served and my more immediate officers, who I knew would not divulge my secret."

"And they did not?" — "No; kept it nobly, and kept their eyes upon me in battle; and I have reaped a rich harvest in fame, honour, and riches, I assure you."

"Thank Heaven!" said Bertha. — "Bertha, if I be conqueror, may I claim you in the court-yard before all the spectators?"

"You may," said Bertha, and she hung her head. — "Moreover," said Sir Arthur, "you will not make a half promise, but when I demand you, you will at once come down to me and accept me as your husband; if I be the victor then he cannot object to the match."

"But he will have many friends, and his intended bridegroom will have many more, so that you may run some danger among so many enemies." — "Never fear for me, Bertha, because I shall have many friends of distinction there too — many old friends who are tried men in battle, and whose deeds are a glory and honour to them; besides, I shall have my commander and several gentlemen who would at once interfere in case any unfair advantage was attempted to be taken of my supposed weakness."

"Have you a fresh horse?" inquired Bertha. — "I have, or shall have by the morning; but promise me you will do what I ask you, and then my arm will be nerved to its utmost, and I am sure to be victorious."

"I do promise," said Bertha; "I hope you may be as successful as you hope to be, Arthur; but suppose fortune should declare against you; suppose an accident of any kind were to happen, what could be done then?" — "I must be content to hide myself for ever afterwards, as a defeated knight; how can I appear before your friends as the claimant of your hand?"

"I will never have any other." — "But you will be forced to accept this Guthrie de Beaumont, your father's chosen son-in-law."

"I will seek refuge in a cloister." — "Will you fly with me, Bertha, to some sequestered spot, where we can live in each others society?"

"Yes," said Bertha, "anything, save marriage with Guthrie de Beaumont." — "Then await the tournament of to-morrow," said Sir Arthur, "and then this may be avoided; in the meantime, keep up a good heart and remember I am at hand."

\* \* \* \*

These two lovers parted for the present, after a protracted interview, Bertha to her chamber, and the Knight of the Green Shield to his tent.

The following morning was one of great preparation; the lists had been enlarged, and the seats made more commodious, for the influx of visitors appeared to be much greater than had been anticipated.

Moreover, there were many old warriors of distinction to be present, which made the bridegroom look pale and feel uncomfortable as to the results of the tournament. The tilting was to begin at an early hour, and then the feasting and the revelry would begin early in the evening, after the tilting had all passed off.

In that day's work there were many thrown from their saddles, and many broke their lances. The bridegroom tilted with several knights, and came off victorious, or without disadvantage to either.

The green knight, on the contrary, tilted with but few, and always victorious, and such matches were with men who had been men of some name in the wars, or at least in the tilt yard.

The sports drew to a close, and when the bridegroom became the challenger, the Knight of the Green Shield at once rode out quietly to meet him. The encounter could not well be avoided, and the bridegroom would willingly have declined the joust with a knight who had disposed of his enemies so easily, and so unceremoniously as he had.

The first encounter was enough; the bridegroom was thrown to a great distance, and lay insensible on the ground, and was carried out of the field. There was an immediate sensation among the friends of the bridegroom, several of whom rode out to challenge the stranger knight for his presumption.

In this, however, they had misreckoned the chances, for the challenged accepted their challenges with alacrity and disposed of them one by one with credit to himself until the day was concluded. The stranger was then asked

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to declare who he was, upon which he lifted his visor and said,

"I am Sir Arthur Home, and claim the Lady Bertha as my bride, by the laws of arms, and by those of love." \*  
\* \* \*

Again the tent was felled, and again the hostelry was tenanted by the soldier, who declared for one side and then for the other, as the cups clanged and ginged together.

"Said I not," exclaimed one of the troopers, "that the knight with a green shield was a good knight?" -- "You did," replied the other.

"And you knew who he was?" said another of the troopers. -- "Not I, comrades; I had seen him fight in battle, and, therefore, partly guessed how it would be if he had any chance with the bridegroom. I'm glad he has won the lady."

It was true, the Lady Bertha was won, and Sir Arthur Home claimed his bride, and then they attempted to defeat his claim; yet Bertha at once expressed herself in his favour, so strongly that they were, however reluctantly compelled, to consent at last.

At this moment, a loud shout as from a multitude of persons came upon their ears and Flora started from her seat in alarm. The cause of the alarm we shall proceed to detail.

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## Chapter LXX. THE FUNERAL OF THE STRANGER OF THE INN. -- THE POPULAR COMMOTION, AND MRS. CHILLINGWORTH'S APPEAL TO THE MOB. -- THE NEW RIOT. -- THE HALL IN DANGER.

A yet the town was quiet; and, though there was no appearance of riot or disturbance, yet the magistracy had taken every precaution they deemed needful, or their position and necessities warranted, to secure the peace of the town from the like disturbance to that which had been, of late, a disgrace and terror of peaceably-disposed persons.

The populace were well advertised of the fact, that the body of the stranger was to be buried that morning in their churchyard; and that, to protect the body, should there be any necessity for so doing, a large body of constables would be employed.

There was no disposition to riot; at least, none was visible. It looked as if there was some event about to take place that was highly interesting to all parties, who were peaceably assembling to witness the interment of nobody knew who.

The early hour at which persons were assembling, at different points, clearly indicated that there was a spirit of curiosity about the town, so uncommon that none would have noticed it but for the fact of the crowd of people who hung about the streets, and there remained, listless and impatient.

The inn, too, was crowded with visitors, and there were many who, not being blessed with the strength of purse that some were, were hanging about in the distance, waiting and watching the moitions of those who were better provided.

"Ah!" said one of the visitors, "this is a disagreeable job in your house, landlord." -- "Yes, sir; I'd sooner it had happened elsewhere, I assure you. I know it has done me no good."

"No; no man could expect any, and yet it is none the less unfortunate for that." -- "I would sooner anything else happen than that, whatever it might be. I think it must be something very bad, at all events; but I dare say I shall never see the like again."

"So much the better for the town," said another; "for, what with vampyres and riots, there has been but little else stirring than mischief and disturbances of one kind or another."

"Yes; and, what between Varneys and Bannerworths, we have had but little peace here."

"Precisely. Do you know it's my opinion that the least thing would upset the whole town. Any one unlucky word would do it, I am sure," said a tall thin man.

"I have no doubt of it," said another; "but I hope the military would do their duty under such circumstances, for people's lives and property are not safe in such a state of things." -- "Oh, dear no."

"I wonder what has become of Varney, or where he can have gone to." -- "Some thought he must have been burned when they burned his house," replied the landlord.

"But I believe it generally understood he's escaped, has he not? No traces of his body were found in the ruins." -- "None. Oh! he's escaped, there can be no doubt of that. I wish I had some fortune depending upon the fact; it would be mine, I am sure."

"Well, the lord keep us from vampyres and such-like cattle," said an old woman. "I shall never sleep again in my bed with any safety. It frightens one out of one's life to think of it. What a shame the men didn't cath him and stake him!"

The old woman left the inn as soon as she had spoke this Christian speech.

"Humane!" said a gentleman, with a sporting coat on. "The old woman is no advocate for half measures!"

"You are right, sir," said the landlord; "and a very good look-out she keeps upon the pot, to see it's full, and carefully blows the froth off!" -- "Ah! I thought as much."

"How soon will the funeral take place, landlord?" inquired a person, who had at that moment entered the inn. -- "In about an hour's time, sir."

"Oh! the town seems pretty full, though it is very quiet. I suppose it is more as a matter of curiosity people congregate to see the funeral of this stranger?"

"I hope so, sir."

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"The time is wearing on, and if they don't make a dust, why then the military will not be troubled."

"I do not expect anything more, sir," said the landlord; "for you see they must have had their swing out, as the saying is, and be fully satisfied. They cannot have much more to do in the way of exhibiting their anger or dislike to vampyres -- they all have done enough."

"So they have -- so they have."

"Granted," said an old man with a troublesome cough; "but when did you ever know a mob to be satisfied? If they wanted the moon and got it, they'd find out it would be necessary to have the stars also."

"That's uncommonly true," said the landlord. "I shouldn't be surprised if they didn't do something worse than ever." -- "Nothing more likely," said the little old man. "I can believe anything of a mob -- anything -- no matter what."

The inn was crowded with visitors, and several extra hands were employed to wait upon the customers, and a scene of bustle and activity was displayed that was never before seen. It would glad the heart of a landlord, though he were made of stone, and landlords are usually of much more malleable materials than that.

However, the landlord had hardly time to congratulate himself, for the bearers were come now, and the undertaker and his troop of death-following officials.

There was a stir among the people, who began now to awaken from the lethargy that seemed to have come over them while they were waiting for the moment when it should arrive, that was to place the body under the green sod, against which so much of their anger had been raised. There was a decent silence that pervaded the mob of individuals who had assembled.

Death, with all its ghastly insignia, had an effect even upon the unthinking multitude, who were ever ready to inflict death or any violent injury upon any object that came in their way -- they never hesitated; but even these, now the object of their hatred was no more, felt appalled.

'Tis strange what a change comes over masses of men as they gaze upon a dead body. It may be that they all know that to that complexion they must come at last. This may be the secret of the respect offered to the dead.

The undertakers are men, however, who are used to the presence of death -- it is their element; they gain a living by attending upon the last obsequies of the dead; they are used to dead bodies, and care not for them. Some of them are humane men, that is, in their way; and even among them are men who wouldn't be deprived of their joke as they screwed down the last screw. They could not forbear, even on this occasion, to hold their converse when left alone.

"Jacobs," said one who was turning a long screw, "Jacobs, my boy, do you take the chair to-night?" -- "Yes," said Jacobs, who was a long lugubrious-looking man, "I do take the chair, if I live over this blessed event."

"You are not croaking, Jacobs, are you? Well you are a lively customer, you are." -- "Lively -- do you expect people to be lively when they are full dressed for a funeral? You are a nice article for your profession. You don't feel like an undertaker, you don't."

"Don't, Jacobs, my boy. As long as I look like one when occasion demands; when I have done my job I puts my comfort in my pocket, and thinks how much more pleasanter it is to be going to other people's funerals than to our own, and then only see the difference as regards the money."

"True," said Jacobs with a groan; "but death's a melancholy article, at all events." -- "So it is."

"And then when you come to consider the number of people we have buried -- how many have gone to their last homes -- and how many more will go the same way." -- "Yes, yes; that's all very well, Jacob. You are precious surly this morning. I'll come to-night. You're brewing a sentimental tale as sure as eggs is eggs."

"Well, that is pretty certain; but as I was saying how many more are there -- "

"Ah, don't bother yourself with calculations that have neither beginning nor end, and which haven't one point to go. Come, Jacob, have you finished yet?" -- "Quite," said Jacob.

They now arranged the pall, and placed all in readiness, and returned to a place down stairs where they could enjoy themselves for an odd half hour, and pass that time away until the moment should arrive when his reverence would be ready to bury the deceased, upon consideration of the fees to paid upon the occasion.

The tap-room was crowded, and there was no room for the men, and they were taken into the kitchen, where they were seated, and earnestly at work, preparing bodily for the ceremony that had so shortly to be performed.

"Any better, Jacobs?" -- "What do you mean?" inquired Jacobs, with a groan. "It's news to me if I have been ill."

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"Oh, yes, you were doleful up stairs, you know." — "I've a proper regard for my profession — that's the difference between you and I, you know."

"I'll wager you what you like, now, that I'll handle a corpse and drive a screw in a coffin as well as you, now, although you are so solid and miserable." — "So you may — so you may."

"Then what do you mean by saying I haven't a proper regard for my profession?" — "I say you haven't, and there's the thing that shall prove it — you don't look it, and that's the truth."

"I don't look like an undertaker! indeed I dare say I don't if I ain't dressed like one." — "Nor when you are," reiterated Jacob.

"Why not, pray?" — "Because you have always a grin on your face as broad as a gridiron — that's why."

This ended the dispute, for the employer of the men suddenly put his head in, saying, —

"Come, now, time's up; you are wanted up stairs, all of you. Be quick; we shall have his reverence waiting for us, and then we shall lose his recommendation."

"Ready, sir," said the round man, taking up his pint and finishing it off as a draught, at the same moment he thrust the remains of some bread and cheese into his pocket.

Jacob, too, took his pot, and, having finished it, with great gravity followed the example of his more jocose companion, and they all left the kitchen for the room above, where the corpse was lying ready for interment.

There was an unusual bustle; everybody was on the tip-top of expectation, and awaiting the result in a quiet hurry, and hoped to have the first glimpse of the coffin, though why they should do so it was difficult to define. But in this fit of mysterious hope and expectation they certainly stood.

"Will they be long?" inquired a man at the door of one inside, — "will they be long before they come?" — "They are coming now," said the man. "Do you all keep quiet; they are knocking their heads against the top of the landing. Hark! There, I told you so."

The man departed, hearing something, and being satisfied that he had got some information.

"Now, then," said the landlord, "move out of the way, and allow the corpse to pass out. Let me have no indecent conduct; let everything be as it should be."

The people soon removed from the passage and vicinity of the doorway, and then the mournful procession — as the newspapers have it — moved forward. They were heard coming down stairs, and thence along the passage, until they came to the street, and then the whole number of attendants was plainly discernible.

How different was the funeral of one who had friends. He was alone; none followed, save the undertaker and his attendants, all of whom looked solemn from habit and professional motives. Even the jocose man was a supernaturally solemn as could be well imagined; indeed, nobody knew he was the same man.

"Well," said the landlord, as he watched them down the street, as they slowly paced their way with funeral, not sorrowful, solemnity — "well, I am very glad that it is all over."

"It has been a sad plague to you," said one.

"It has, indeed; it must be to any one who has had another such a job as this. I don't say it out of any disrespect to the poor man who is dead and gone — quite the reverse; but I would not have such another affair on my hands for pounds."

"I can easily believe you, especially when we come to consider the disagreeables of a mob."

"You may say that. There's no knowing what they will or won't do, confound them! If they'd act like men, and pay for what they have, why, then I shouldn't care much about them; but it don't do to have other people in the bar."

"I should think not, indeed; that would alter the scale of your profits, I reckon."

"It would make all the difference to me. Business," added the landlord, "conducted on that scale, would become a loss; and a man might as well walk into a well at once."

"So I should say. Have many such occurrences as these been usual in this part of the country?" inquired the stranger.

"Not usual at all," said the landlord; "but the fact is, the whole neighbourhood has run distracted about some superhuman being they call a vampyre."

"Indeed!" — "Yes; and they suspected the unfortunate man who has been lying up-stairs, a corpse, for some days."

"Oh, the man they have just taken in the coffin to bury?" said the stranger. — "Yes, sir, the same."

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"Well, I thought perhaps somebody of great consequence had suddenly become defunct." — "Oh, dear no; it would not have caused half the sensation; people have been really mad."

"It was a strange occurrence, altogether, I believe, was it?" inquired the stranger. — "Indeed it was, sir. I hardly know the particulars, there have been so many tales afloat; though they all concur in one point, and that is, it has destroyed the peace of one family."

"Who had done so?" — "The vampyre."

"Indeed! I never heard of such an animal, save as a fable, before; it seems to me extraordinary."

"So it would do to any one, sir, as was not on the spot, to see it; I'm sure I wouldn't." \* \* \* \* \*

In the meantime, the procession, short as it was of itself, moved along in slow time through a throng of people who ran out of their houses on either side of the way, and lined the whole length of the town.

Many of these closed in behind, and followed the mourners until they were near the church, and then they made a rush to get into the churchyard.

As yet all had been conducted with toerable propriety, the funeral met with no impediment. The presence of death among so many of them seemed some check upon the license of the mob, who bowed in silence to the majesty of death.

Who could bear ill-will against him who was now no more? Man, while he is man, is always the subject of hatred, fear, or love. Some one of these passions, in a modified state, exists in all men, and with such feelings they will regard each other; and it is barely possible that any one should not be the object of some of these, and hence the stranger's corpse was treated with respect.

In silence the body proceeded along the highway until it came to the churchyard, and followed by an immense multitude of people of all grades.

The authorities trembled; they knew not what all this portended. They thought it might pass off; but it might become a storm first; they hoped and feared by turns, till some of them fell sick with apprehension.

There was a deep silence observed by all those in the immediate vicinity of the coffin, but those farther in the rear found full expression for their feelings.

"Do you think," said an old man to another, "that he will come to life again, eh?" — "Oh, yes, vampyres always do, and lay in the moonlight, and then they come to life again. Moonlight recovers a vampyre to life again."

"And yet the moonlight is cold." — "Ah, but who's to tell what may happen to a vampyre, or what's hot or what's cold?"

"Certainly not; oh, dear, no." — "And then they have permission to suck the blood of other people, to live themselves, and to make other people vampyres, too."

"The lord have mercy upon us!" — "Ay, but they have driven a stake through this one, and he can't get in moonlight or daylight; it's all over — he's certainly done for; we may congratulate ourselves on this point."

"So we may — so we may."

They now neared the grave, the clergyman officiating as usual on such occasions. There was a large mob of persons on all sides, with serious faces, watching the progress of the ceremony, and who listened in quietness.

There was no sign of any disturbance amongst the people, and the authorities were well pleased; they congratulated themselves upon the quietness and orderliness of the assemblage.

The service was ended and the coffin lowered, and the earth was thrown on the coffin-lid with a hollow sound. Nobody could hear that sound unmoved. But in a short while the sound ceased as the grave became filled; it was then trodden carefully down.

There were no relatives there to feel affected at the last scene of all. They were far away, and, according to popular belief upon the subject, they must have been dead some ages. \* \* \* \* \*

The mob watched the last shovel-full of earth thrown upon the coffin, and witnessed the ramming down of the soil, and the heaping of it over at top to make the usual monument; for all this was done speedily and carefully, lest there should be any tendency to exhume the body of the deceased.

The people were now somewhat relieved, as to their state of solemnity and silence. They would all of them converse freely on the matter that had so long occupied their thoughts.

They seemed now let loose, and everybody found himself at liberty to say or do something, no matter if it were not very reasonable; that is not always required of human beings who have souls, or, at least, it is

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unexpected; and were it expected, the expectation would never be realized.

The day was likely to wear away without a riot, nay, even without a fight; a most extraordinary occurrence for such a place, under the existing circumstances; for of late the populace, or perhaps, the townspeople, were extremely pugnacious, and many were the disputes that were settled by the very satisfactory application of the knuckles to the head of the party holding a contrary opinion.

Thus it was they were ready to take fire, and a hubbub would be the result of the slightest provocation. But, on the present occasion, there was a remarkable dearth of all subjects of the nature described.

Who was to lead Israel out to battle? Alas! no one on the present occasion.

Such a one, however, appeared; at least, one who furnished a ready excuse for a disturbance.

Suddenly, Mrs. Chillingworth appeared in the midst of a large concourse of people. She had just left her house, which was close at hand; her eyes red with weeping, and her children around her on this occasion. The crowd made way for her, and gathered round her to see what was going to happen.

"Friends and neighbours," she said, "can any of you relieve the tears of a distressed wife and mother; have any of you seen anything of my husband, Mr. Chillingworth?"

"What the doctor?" exclaimed one. — "Yes; Mr. Chillingworth, the surgeon. He has not been home two days and a night. I'm distracted! — what can have become of him I don't know, unless —"

Here Mrs. Chillingworth paused; and some person said, —

"Unless what, Mrs. Chillingworth? there are none but friends here, who wish the doctor well, and would do anything to serve him — unless what? speak out."

"Unless he's been destroyed by the vampyre. Heaven knows what we may all come to! Here am I and my children deprived of our protector by some means which we cannot imagine. He never, in all his life, did the same before."

"He must have been spirited away by some of the vampyres. I'll tell you what, friend," said one to another, "that something must be done; nobody's safe in their bed."

"No; they are not, indeed. I think that all vampyres ought to be burned and a stake run through them, and then we should be safe."

"Ay; but you must destroy all those who are even suspected of being vampyres, or else one may do all the mischief." — "So he might."

"Hurrah! shouted the mob. "Chillingworth for ever! We'll find the doctor somewhere, if we pull down the whole town."

"There was an immense commotion among the populace, who began to start throwing stones, and do all sorts of things without any particular object, and some, as they said, to find the doctor, or to show how willing they were to do so if they knew how.

Mrs. Chillingworth, however, kept on talking to the mob, who continued shouting; and the authorities anticipated an immediate outbreak of popular opinion, which is generally accompanied by some forcible demonstration, and on this occasion some one suggested the propriety of burning down Bannerworth Hall; because they had burned down the vampyre's house, and they might as well burn down that of the injured party, which was carried by acclamation; and with loud shouts they started on their errand.

"This was a mob's proceeding all over, and we regret very much to say, that it is very much the characteristic of English mobs. What an uncommonly strange thing it is that people in multitudes seem completely to get rid of all reason — all honour — all common ordinary honesty; while, if you were to take the same people singly, you would find that they were reasonable enough, and would shrink with a feeling quite approaching to horror from anything in the shape of very flagrant injustice.

This can only be accounted for by a piece of cowardice in the human race, which induces them when alone, and acting with the full responsibility of their actions, to shrink from what it is quite evident they have a full inclination to do, and will do when, having partially lost their individuality in a crowd, they fancy, that to a certain extent they can do so with impunity.

The burning of Sir Francis Varney's house, although it was one of those proceedings which would not bear the test of patient examination, was yet, when we take all the circumstances into consideration, an act really justifiable and natural in comparison with the one which was now meditated.

Bannerworth Hall had never been the residence even of any one who had done the people any injury or given

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them any offence, so that to let it become a prey to the flames was but a gratuitous act of mischief.

It was, however, or seemed to be, doomed, for all who have had any experience in mobs, must know how extremely difficult it is to withdraw them from any impulse once given, especially when that impulse, as in the present instance, is of a violent character.

"Down with Bannerworth Hall!" was the cry. "Burn it — burn it," and augmented by fresh numbers each minute, the ignorant, and, in many respects, ruffianly assemblage, soon arrived within sight of what had been for so many years the bane of the Bannerworths, and whatever may have been the fault of some of that race, those faults had been of a domestic character, and not at all such as would interfere with the public weal.

The astonished, and almost worn-out authorities, hastily, now, after having disposed of their prisoners, collected together what troops they could, and by the time the misguided, or rather the not guided at all populace, had got half way to Bannerworth Hall, they were being outflanked by some of the dragoons, who, by taking a more direct route, hoped to reach Bannerworth Hall first, and so perhaps, by letting the mob see that it was defended, induce them to give up the idea of its destruction on account of the danger attendant upon the proceeding by far exceeding any of the anticipated delight of the disturbance.

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## Chapter LXXI. THE STRANGE MEETING AT THE HALL BETWEEN MR. CHILLINGWORTH AND THE MYSTERIOUS FRIEND OF VARNEY.

When we praise our friend Mr. Chillingworth for not telling his wife where he was going, in pursuance of a caution and a discrimination so highly creditable to him, we are quite certain that he has no such excuse as regards the reader. Therefore we say at once that he had his own reasons now for taking up his abode at Bannerwoth Hall for a time. These reasons seemed to be all dependant upon the fact of having met the mysterious man at Sir Francis Varney's; and although we perhaps would have hoped that the doctor might have communicated to Henry Bannerwoth all that he knew and all that he surmised, yet have we no doubt that what he keeps to himself he has good reasons for so keeping, and that his actions as regards it are founded upon some very just conclusions.

He has then made a determination to take possession of, and remain in, Bannerwoth Hall according to the full and free leave which the admiral had given him so to do. What results he anticipated from so lonely and so secret a watch we cannot say, but probably they will soon exhibit themselves. It needed no sort of extraordinary discrimination for any one to feel at once that not the least good, in the way of an ambuscade, was likely to be effected by such persons as Admiral Bell or Jack Pringle. They were all very well when fighting should actually ensue, but they both were certainly remarkably and completely deficient in diplomatic skill, or in that sort of patience which should enable them at all to compete with the cunning, the skill, and the nice discrimination of such a man as Sir Francis Varney.

If anything were to be done in that way it was unquestionably to be done by some one alone, who, like the doctor, would, and could, remain profoundly quiet and await the issue of events, be they what they might, and probably remain a spy and attempt no overt act which should be of a hostile character. This unquestionably was the mode, and perhaps we should not be going too far when we say it was the only mode which could be with anything like safety relied upon as one likely to lead really to a discovery of Sir Francis Varney's motives in making such determined exertions to get possession of Bannerwoth Hall.

That night was doomed to be a very eventful one, indeed; for on it had Charles Holland been, by a sort of wild impulsive generosity of Sir Francis Varney, rescued from the miserable dungeon in which he had been confined, and on that night, too, he, whom we cannot otherwise describe than as the villain Marchdale, had been, in consequence of the evil that he himself meditated, and the crime with which he was quite willing to stain his soul, been condemned to occupy Charles's position.

On that night, too, had the infuriated mob determined upon the destruction of Bannerwoth Hall, and on that night was Mr. Chillingworth waiting with what patience he could exert, at the Hall, for whatever in the chapter of accidents might turn up of an advantageous character to that family in whose welfare and fortunes he felt so friendly and so deep an interest.

Let us look, then, at the worthy doctor as he keeps his solitary watch.

He did not, as had been the case when the admiral shared the place with him in the hope of catching Varney on that memorable occasion when he caught only his boot, sit in a room with a light and the means and appliances for making the night pass pleasantly away; but, on the contrary, he abandoned the house altogether, and took up a station in that summer-house which has been before mentioned as the scene of a remarkable interview between Flora Bannerwoth and Varney the vampyre.

Alone and in the dark, so that he could not be probably seen, he watched that one window of the chamber where the first appearance of the hideous vampyre had taken place, and which seemed ever since to be the special object of his attack.

By remaining from twilight, and getting accustomed to the gradually increasing darkness of the place, no doubt the doctor was able to see well enough without the aid of any artificial light whether any one was in the place besides himself.

"Night after night," he said, "will I watch here until I have succeeded in unravelling this mystery; for that there is some fearful and undreamt of mystery at the bottom of all these proceedings I am well convinced."

When he made such a determination as this, Dr. Chillingworth was not at all a likely man to break it, so there, looking like a modern statue in the arbour, he sat with his eyes fixed upon the balcony and the window of what

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used to be called Flora's room for some hours.

The doctor was a contemplative man, and therefore he did not so acutely feel the loneliness of his position as many persons would have done; moreover, he was decidedly not of a superstitious turn of mind, although certainly we cannot deny an imagination to him. However, if he really had harboured some strange fears and terrors they would have been excusable, when we consider how many circumstances had combined to make it almost a matter of demonstration that Sir Francis Varney was something more than mortal.

What quantities of subjects the doctor thought over during his vigil in that garden it is hard to say, but never in his whole life, probably, had he such a glorious opportunity for the most undisturbed contemplation of subjects requiring deep thought to analyze, than as he had then. At least he felt that since his marriage he had never been so thoroughly quiet, and left so completely to himself.

It is to be hoped that he succeeded in settling any medical points of a knotty character that might be hovering in his brain, and certain it is that he had become quite absorbed in an abstruse matter connected with physiology, when his ears were startled, and he was at once aroused to a full consciousness of where he was, and why he had come there, by the distant sound of a man's footstep.

It was a footstep which seemed to be that of a person who scarcely thought it at all necessary to use any caution, and the doctor's heart leaped within him as in the lowest possible whisper he said to himself, —

"I am successful — I am successful. It is believed now that the Hall is deserted, and no doubt that is Sir Francis Varney come with confidence, to carry out his object in so sedulously attacking it, be that object what it may."

Elated with this idea, the doctor listened intently to the advancing footstep, which each moment sounded more clearly upon his ears.

It was evidently approaching from the garden entrance towards the house, and he thought, by the occasional deadened sound of the person's feet, be he whom he might, that he could not see his way very well, and, consequently, frequently strayed from the path, on to some of the numerous flowerbeds which were in the way.

"Yes," said the doctor, exultingly, "it must be Varney; and now I have but to watch him, and not to resist him; for what good on earth is it to stop him in what he wishes to do, and, by such means, never wrest his secret from him. The only way is to let him go on, and that will I do, most certainly."

Now he heard the indistinct muttering of the voice of some one, so low that he could not catch what words were uttered; but he fancied that, in the deep tones, he recognised, without any doubt, the voice of Sir Francis Varney.

"It must be he," he said, "it surely must be he. Who else would come here to disturb the solitude of an empty house? He comes! he comes!"

Now the doctor could see a figure emerge from behind some thick beeches, which had before obstructed his vision, and he looked scrutinisingly about, while some doubts stole slowly over his mind now as to whether it was the vampyre or not. The height was in favour of the supposition that it was none other than Varney; but the figure looked so much stouter, that Mr. Chillingworth felt a little staggered upon the subject, and unable wholly to make up his mind upon it.

The pausing of this visitor, too, opposite that window where Sir Francis Varney had made his attempts, was another strong reason why the doctor was inclined to believe it must be him, and yet he could not quite make up his mind upon the subject, so as to speak with certainty.

A very short time, however, indeed, must have sufficed to set such a question as that at rest; and patience seemed the only quality of mind necessary under those circumstances for Mr. Chillingworth to exert.

The visitor continued gazing either at that window, or at the whole front of the house, for several minutes, and then he turned away from a contemplation of it, and walked slowly along, parallel with the windows of that dining-room, one of which had been broken so completely on the occasion of the admiral's attempt to take the vampyre prisoner.

The moment the stranger altered his position, from looking at the window, and commenced walking away from it, Mr. Chillingworth's mind was made up. It was not Varney — of that he felt now most positively assured, and could have no doubt whatever upon the subject.

The gait, the general air, the walk, all were different; and then arose the anxious question of who could it be that had intruded upon that lonely place, and what could be the object of any one else but Varney the vampyre to



do so.

The stranger looked a powerful man, and walked with a firm tread, and, altogether, he was an opponent that, had the doctor been ever so belligerently inclined, it would have been the height of indiscretion for him to attempt to cope with.

It was a very vexatious thing, too, for any one to come there at such a juncture, perhaps only from motives of curiosity, or possibly just to endeavour to commit some petty depredations upon the deserted building, if possible; and mostly heartily did the doctor wish that, in some way, he could scare away the intruder.

The man walked along very slowly, indeed, and seemed to be quite taking his time in making his observations of the building; and this was the more provoking, as it was getting late, and, if having projected a visit at all, it would surely soon be made, and then, when he found any one there, of course, he would go.

Amazed beyond expression, the doctor felt about on the ground at his feet, until he found a tolerably large stone, which he threw at the stranger with so good an aim, that it hit him a smart blow on the back, which must have been anything but a pleasant surprise.

That it was a surprise, and that, too, a most complete one, was evident from the start which the man gave, and then he uttered a furious oath, and rubbed his back, as he glanced about him to endeavour to ascertain from whence the missile had come.

"I'll try him again with that," thought the doctor; "it may succeed in scaring him away;" and he stooped to search for another stone.

It was well that he did so at that precise moment; for, before he rose again, he heard the sharp report of a pistol, and a crashing sound among some of the old wood work of which the summer-house was composed, told him that a shot had there taken effect. Affairs were now getting much too serious; and, accordingly, Dr. Chillingworth thought that, rather than stay there to be made a target of, he would face the intruder.

"Hold -- hold!" he cried. "Who are you, and what do you mean by that?" -- "Oh! somebody is there," cried the man, as he advanced. "My friend, whoever you are, you were very foolish to throw a stone at me."

"And, my friend, whoever you are," responded the doctor, "you were very spiteful to fire a pistol bullet at me in consequence." -- "Not at all."

"But I say yes; for, probably, I can prove a right to be here, which you cannot." -- "Ah!" said the stranger, "that voice -- why -- you are Dr. Chillingworth?"

"I am; but I don't know you," said the doctor, as he emerged now from the summer-house, and confronted the stranger, who was within a few paces of the entrance to it. Then he started, as he added, --

"Yes, I do know you, though. How in the name of Heaven, came you here, and what purpose have you in so coming?"

"What purpose have you? Since we met at Varney's, I have been making some inquiries about this neighbourhood, and learn strange things." -- "That you may very easily do here; and, what is more extraordinary, the strange things are, for the most part, I can assure you, quite true."

The reader will, from what has been said, now readily recognise this man as Sir Francis Varney's mysterious visitor, to whom he gave, from some hidden cause or another, so large a sum of money, and between whom and Dr. Chillingworth a mutual recognition had taken place, on the occasion when Sir Francis Varney had, with such cool assurance, invited the admiral to breakfast with him at his new abode.

"You, however," said the man, "I have no doubt, are fully qualified to tell me of more than I have been able to learn from other people; and, first of all, let me ask you why you are here?" -- "Before I answer you that question, or any other," said the doctor, "let me beg of you to tell me truly, is Sir Francis Varney-- --"

The doctor whispered in the ear of the stranger some name, as if he feared, even there, in the silence of that garden, where everything conspired to convince him that he could not be overheard, to pronounce it in an audible tone.

"He is," said the other. -- "You have no manner of doubt of it?"

"Doubt? -- certainly not. What doubt can I have? I know it for a positive certainty, and he knows, of course, that I do know it, and has purchased my silence pretty handsomely, although I must confess that nothing but my positive necessities would have induced me to make the large demands upon him that I have, and I hope soon to be able to release him altogether from them."

The doctor shook his head repeatedly, as he said, --

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"I suspected it; I suspected it, do you know, from the first moment that I saw you there in his house. His face haunted me ever since — awfully haunted me; and yet, although I felt certain that I had once seen it under strange circumstances, I could not identify it with — but no matter, no matter. I am waiting here for him."

"Indeed!" — "Ay, that I am; and I flung a stone at you, not knowing you, with a hope that you would be, by such means, perhaps, scared away, and so leave the coast clear for him."

"Then you have an appointment with him?" — "By no means; but he has made such repeated and determined attacks upon this house that the family who inhabited it were compelled to leave it, and I am here to watch him, and ascertain what can possibly be his object."

"It is as I suspected, then," muttered this man. "Confound him! Now can I read, as if in a book, most clearly, the game that he is playing!"

"Can you?" cried the doctor, energetically — "can you? What is it? Tell me, for that is the very thing I want to discover." — "You don't say so?"

"It is, indeed; and I assure you that it concerns the peace of a whole family to know it. You say you have made inquiries about this neighbourhood, and, if you have done so, you have discovered how the family of the Bannerworths have been persecuted by Varney, and how, in particular, Flora Bannerworth, a beautiful and intelligent girl, has been most cruelly made to suffer."

"I have heard all that, and I dare say with many exaggerations." — "It would be difficult for any one really to exaggerate the horrors that have taken place in this house, so that any information which you can give respecting the motives of Varney will tend, probably, to restore peace to those who have been so cruelly persecuted, and be an act of kindness which I think not altogether inconsistent with your nature."

"You think so, and yet know who I am." — "I do, indeed."

"And what I am. Why if I were to go into the market-place of yon town, and proclaim myself, would not all shun me — ay, even the lowest and vilest; and yet you talk of an act of kindness not being altogether inconsistent with my nature!" — "I do, because I know something more of you than many."

There was a silence of some moments' duration, and then the stranger spoke in a tone of voice which looked as if he were struggling with some emotion.

"Sir, you do know more of me than many. You know what I have been, and you know how I left an occupation which would have made me loathed. But you — even you — do not know what made me take to so terrible a trade." — "I do not."

"Would it suit you for me now to tell you?" — "Will you first promise me that you will do all you can for this persecuted family of the Bannerworths, in whom I take so strange an interest?"

"I will. I promise you that freely. Of my own knowledge, of course, I can say but little concerning them, but, upon that warranting, I well believe they deserve abundant sympathy, and from me they shall have it."

"A thousand thanks! With your assistance, I have little doubt of being able to extricate them from the tangled web of dreadful incidents which has turned them from their home; and now, whatever you may choose to tell me of the cause which drove you to be what you became, I shall listen to with abundant interest. Only let me beseech you to come into this summer-house, and to talk low."

"I will, and you can pursue your watch at the same time, while I beguile its weariness." — "Be it so."

"You knew me years ago, when I had all the chances in the world of becoming respectable and respected. I did, indeed; and you may, therefore, judge of my surprise when, some years since, being in the metropolis, I met you, and you shunned my company." — "Yes; but, at last, you found out why it was that I shunned your company."

"I did. You yourself told me once that I met you, and would not leave you, but insisted upon your dining with me. Then you told me, when you found that I would take no other course whatever, that you were no other than the — the — " — "Out with it! I can bear to hear it now better than I could then! I told you that I was the common hangman of London!"

"You did, I must confess, to my most intense surprise."

"Yes, and yet you kept to me; and, but that I respected you too much to allow you to do so, you would, from old associations, have countenanced me; but I could not, and I would not, let you do so. I told you then that, although I held the terrible office, that I had not been yet called upon to perform its loathsome functions. Soon — soon — come the first effort — it was the last!"

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"Indeed! You left the dreadful trade?" — "I did — I did. But what I want to tell you, for I could not then, was why I went ever to it. The wounds my heart had received were then too fresh to allow me to speak of them, but I will tell you now. The story is a brief one, Mr. Chillingworth. I pray you be seated."

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## Chapter LXXII. THE STRANGE STORY. -- THE ARRIVAL OF THE MOB AT THE HALL, AND THEIR DISPERSION.

"You will find that the time which elapsed since I last saw you in London, to have been spent in an eventful, varied manner." -- "You were in good circumstances then," said Mr. Chillingworth. -- "I was, but many events happened after that which altered the prospect; made it even more gloomy than you can well imagine: but I will tell you all candidly, and you can keep watch upon Bannerworth Hall at the same time. You are well aware that I was well to do, and had ample funds, and inclination to spend them." -- "I recollect: but you were married then, surely?" -- "I was," said the stranger, sadly, "I was married then." -- "And now?" -- "I am a widower." The stranger seemed much moved, but, after a moment or so, he resumed -- "I am a widower now; but how that event came about is partly my purpose to tell you. I had not married long -- that is very long -- for I have but one child, and she is not old, or of an age to know much more than what she may be taught; she is still in the course of education. I was early addicted to gamble; the dice had its charms, as all those who have ever engaged in play but too well know; it is perfectly fascinating." -- "So I have heard," said Mr. Chillingworth; "though, for myself, I found a wife and professional pursuits quite incompatible with any pleasure that took either time or resources." -- "It is so. I would I had never entered one of those houses where men are deprived of their money and their own free will, for at the gambling table you have no liberty, save that in gliding down the stream in company with others. How few have ever escaped destruction -- none, I believe -- men are perfectly fascinated; it is ruin alone that enables a man to see how he has been hurried onwards without thought or reflection; and how fallacious were all the hopes he ever entertained! Yes, ruin, and ruin alone, can do this; but alas! 'tis too late -- the evil is done. Soon after my marriage I fell in with a Chevalier St. John. He was a man of the world in every sense of the word, and one that was well versed in all the ways of society. I never met with any man who was so perfectly master of himself, and of perfect ease and self-confidence as he was. He was never at a loss, and, come what would, never betrayed surprise or vexation -- two qualities, he thought, never ought to be shown by any man who moved in society." -- "Indeed!" -- "He was a strange man -- a very strange man." -- "Did he gamble?" -- "It is difficult to give you a correct and direct answer. I should say he did, and yet he never lost or won much; but I have often thought he was more connected with those who did than was believed." -- "Was that a fact?" inquired Mr. Chillingworth. -- "You shall see as we go on, and be able to judge for yourself. I have thought he was. Well, he first took me to a handsome saloon, where gambling was carried on. We had been to the opera. As we came out, he recommended that we should sup at a house where he was well known, and where he was in the habit of spending his evenings after the opera, and before he retired. I agreed to this. I saw no reason why I should not. We went there, and bitterly have I repented of so doing for years since, and do to this day." -- "Your repentance has been sincere and lasting," said Mr. Chillingworth; "the one proves the other." -- "It does; but I thought not so then. The place was glittering, and the wine was good. It was a kind of earthly paradise; and when we had taken some wine, the chevalier said to me, --

"I am desirous of seeing a friend backwards; he is at the hazard-table. Will you go with me?" -- I hesitated. I feared to see the place where a vice was carried on. I knew myself inclined to prudential motives. I said to him, -- 'No, St. John, I'll wait here for you; it may be as well -- the wine is good, and it will content me?'

"Do so," he said, smiling; 'but remember I seldom or never play myself, nor is there any reason why you should.' -- 'I'll go, but I will not play.' -- 'Certainly not; you are free alike to look on, play, or quit the place at any moment you please, and not be noticed, probably, by a single soul.'

"I arose, and we walked backwards, having called one of the men who were waiting about, but who were watchers and doorkeepers of the 'hell.' We were led along the passage, and passed through the pair of doors, which were well secured and rendered the possibility of a surprise almost impossible. After these dark places, we were suddenly let into a place where we were dazzled by the light and brilliancy of the saloon. It was not so large as the one we left, but it was superior to it in all its appointments.

"At first I could not well see who was, or who was not, in the room where we were. As soon, however, as I found the use of my eyes, I noticed many well-dressed men, who were busily engaged in play, and who took no notice of any one who entered. We walked about for some minutes without speaking to any one, but merely

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looking on. I saw men engaged in play; some with earnestness, others again with great nonchalance, and money changed hands without the least remark. There were but few who spoke, and only those in play. There was a hum of conversation; but you could not distinguish what was said, unless you paid some attention to, and was in close vicinity with, the individual who spoke.

"'Well,' said St. John, 'what do you think of this place?' — 'Why,' I replied, 'I had no notion of seeing a place fitted up as this is.'

"'No; isn't it superb?' — 'It is beautifully done. They have many visitors,' said I, 'many more than I could have believed.'

"'Yes, they are all bona fide players; men of stamp and rank — none of your seedy legs who have only what they can cheat you out of.' — 'Ah!' — 'And besides,' he added, 'you may often form friendships here that lead to fortune hereafter. I do not mean in play, because there is no necessity for your doing so, or, if you do so, in going above a stake which you know won't hurt you.' — 'Exactly.'

"'Many men can never approach a table like this, and sit down to an hour's play, but, if they do, they must stake not only more than they can afford, but all their property, leaving themselves beggars.' 'They do?' said I.

"'But men who know themselves, their resources, and choose to indulge for a long time, many often come and lay the foundation to a very pretty fortune.'

"'Do you see your friend?' I inquired. — 'No, I do not; but I will inquire if he has been here — if not, we will go.'

"He left me for a moment or two to make some inquiry, and I stood looking at the table, where there were four players, and who seemed to be engaged at a friendly game; and when one party won they looked grave, and when the other party lost they smiled and looked happy. I walked away, as the chevalier did not return immediately to me; and then I saw a gentleman rise up from a table. He had evidently lost. I was standing by the seat, unconsciously holding the back of my hand. I sat down without thinking or without speaking, and found myself at the hazard table.

"'Do you play, sir?' — 'Yes,' I said. I had hardly uttered the words when I was sorry for them; but I could not recall them. I sat down, and play at once commenced.

"In about ten or fifteen minutes, often losing and then winning, I found myself about a hundred and twenty pounds in pocket, clear gain by the play.

"'Ah!' said the chevalier, who came up at that moment, 'I thought you wouldn't play.' — 'I really don't know how it happened,' said I, 'but I suddenly found myself here without any previous intention.'

"'You are not a loser, I hope?' — 'Indeed I am not,' I replied; 'but not much a gainer.'

"'Nor need you desire to be. Do you desire to give your adversary his revenge now, or take another opportunity.' — 'At another time,' I replied.

"'You will find me here the day after to-morrow, when I shall be at your service; then bowing, he turned away.

"'He is a very rich man whom you have been playing with,' said the chevalier. — 'Indeed!'

"'Yes, and I have known him to lose for three days together; but you may take his word for any amount; he is a perfect gentleman and man of honour.' — 'Tis well to play with such,' I replied; 'but I suppose you are about to leave.'

"'Yes, it grows late, and I have some business to transact to-morrow, so I must leave.' — 'I will accompany you part of the way home.' said I, 'and then I shall have finished the night.'

"I did leave with him, and accompanied him home, and then walked to my own home. \*\*\*\*

"This was my first visit, and I thought a propitious beginning, but it was the more dangerous. Perhaps a loss might have effectually deterred me, but it doubtful to tell how certain events might have been altered. It is just possible that I might have been urged on by my desire to retrieve any loss I might have incurred, and so made myself at once the miserable being it took months to accomplish in bringing me to.

"I went the day but one after this, to meet the same individual at the gambling-table, and played some time with varied success, until I left off with a trifling loss upon the night's play, which was nothing of any consequence.

"Thus matters went on; I sometimes won and sometimes lost, until I won a few hundreds, and this determined me to play for higher stakes than any I had yet played for.

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"It was no use going on in the peddling style I had been going on; I had won two hundred and fifty pounds in three months, and had I been less fearful I might have had twenty-five thousand pounds. Ah! I'll try my fortune at a higher game.

"Having once made this resolution, I was anxious to begin my new plan, which I hoped would have the effect of placing me far above my then present position in society, which was good, and with a little attention it would have made me an independent man; but then it required patience, and nothing more. However, the other method was so superior since it might all be done with good luck in a few months. Ah! good luck; how uncertain is good luck; how changeful is fortune; how soon is the best prospect blighted by the frosts of adversity. In less than a month I had lost more than I could pay, and then I gambled on for a living.

"My wife had but one child; her first and only one; an infant at her breast; but there was a change came over her; for one had come over me — a fearful one it was too — one not only in manner but in fortune too. She would beg me to come home early; to attend to other matters, and leave the dreadful life I was then leading.

"Lizzy,' said I, 'we are ruined.' — 'Ruined!' she exclaimed, and staggered back, until she fell into a seat. 'Ruined!'

"Ay, ruined. It is a short word, but expressive.' — 'No, no, we are not ruined. I know what you mean, you would say, we cannot live as we have lived; we must retrench, and so we will, right willingly.'

"You much retrench most wonderfully,' I said, with desperate calmness, 'for the murder must out.' — 'And so we will; but you will be with us; you will not go out night after night, ruining your health, our happiness, and destroying both peace and prospects.'

"No, no, Lizzy, we have no chance of recovering ourselves; house and home — all gone — all, all.' — 'My God!' she exclaimed.

"Ay, rail on.' said I; 'you have cause enough; but, no matter — we have lost all.' — 'How — how?'

"It is useless to ask how; I have done, and there is an end of the matter; you shall know more another day; we must leave this house for a lodging.' — 'It matters little,' she said; 'all may be won again, if you will but say you will quit the society of those who have ruined you.'

"No one,' said I, 'has ruined me; I did it; it was no fault of any one else's; I have not that excuse.' — 'I am sure you can recover.'

"I may; some day fortune will shower her favours upon me, and I live on in that expectation.' — 'You cannot mean that you will chance the gaming-table? for I am sure you must have lost all there?'

"I have.' — 'God help me,' she said; 'you have done your child a wrong, but you may repair it yet.'

"Never!' — 'Tis a long day! let me implore you, on my knees, to leave this place, and adopt some other mode of life; we can be careful; a little will do, and we shall, in time, be equal to, and better than what we have been.'

"We never can, save by chance.' — 'And by chance we never shall,' she replied; 'if you will exert yourself, we may yet retrieve ourselves.'

"And exert myself I will.' — 'And quit the gaming-table?'

"Ask me to make no promises,' said I; 'I may not be able to keep them; therefore, ask me to make none.' — 'I do ask you, beg of, entreat of you to promise, and solemnly promise me that you will leave that fearful place, where men not only lose all their goods, but the feelings of nature also.'

"Say no more, Lizzy; if I can get a living elsewhere I will, but if not, I must get it there.'

"She seemed to be cast down at this, and she shed tears. I left the room, and again went to the gambling-house, and there, that night, I won a few pounds, which enabled me to take my wife and child away from the house they had so long lived in, and took them afterwards to a miserable place, — one room, where, indeed, there were a few articles of furniture that I had saved from the general wreck of my own property.

"She took things much less to heart than I could have anticipated; she seemed cheerful and happy, — she endeavoured to make my home as comfortable as she could.

"Her whole endeavour was to make me, as much as possible, forget the past. She wanted, as much as possible, to wean me away from my gambling pursuits, but that was impossible. I had no hope, no other prospect.

"Thus she strove, but I could see each day she was getting paler, and more pale; her figure, before round, was more thin, and betrayed signs of emaciation. This preyed upon me; and, when fortune denied me the means of carrying home that which she so much wanted, I could never return for two days at a time. Then I would find her shedding tears, and sighing; what could I say? If I had anything to take her, then I used to endeavour to make her

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forget that I had been away.

"'Ah!' she would exclaim, 'you will find me dead one of these days; what you do now for one or two days, you will do by—and—bye for many days, perhaps weeks.' — 'Do not anticipate evil.'

"'I cannot do otherwise; were you in any other kind of employment but that of gambling,' she said, 'I should have some hope of you; but, as it is, there is none.' — 'Speak not of it; my chances may turn out favourable yet, and you may be again as you were.'

"'Never.' — 'But fortune is inconstant, and may change in my favour as much as she has done in others.'

"'Fortune is indeed constant, but misfortune is an inconstant.' — 'You are prophetic of evil.'

"'Ah! I would to Heaven I could predict good; but who ever yet heard of a ruined gambler being able to retrieve himself by the same means that he was ruined?'

"'Thus we used to converse, but our conversation was usually of but little comfort to either of us, for we could give neither any comfort to the other; and as that was usually the case, our interviews became less frequent, and of less duration. My answer was always the same.

"'I have no other chance; my prospects are limited to that one place; deprive me of that, and I never more should be able to bring you a mouthful of bread.'

"'Day after day, — day after day, the same result followed, and I was as far from success as ever I was, and ever should be; I was yet a beggar.

"'The time flew by; my little girl was nearly four years old, but she knew not the misery her father and mother had to endure. The poor little thing sometimes went without more than a meal a day; and while I was living thus upon the town, upon the chances of the gaming table, many a pang did she cause me, and so did her mother. My constant consolation was this, —

"'It is bad luck now,' I would say; 'but will be better by—and—bye; things cannot always continue thus. It is all for them — all for them.'

"'I thought that by continuing constantly in one course, I must be at land at the ebb of the tide. 'It cannot always flow one way,' I thought. I had often heard people say that if you could but have the resolution to play on, you must in the end seize the turn of fortune.

"'If I could but once do that, I would never enter a hell again as long as I drew breath.'

"'This was a resolve I could not only make but keep, because I had suffered so much that I would never run through the same misery again that I had already gone through. However, fortune never seemed inclined to take the turn I had hoped for; fortune was as far off as ever, and had in no case given me any opportunity of recovering myself.

"'A few pounds were the utmost I could at any time muster, and I had to keep up something of an appearance, and seem as if I had a thousand a year; when, God knows, I could not have mustered a thousandth part of that sum, were all done and paid for.

"'Day after day passed on, and yet no change. I had almost given myself up to despair, when one night when I went home I saw my wife was more than usually melancholy and sad, and perhaps ill; I didn't look at her — I seldom did, because her looks were always a reproach to me; I could not help feeling them so.

"'Well,' said I, 'I have come home to you because I have something to bring you; not what I ought — but what I can — you must be satisfied!' — 'I am,' she said.

"'I know also you want it; how is the child, is she quite well?' — 'Yes, quite.'

"'Where is she?' inquired I, looking round the room, but I didn't see her; she used to be up. — 'She has gone to bed,' she said.

"'It is very early.' — 'Yes, but she cried so for food that I was obliged to get her to sleep to forget her hunger; poor thing, she has wanted bread very badly.'

"'Poor thing!' I said, 'let her be awakened and partake of what I have brought home.'

"'With that my wife waked her up, and the moment she opened her eyes she again began to cry for food, which I immediately gave her, and saw her devour with the utmost haste and hunger. The sight smote my heart, and my wife sat by watching, and endeavouring to prevent her from eating so fast.

"'This is bad,' I said. — 'Yes, but I hope it may be the worst,' she replied, in a deep and hollow voice.

"'Lizzy,' I exclaimed, 'what is the matter — are you ill?' — 'Yes, very ill.'

"'What is the matter with you? For God's sake tell me,' I said, for I was alarmed. — 'I am very ill,' she said,

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'very ill indeed; I feel my strength decreasing every day. I must drink.'

"You, too, want food?" — 'I have and perhaps do, though the desire to eat seems almost to have left me.'

"'For Heaven's sake eat,' said I; 'I will bring you home something more by to-morrow; eat and drink Lizzy. I have suffered; but for you and your child's sake, I will do my best.' — 'Your best,' she said, 'will kill us both; but, alas, there is no other aid at hand. You may one day, however, come here too late to find us living.'

"'Say no more, Lizzy, you know not my feelings when you speak thus; alas, I have no hope — no aid — no friend.' — 'No,' she replied, 'your love of gaming drove them from you, because they would not aid a gambler.'

"'Say no more, Lizzy,' I said; 'if there be not an end to this life soon, there will be an end to me. In two days more I shall return to you. Good bye; God bless you. Keep up your heart and the child.' — 'Good bye,' she said, sorrowfully. She shed tears, and wrung her hands bitterly. I hastened away — my heart was ready to burst, and I could not speak.

"I walked about to recover my serenity, but could not do so sufficiently well to secure anything like an appearance that would render me fit to go to the gaming-house. That night I remained away, but I could not avoid falling into a debauch to drown my misfortunes, and shift the scene of misery that was continually before my eyes. \*\*\*\*

"The next night I was at the gaming-house. I went there in better than usual spirits. I saw, I thought, a change in fortune, and hailed that as the propitious moment of my life, when I was to rise above my present misfortunes.

"I played and won — played and lost — played and won, and then lost again; thus I went on, fluctuating more and more, until I found I was getting money in my pocket. I had, at one moment, more than three hundred pounds in my pocket, and I felt that then was my happy moment — then the tide of fortune was going in my favour. I ought to have left off with that — to have been satisfied with such an amount of money; but the demon of avarice seemed to have possessed me, and I went on and on with fluctuating fortune, until I lost the whole of it.

"I was mad — desperate, and could have destroyed myself; but I thought of the state my wife and child were in; I thought that that night they would want food; but they could not hurt for one day — they must have some, or would procure some.

"I was too far gone to be able to go to them, even if I were possessed of means; but I had none, and daylight saw me in a deep sleep, from which I awoke not until the next evening set in, and then I once more determined that I would make a desperate attempt to get a little money. I had always paid, and thought my word would be taken for once; and, if I won, all well and good; if not, then I was no worse off than before.

"This was easy to plan, but not to execute. I went there, but there were none present in whom I had sufficient interest to dare make the attempt. I walked about, and felt in a most uncomfortable state. I feared I should not succeed at all, then what was to become of me — of my wife and child? This rendered me almost mad. I could not understand what I was to do, what to attempt, or where to go. One or two persons came up, and asked me if I were ill. My answers were, that I was well enough. Good God! how far from the truth was that; but I found I must place more control on my feelings, else I should cause much conversation, and then I should lose all hope of recovering myself, and all prospect of living, even.

"At length some one did come in, and I remarked I had been there all the evening, and had not played. I had an invitation to play with him, which ended, by a little sleight of hand, in my favour; and on that I had calculated as much as on any good fortune I might meet. The person I played with observed it not, and, when we left off playing, I had some six or seven pounds in pocket. This, to me, was a very great sum; and, the moment I could decently withdraw myself, I ran off home.

"I was fearful of the scene that awaited me. I expected something worse than I had yet seen. Possibly Lizzy might be angry, and scold as well as complain. I therefore tapped at the door gently, but heard no one answer; but of this I took no notice, as I believed that they might be, and were, most probably, fast asleep. I had provided myself with a light, and I therefore opened the door, which was not fastened.

"'Lizzy!' said I, 'Lizzy!' There was no answer given, and I paused. Everything was as still as death. I looked on the bed — there lay my wife with her clothes on.

"'Lizzy! Lizzy!' said I. But still she did not answer me.

"'Well,' said I, 'she sleeps sound;' and I walked towards the bed, and placed my hand upon her shoulder, and began to shake her, saying, as I did so, —

"'Lizzy! Lizzy! I'm come home.' But still no answer, or signs of awaking.



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"I went on the other side of the bed to look at her face, and some misgivings overtook me. I trembled much. She lay on the bed, with her back towards the spot where I stood.

"I came towards her face. My hand shook violently as I endeavoured to look at her. She had her eyes wide open, as if staring at me.

"'Lizzy,' said I. No answer was returned. I then placed my hand upon her cheek. It was enough, and I started back in great horror. She was dead!

"This was horror itself. I staggered back and fell into a chair. The light I placed down, Heaven knows how or why; but there I sat staring at the corpse of my unfortunate wife. I can hardly tell you the tremendous effect this had upon me. I could not move. I was fascinated to the spot. I could not move and could not turn. \*\*\*\*\*

"It was morning, and the rays of the sun illuminated the apartment; but there sat I, still gazing upon the face of my unfortunate wife. I saw, I knew she was dead; but yet I had not spoken, but sat looking at her.

"I believe my heart was as cold as she was; but extreme horror and dread had dried up all the warm blood in my body, and I hardly think there was a pulsation left. The thoughts of my child never once seemed to cross my mind. I had, however, sat there long — some hours before I was discovered, and this was by the landlady.

"I had left the door open behind me, and she, in passing down, had the curiosity to peep, and saw me sitting in what she thought to be a very strange attitude, and could hear no sounds.

"After some time she discovered my wife was dead, and, for some time, she thought me so, too. However, she was convinced to the contrary, and then began to call for assistance. This awoke the child, which was nearly famished. The landlady, to become useful, and to awaken me from my lethargy, placed the child in my hands, telling me I was the best person now to take care of it.

"And so I was; there was no doubt of the truth of that, and I was compelled to acknowledge it. I felt much pride and pleasure in my daughter, and determined she should, if I starved, have the benefit of all I could do for her in the way of care, \*\*\*\*\*

"The funeral over, I took my child and carried it to a school, where I left her, and paid in advance, promising to do so as often as the quarter came round. My wife I had seen buried by the hands of man, and I swore I would do the best for my child, and to keep this oath was a work of pleasure.

"I determined also I would never more enter a gaming-house, be the extremity what it might; I would suffer even death before I would permit myself to enter the house in which it took place.

"'I will,' I thought, 'obtain some employment of some kind or other. I could surely obtain that. I have only to ask and I have it, surely — something, however menial, that would keep me and my child. Yes, yes — she ought, she must have her charges paid at once.'

"The effect of my wife's death was a very great shock to me, and such a one I could not forget — one I shall ever remember, and one that at least made a lasting impression upon me. \*\*\*\*\*

"Strange, but true, I never entered a gambling-house; it was my horror and my aversion. And yet I could obtain no employment. I took my daughter and placed her at a boarding-school, and tried hard to obtain bread by labour; but, do what I would, none could be had; if my soul depended upon it, I could find none. I cared not what it was — anything that was honest.

"I was reduced low — very low; gaunt starvation showed itself in my cheeks; but I wandered about to find employment; none could be found, and the world seemed to have conspired together to throw me back to the gaming-table.

"But this I would not. At last employment was offered; but what was it? The situation of common hangman was offered me. The employment was disgusting and horrible; but, at the same time, it was all I could get, and that was a sufficient inducement for me to accept of it. I was, therefore, the common executioner; and in that employment for some time earned a living. It was terrible; but necessity compelled me to accept the only thing I could obtain. You now know the reason why I became what I have told you."

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## Chapter LXXIII. THE VISIT OF THE VAMPIRE. -- THE GENERAL MEETING.

"The mysterious friend of Mr. Chillingworth finished his narrative, and then the doctor said to him, --

"And that, then, is the real cause of why you, a man evidently far above the position in life which is usually that of those who occupy the dreadful post of executioner, came to accept of it." -- "The real reason, sir. I considered, too, that in holding such a humiliating situation that I was justly served for the barbarity of which I had been guilty; for what can be a greater act of cruelty than to squander, as I did, in the pursuit of mad excitement, those means which should have rendered my home happy, and conduced to the welfare of those who were dependant upon me?"

"I do not mean to say that your self-reproaches are unjust altogether, but -- What noise is that? do you hear anything? -- "Yes -- yes."

"What do you take it to be?" -- "It seemed like the footsteps of a number of persons, and it evidently approaches nearer and nearer. I know not what to think."

"Shall I tell you?" said a deep-toned voice, and some one, through the orifice in the back of the summer-house, which, it will be recollected, sustained some damage at the time that Varney escaped from it, laid a hand upon Mr. Chillingworth's shoulder. "God bless me!" exclaimed the doctor; "who's that?" and he sprang from his seat with the greatest perturbation in the world.

"Varney, the vampyre!" added the voice, and then both the doctor and his companion recognised it, and saw the strange, haggard features, that now they knew so well, confronting them. There was a pause of surprise, for a moment or two, on the part of the doctor, and then he said, "Sir Francis Varney, what brings you here? I conjure you to tell me, in the name of common justice and common feeling, what brings you to this house so frequently? You have dispossessed the family, whose property it is, of it, and you have caused great confusion and dismay over a whole county. I implore you now, not in the language of menace or as an enemy, but as the advocate of the oppressed, and one who desires to see justice done to all, to tell me what it is you require."

"There is no time now for explanation," said Varney, "if explanations were my full and free intent. You wished to know what noise was that you heard?"

"I did; can you inform me?" -- "I can. The wild and lawless mob which you and your friends first induced to interfere in affairs far beyond their or your control, are now flushed with the desire of riot and of plunder. The noise you hear is that of their advancing footsteps; they come to destroy Bannerworth Hall."

"Can that be possible? The Bannerworth family are the sufferers from all that has happened, and not the inflictors of suffering." -- "Ay, be it so; but he who once raises a mob has raised an evil spirit, which, in the majority of cases, it requires a far more potent spell than he is master of to quell again."

"It is so. That is a melancholy truth; but you address me, Sir Francis Varney, as if I led on the mob, when in reality I have done all that lay in my power, from the very first moment of their rising on account of this affair, which, in the first instance, was your work, to prevent them from proceeding to acts of violence." -- "It may be so; but if you have now any regard for your own safety you will quit this place. It will too soon become the scene of a bloody contention. A large party of dragoons are even now by another route coming towards it, and it will be their duty to resist the aggressions of the mob; then should the rioters persevere, you can guess the result." -- "I can, indeed."

"Retire then while you may, and against the bad deeds of Sir Francis Varney at all events place some of his good ones, that he may not seem wholly without one redeeming trait." -- "I am not accustomed," said the doctor, "to paint the devil blacker than he really is; but yet the cruel persecutions that the Bannerworth family have endured call aloud for justice. You still, with a perseverance which shows you regardless of what others suffer so that you compass your own ends, hover round a spot which you have rendered desolate."

"Hark, sir; do you not hear the tramp of horses' feet?" -- "I do."

The noise made by the feet of the insurgents was now almost drowned in the louder and more rapid tramp of the horses' feet of the advancing dragoons, and, in a few moments more, Sir Francis Varney waved his arm, exclaiming, --

"They are here. Will you not consult your safety by flight?" -- "No," said Mr. Chillingworth's companion;

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"we prefer remaining here at the risk even of whatever danger may accrue to us."

"Fools, would you die in a chance melee between an infuriated populace and soldiery?" — "Do not leave," whispered the ex-hangman to Mr. Chillingworth; "do not leave, I pray you. He only wants to have the Hall to himself."

There could be no doubt now of the immediate appearance of the cavalry, and, before Sir Francis Varney could utter another word, a couple of the foremost of the soldiers cleared the garden fence at a part where it was low, and alighted not many feet from the summer-house in which this short colloquy was taking place. Sir Francis Varney uttered a bitter oath, and immediately disappeared in the gloom.

"What shall we do?" said the hangman. — "You can do what you like, but I shall avow my presence to the military, and claim to be on their side in the approaching contest, if it should come to one, which I sincerely hope it will not."

The military detachment consisted of about twenty-five dragoons, who now were all in the gardens. An order was given by the officer in command for them to dismount, which was at once obeyed, and the horses were fastened by their bridles to the various trees with which the place abounded.

"They are going to oppose the mob on foot, with their carbines," said the hangman; "there will be sad work here I am afraid." — "Well, at all events," said Mr. Chillingworth, "I shall decline acting the part of a spy here any longer; so here goes."

"Hilloa! a friend, — a friend here, in the summer-house!"

"Make it two friends," cried the hangman, "if you please, while you are about it."

A couple of the dragoons immediately appeared, and the doctor, with his companion, were marched, as prisoners, before the officer in command.

"What do you do here?" he said; "I was informed that the Hall was deserted. Here, orderly, where is Mr. Adamson, the magistrate, who came with me?" — "Close at hand, sir, and he says he's not well."

"Well, or ill, he must come here, and do something with these people."

A magistrate of the district who had accompanied the troops, and been accommodated with a seat behind one of the dragoons, which seemed very much to have disagreed with him, for he was as pale as death, now stepped forward.

"You know me, Mr. Adamson?" said the doctor; "I am Mr. Chillingworth." — "Oh! yes; Lord bless you! how came you here?"

"Never mind that just now; you can vouch for my having no connection with the rioters." — "Oh! dear, yes; certainly. This is a respectable gentleman, Captain Richardson, and a personal friend of mine."

"Oh! very good." — "And I," said the doctor's companion, "am likewise a respectable and useful member of society, and a great friend of Mr. Chillingworth."

"Well, gentlemen," said the captain in command, "you may remain here, if you like, and take the chances, or you may leave."

They intimated that they preferred remaining, and, almost at the moment that they did so, a loud shout from many throats announced the near approach of the mob. — "Now, Mr. Magistrate, if you please," said the officer; "you will be so good as to tell the mob that I am here with my troop, under your orders, and strongly advise them to be off while they can, with whole skins, for if they persevere in attacking the place, we must persevere in defending it; and, if they have half a grain of sense among them, they can surely guess what the result of that will be."

"I will do the best I can, as Heaven is my judge," said the magistrate, "to produce a peaceable result, — more no man can do."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted the mob, "down with the Vampyre! down with the Hall!" and then one, more candid than his fellows shouted, — "Down with everything and everybody!"

"Ah!" remarked the officer; "that fellow now knows what he came about."

A great number of torches and links were lighted by the mob, but the moment the glare of light fell upon the helmets and accoutrements of the military, there was a pause of consternation on the part of the multitude, and Mr. Adamson, urged on by the officer, who, it was evident, by no means liked the service he was on, took advantage of the opportunity, and, stepping forward, he said, —

"My good people, and fellow townsmen, let me implore you to listen to reason, and go to your homes in

peace. If you do not, but, on the contrary, in defiance of law and good order, persist in attacking this house, it will become my painful duty to read the riot act, and then the military and you will have to fight it out together, which I beg you will avoid, for you know that some of you will be killed, and a lot more of you receive painful wounds. Now disperse, let me beg of you, at once."

There seemed for a moment a disposition among the mob to give up the contest, but there were others among them who were infuriated with drink, and so regardless of all consequences. Those set up a shout of "Down with the red coats; we are Englishmen, and will do what we like." Some one then threw a heavy stone, which struck one of the soldiers, and brought blood from his cheek. The officer saw it, but he said at once, --

"Stand firm, now, stand firm. No anger -- steady."

"Twenty pounds for the man who threw that stone," said the magistrate. -- "Twenty pound ten for old Adamson, the magistrate," cried a voice in the crowd, which, no doubt came from him who had cast the missile.

Then, at least fifty stones were thrown, some of which hit the magistrate, and the remainder came rattling upon the helmets of the dragoons, like a hail shower.

"I warn you, and beg of you to go," said Mr. Adamson; "for the sake of your wives and families; I beg of you not to pursue this desperate game."

Loud cries now arose of "Down with the soldiers; down with the vampyre. He's in Bannerworth Hall. Smoke him out. And then one or two links were hurled among the dismounted dragoons. All this was put up with patiently; and then again the mob were implored to leave, which being answered by fresh taunts, the magistrate proceeded to read the riot act, not one word of which was audible amid the tumult that prevailed.

"Put out all the lights," cried a voice among the mob. The order was obeyed, and the same voice added; "they dare not fire on us. Come on:" and a rush was made at the garden wall.

"Make ready -- present," cried the officer. And then he added, in an under tone, "above their heads, now -- fire."

There was a blaze of light for a moment, a stunning noise, a shout of dismay from the mob, and in another moment all was still.

"I hope," said Dr. Chillingworth, "that this is, at all events, a bloodless victory."

"You may depend upon that," said his companion; "but is not there some one yet remaining? Look there, do you not see a figure clambering over the fence?"

"Yes, I do, indeed. Ah, they have him a prisoner, at all events. Those two dragoons have him, fast enough; we shall now, perhaps, hear from this fellow who is the actual ringleader in such an affair, which, but for the pusillanimity of the mob, might have turned out to be really most disastrous."

It was strange how one man should think it expedient to attack the military post after the mob had been so completely routed at the first discharge of fire-arms, but so it was. One man did make an attempt to enter the garden, and it was so rapid and so desperate an one, that he rather seemed to throw himself bodily at the fence, which separated it from the meadows without, than to clamber over it, as any one under ordinary circumstances, who might wish to effect an entrance by that means, would have done.

He was no sooner, however, perceived, than a couple of the dismounted soldiers stepped forward and made a prisoner of him.

"Good God!" exclaimed Mr. Chillingworth, as they approached nearer with him. "Good God! what is the meaning of that? Do my eyes deceive me, or are they, indeed, so blessed?"

"Blessed by what?" exclaimed the hangman.

"By a sight of the long lost, deeply regretted Charles Holland. Charles -- Charles, is that indeed you, or some unsubstantial form in your likeness?"

Charles Holland, for it was, indeed, himself, heard the friendly voice of the doctor, and he called out to him.

"Speak to me of Flora. Oh, speak to me of Flora, if you would not have me die at once of suspense, and all the torture of apprehension."

"She lives and is well."

"Thank Heaven. Do with me what you please."

Dr. Chillingworth sprang forward, and addressing the magistrate, he said, --

"Sir, I know this gentleman. He is not one of the rioters, but a dear friend of the family of the Bannerworths. Charles Holland, what in the name of Heaven had become of you so long, and what brought you here at such a

juncture as this?"

"I am faint," said Charles; "I — I only arrived as the crowd did. I had not the strength to fight my way through them, and was compelled to pause until they had dispersed. Can — can you give me water?"

"Here's something better," said one of the soldiers, as he handed a flask to Charles, who partook of some of the contents, which greatly revived him, indeed.

"I am better now," he said. "Thank you kindly. Take me into the house. Good God! why is it made a point of attack? Where are Flora and Henry? Are they all well? And my uncle? Oh! what must you all have thought of my absence! But you cannot have endured a hundredth part of what I have suffered. Let me look once again upon the face of Flora. Take me into the house."

"Release him," said the officer, as he pointed to his head, and looked significantly, as much to say, "Some mad patient of yours, I suppose."

"You are much mistaken, sir," said Dr. Chillingworth; "this gentleman has been cruelly used, I have no doubt. He has, I am inclined to believe, been made the victim, for a time, of the intrigues of that very Sir Francis Varney, whose conduct has been the real cause of all the serious disturbances that have taken place in the country."

"Confound Sir Francis Varney," muttered the officer; "he is enough to set a whole nation by the ears. However, Mr. Magistrate, if you are satisfied that this young man is not one of the rioters, I have, of course, no wish to hold him a prisoner."

"I can take Mr. Chillingworth's word for more than that," said the magistrate.

Charles Holland was accordingly released, and then the doctor, in hurried accents, told him the principal outlines of what had occurred.

"Oh! take me to Flora," he said; "let me not delay another moment in seeking her, and convincing her that I could not have been guilty of the baseness of deserting her."

"Hark you, Mr. Holland, I have quite made up my mind that I will not leave Bannerworth Hall yet; but you can go alone, and easily find them by the directions which I will give you; only let me beg of you not to go abruptly into the presence of Flora. She is in an extremely delicate state of health, and although I do not take upon myself to say that a shock of a pleasurable nature would prove of any paramount bad consequence to her, yet it is as well not to risk it."

"I will be most careful, you may depend."

At this moment there was a loud ringing at the garden bell, and, when it was answered by one of the dragoons, who was ordered to do so by his officer, he came back, escorting no other than Jack Pringle, who had been sent by the admiral to the Hall, but who had solaced himself so much on the road with divers potations, that he did not reach it till now, which was a full hour after the reasonable time in which he ought to have gone the distance.

Jack was not to say dumb, but he had had enough to give him a very jolly sort of feeling of independence, and so he came along quarrelling with the soldier all the way, the latter only laughing and keeping his temper admirably well, under a great deal of provocation.

"Why, you land lubbers," cried Jack, "what do you do here, all of you, I wonder? You are all vamphighers, I'll be bound, every one of you. You mind me of marines, you do, and that's quite enough to turn a proper seaman's stomach, any day in the week."

The soldier only laughed, and brought Jack up to the little group of persons consisting of Dr. Chillingworth, the hangman, Charles Holland, and the officer.

"Why, Jack Pringle," said Dr. Chillingworth, stepping before Charles, so that Jack should not see him, — "why, Jack Pringle, what brings you here?"

"A slight squall, sir, to the nor west. Brought you something to eat."

Jack produced a bottle.

"To drink, you mean?"

"Well, it's all one; only in this here shape you see, it goes down better, I'm thinking, which does make a little difference somehow."

"How is the admiral?"

"Oh, he's as stupid as ever; Lord bless you, he'd be like a ship without a rudder without me, and would go swaying about at the mercy of winds and waves, poor old man. He's bad enough as it is, but if so be I wasn't to give the eye to him as I does, bless my heart if I thinks as he'd be above hatches long. Here's to you all."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

Jack took the cork from the bottle he had with him, and there came from it a stong odour of rum. Then he placed it to his lips, and was enjoying the pleasant gurgle of the liquor down his throat, when Charles stepped up to him, and laying hold of the lower end of the bottle, he dragged it from his mouth, saying, --

"How dare you talk in the way you have of my uncle, you drunken, mutinous rascal, and behind his back too!"

The voice of Charles Holland was as well known to Jack Pringle as that of the admiral, and his intense astonishment at hearing himself so suddenly addressed by one, of whose proximity he had not the least idea, made some of the rum go, what is popularly termed, the wrong way, and nearly choked him.

He reeled back, till he fell over some obstruction, and then down he sat on a flower bed, while his eyes seemed ready to come out of his head.

"Avast heavings," he cried. "Who's that?"

"Come, come," said Charles Holland, "don't pretend you don't know me; I will not have my uncle spoken of in a disrespectful manner by you."

"Well, shiver my timbers, if that ain't our nevey. Why, Charley, my boy, how are you? Here we are in port at last. Won't the old commodore pipe his eye, now. Whew! here's a go. I've found our nevey, after all."

"You found him," said Dr. Chillingworth; "now, that is as great a piece of impudence as ever I heard in all my life. You mean that he has found you, and found you out, too, you drunken fellow. Jack, you get worse and worse every day."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"What, you admit it?"

"Ay, ay, sir. Now Master Charley, I tell you what it is, I shall take you off to your old uncle, you shore-going sneak, and you'll have to report what cruise you've been upon all this while, leaving the ship to look after itself. Lord love you all, if it hadn't been for me I don't know what anybody would have done."

"I only know of the result," said Dr. Chillingworth, "that would ensue, if it were not for you, and that would consist in a great injury to the revenue, in consequence of the much less consumption of rum and other strong liquors."

"I'll be hanged up at the yard if I understands what you mean," said Jack; "as if I ever drunk anything -- I, of all people in the world. I am ashamed of you. You are drunk."

Several of the dragoons had to turn aside to keep themselves from laughing, and the officer himself could not forbear from a smile as he said to the doctor, --

"Sir, you seem to have many acquaintances, and by some means or another they all have an inclination to come here tonight. If, however, you consider that you are bound to remain here from a feeling that the Hall is threatened with any danger, you may dismiss that fear, for I shall leave a picquet here all night."

"No, sir," replied Dr. Chillingworth, "it is not that I fear now, after the manner in which they have been repulsed, any danger to the Hall from the mob; but I have reasons for wishing to be in it or near it for some time to come."

"As you please."

"Charles, do not wait for or accept the guidance of that drunken fellow, but go yourself with a direction which I will write down for you in a leaf of my pocket-book."

"Drunken fellow," exclaimed Jack, who had now scrambled to his feet, "who do you call a drunken fellow?"

"Why you, unquestionably."

"Well, now, that is hard. Come along, nevey; I'll shew you where they all are. I could walk a plank on any deck with any man in the service, I could. Come along, my boy, come along."

"You can accept of him as a guide if you like, of course," said the doctor; "he may be sober enough to conduct you."

"I think he can," said Charles. "Lead on, Jack; but mark me, I shall inform my uncle of this intemperance, as well as of the manner in which you let your tongue wag about him behind his back, unless you promise to reform."

"He is long past all reformation," remarked Dr. Chillingworth; "it is out of the question."

"And I am afraid my uncle will not have courage to attempt such an ungrateful task, when there is so little chance of success." replied Charles Holland, shaking the worthy doctor by the hand. "Farewell, for the present, sir; the next time I see you, I hope we shall both be more pleasantly situated."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"Come along, nevey," interrupted Jack Pringle; "now you've found your way back, the first thing you ought to do, is to report yourself as having come aboard. Follow me, and I'll soon show yer the port where the old hulk's laid hisself up."

Jack walked on first, tolerably steady, if one may take into account his divers deep potations, and Charles Holland, anticipating with delight again looking upon the face of his much loved Flora, followed closely behind him.

We can well imagine the world of delightful thoughts that came crowding upon him when Jack, after a rather long walk, announced that they were now very near the residence of the object of his soul's adoration.

We trust that there is not one of our readers who, for one moment, will suppose that Charles Holland was the sort of man to leave even such a villain and double-faced hypocrite as Marchdale, to starve amid the gloomy ruins where he was immured.

Far from Charles's intentions was any such thing; but he did think that a night passed there, with no other company than his own reflections, would do him a world of good, and was, at all events, no very great modicum of punishment for the rascality with which he had behaved.

Besides, even during that night there were refreshments in the shape of bread and water, such as had been presented to Charles himself, within Marchdale's reach as they had been within his.

That individual now, Charles thought, would have a good opportunity of testing the quality of that kind of food, and of finding out what an extremely light diet it was for a strong man to live upon.

But in the morning it was Charles's intention to take Henry Bannerworth and the admiral with him to the ruins, and then and there release the wretch from his confinement, on condition that he made a full confession of his villainies before those persons.

Oh, how gladly would Marchdale have exchanged the fate which actually befell him for any amount of personal humiliation, always provided that it brought with it a commensurate amount of personal safety.

But that fate was one altogether undreamt of by Charles Holland, and wholly without his control.

It was a fate which would have been his, but for the murderous purpose which had brought Marchdale to the dungeon, and those happy accidents which had enabled Charles to change places with him, and breathe the free, cool, fresh air; while he left his enemy loaded with the same chains that had encumbered his limbs so cruelly, and lying on that same damp dungeon floor, which he thought would be his grave.

We mentioned that as Charles left the ruins, the storm, which had been giving various indications of its coming, seemed to be rapidly approaching.

It was one of these extremely local tempests which expend all their principal fury over a small space of country; and, in this instance, the space seemed to include little more than the river, and the few meadows which immediately surrounded it, and lent it so much of its beauty.

Marchdale soon found that his cries were drowned by the louder voices of the elements. The wailing of the wind among the ancient ruins was much more full of sound than his cries; and, now and then, the full-mouthed thunder filled the air with such a volume of roaring, and awakened so many echoes among the ruins, that, had he possessed the voices of fifty men, he could not have hoped to wage war with it.

And then, although we know that Charles Holland would have encountered death himself, rather than he would have willingly left anything human to expire of hunger in that dungeon, yet Marchdale, judging of others by himself, felt by no means sure of any such thing, and, in his horror of apprehension, fancied that that was just the sort of easy, and pleasant, and complete revenge that it was in Charles Holland's power to take, and just the one which would suggest itself, under the circumstances, to his mind.

Could anything be possibly more full of horror than such a thought? Death, let it come in any shape it may, is yet a most repulsive and unwelcome guest; but, when it comes, so united with all that can add to its terrors, it is enough to drive reason from its throne, and fill the mind with images of absolute horror.

Tired of shrieking, for his parched lips and clogged tongue would scarcely now permit him to utter a sound higher than a whisper, Marchdale lay, listening to the furious storm without, in the last abandonment of despair.

"Oh! what a death is this," he groaned. "Here, alone — all alone — and starvation to creep on me by degrees, sapping life's energies one by one. Already do I feel the dreadful sickening weakness growing on me. Help, oh! help me Heav— — no, no! Dare I call on Heaven to help me? Is there no fiend of darkness who now will bid me a price for a human soul? Is there not one who will do so — not one who will rescue me from the horror that

surrounds me, for Heaven will not? I dare not ask mercy there."

The storm continued louder and louder. The wind, it is true, was nearly hushed, but the roar and the rattle of the echo-awakening thunder fully made up for its cessation, while, now and then, even there, in that underground abode, some sudden reflection of the vivid lightning's light would find its way, lending, for a fleeting moment, sufficient light to Marchdale, wherewith he could see the gloomy place in which he was.

At times he wept, and at times he raved, while ever and anon he made such frantic efforts to free himself from the chains that were around him, that, had they not been strong, he must have succeeded; but, as it was, he only made deep indentations into his flesh, and gave himself much pain.

"Charles Holland!" he shouted; "oh! release me! Varney! Varney! why do you not come to save me? I have toiled for you most unrequitedly -- I have not had my reward. Let it all consist in my release from this dreadful bondage. Help! help! oh, help!"

There was no one to hear him. The storm continued, and now, suddenly, a sudden and a sharper sound than any awakened by the thunder's roar came upon his startled ear, and, in increased agony, he shouted, --

"What is that? oh! what is that? God of heaven, do my fears translate that sound aright? Can it be, oh! can it be, that the ruins which have stood for so many a year are now crumbling down before the storm of to-night?"

The sound came again, and he felt the walls of the dungeon in which he was shake. Now there could be no doubt but that the lightning had struck some part of the building, and so endangered the safety of all that was above ground. For a moment there came across his brain such a rush of agony, that he neither spoke nor moved. Had that dreadful feeling continued much longer, he must have lapsed into insanity; but that amount of mercy -- for mercy it would have been -- was not shown to him. He still felt all the accumulating horrors of his situation, and then, with such shrieks as nothing but a full appreciation of such horrors could have given him strength to utter, he called upon earth, upon heaven, and upon all that was infernal, to save him from his impending doom.

All was in vain. It was an impending doom which nothing but the direct interposition of Heaven could have at all averted; and it was not likely that any such perversion of the regular laws of nature would take place to save such a man as Marchdale.

Again came the crashing sound of falling stones, and he was certain that the old ruins, which had stood for so many hundred years the storm, and the utmost wrath of the elements, was at length yielding, and crumbling down.

What else could he expect but to be engulfed among the fragments -- fragments still weighty and destructive, although in decay. How fearfully now did his horrified imagination take in at one glance, as it were, a panoramic view of all his past life, and how absolutely contemptible, at that moment, appeared all that he had been striving for.

But the walls shake again, and this time the vibration is more fearful than before. There is a tremendous uproar above him -- the roof yields to some superincumbent pressure -- there is one shriek, and Marchdale lies crushed beneath a mass of masonry that it would take men and machinery days to remove from off him.

All is over now. That bold, bad man -- that accomplished hypocrite -- that mendacious, would-be murderer was no more. He lies but a mangled, crushed, and festering corpse.

May his soul find mercy with his God!

The storm, from this moment, seemed to relax in its violence, as if it had accomplished a great purpose, and, consequently, now, need no longer "vex the air with its boisterous presence." Gradually the thunder died away in the distance. The wind no longer blew in blustrous gusts, but, with a gentle murmuring, swept around the ancient pile, as if singing the requiem of the dead that lay beneath -- that dead which mortal eyes were never to look upon.

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## Chapter LXXIV. THE MEETING OF CHARLES AND FLORA.

Charles Holland followed Jack Pringle for some time in silence from Bannerworth Hall; his mind was too full of thought concerning the past to allow him to indulge in much of that kind of conversation in which Jack Pringle might be fully considered to be a proficient.

As for Jack, somehow or another, he had felt his dignity offended in the garden of Bannerworth Hall, and he had made up his mind, as he afterwards stated in his own phraseology, not to speak to nobody till somebody spoke to him.

A growing anxiety, however, to ascertain from one who had seen her lately, how Flora had borne his absence, at length induced Charles Holland to break his self-imposed silence.

"Jack," he said, "you have had the happiness of seeing her lately, tell me, does Flora Bannerworth look as she was wont to look, or have all the roses faded from her cheeks?"

"Why, as for the roses," said Jack, "I'm blowed if I can tell, and seeing as how she don't look at me much, I doesn't know nothing about her; I can tell you something, though, about the old admiral that will make you open your eyes."

"Indeed, Jack, and what may that be?"

"Why, he's took to drink, and gets groggy about every day of his life, and the most singular thing is, that when that's the case with the old man, he says it's me."

"Indeed, Jack! taken to drinking has my poor old uncle, from grief, I suppose, Jack at my disappearance."

"No, I don't think it's grief," said Jack; "it strikes me it's rum-and-water."

"Alas, alas, I never could have imagined he could have fallen into that habit of yours; he always seemed so far from anything of this kind."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Jack, "I know'd you'd be astonished. It will be the death of him, that's my opinion; and the idea, you know, Master Charles, of accusing me when he gets drunk himself."

"I believe that is a common delusion of intemperate persons," said Charles.

"Is it, sir; well, it's a very awkward thing, because you know, sir, as well as most people, that I'm not the fellow to take a drop too much."

"I cannot say, Jack, that I know so much, for I have certainly heard my uncle accuse you of intoxication."

"Lor', sir, that was all just on account of his trying it hisself; he was a thinking on it then, and wanted to see how I'd take it."

"But tell me of Flora; are you quite certain that she has had no more alarms from Varney?"

"What, that ere vampyre fellow? not a bit of it, your honour. Lor' bless you, he must have found out by some means or another that I was on the look out, and that did the business. He'll never come near Miss Flora again, I'll be bound, though to be sure we moved away from the Hall on account of him; but not that I saw the good of cruising out of one's own latitude, but somehow or another you see the doctor and the admiral got it into their heads to establish a sort of blockade, and the idea of the thing was to sail away in the night quite quiet, and after that take up a position that would come across the enemy on the larboard tack, if so be as he made his appearance."

"Oh, you allude to watching the Hall, I presume?"

"Ay, ay, sir, just so; but would you believe it, Master Charlie, the admiral and the doctor got so blessed drunk that I could do nothing with 'em."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, they did indeed, and made all kinds of queer mistakes, so that the end of all that was, that the vampyre did come; but he got away again."

"He did come then; Sir Francis Varney came again after the house was presumed to be deserted?"

"He did, sir."

"That is very strange; what on earth could have been his object? This affair is most inexplicably mysterious. I hope the distance, Jack, is not far that you're taking me, for I'm incapable of enduring much fatigue."

"Not a great way, your honour; keep two points to the westward, and sail straight on; we'll soon come to port."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

My eye, won't there be a squall when you get in. I expect as Miss Flora will drop down as dead as a herring, for she doesn't think you're above the hatches."

"A good thought, Jack; my sudden appearance may produce alarm. When we reach the place of abode of the Bannerworths, you shall precede me, and prepare them in some measure for my reception."

"Very good, sir; do you see that there little white cottage a-head, there in the offing?"

"Yes, yes; is that the place?"

"Yes, your honour, that's the port to which we are bound."

"Well, then, Jack, you hasten a-head, and see Miss Flora, and be sure you prepare her gently and by degrees, you know, Jack, for my appearance, so that she shall not be alarmed."

"Ay, ay, sir, I understand; you wait here, and I'll go and do it; there would be a squall if you were to make your appearance, sir, all at once. She looks upon you as safely lodged in Davy's locker; she minds me, all the world, of a girl I knew at Portsmouth, called Bet Bumplush. She was one of your delicate little creatures as don't live long in this here world; no, blow me; when I came home from a eighteen months' cruise, once I seed her drinking rum out of a quart pot, so I says, 'Hilloa, what cheer?' And only to think now of the wonderful effect that there had upon her; with that very pot she gives the fellow as was standing treat a knobber on the head as lasted him three weeks. She was too good for this here world, she was, and too rummantic. 'Go to blazes,' she says to him, 'here's Jack Pringle come home.'"

"Very romantic indeed," said Charles.

"Yes, I believe you, sir; and that puts me in mind of Miss Flora and you."

"An extremely flattering comparison. Of course I feel much obliged."

"Oh, don't name it, sir. The British tar as can't oblige a feller-cretor is unworthy to tread the quarter-deck, or to bear a hand to the distress of a woman."

"Very well," said Charles. "Now, as we are here, precede me, if you please, and let me beg of you to be especially cautious in your manner of announcing me."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Jack; and away he walked towards the cottage, leaving Charles some distance behind.

Flora and the admiral were sitting together conversing. The old man, who loved her as if she had been a child of his own, was endeavouring, to the extent of his ability, to assuage the anguish of her thoughts, which at that moment chanced to be bent upon Charles Holland.

"Never mind, my dear," he said; "he'll turn up some of these days, and when he does, I sha'n't forget to tell him that it was you who stood out for his honesty and truth, when every one else was against him, including myself, an old wretch that I was."

"Oh, sir, how could you for one moment believe that those letters could have been written by your nephew Charles? They carried, sir, upon the face of them their own refutation; and I'm only surprised that for one instant you, or any one who knew him, could have believed him capable of writing them."

"Avast, there," said the admiral; "that'll do. I own you got the better of the old sailor there. I think you and Jack Pringle were the only two persons who stood out from the first."

"Then I honour Jack for doing so."

"And here he is," said the admiral, "and you'd better tell him. The mutinous rascal! he wants all the honour he can get, as a set-off against his drunkenness and other bad habits."

Jack walked into the room, looked about him in silence for a moment, thrust his hands in his breeches pockets, and gave a long whistle.

"What's the matter now?" said the admiral.

"D -- me, if Charles Holland ain't outside, and I've come to prepare you for the blessed shock," said Jack. "Don't faint either of you, because I'm only going to let you know it by degrees, you know."

A shriek burst from Flora's lips, and she sprung to the door of the apartment.

"What!" cried the admiral, "my nephew -- my nephew Charles! Jack, you rascal, if you're joking, it's the last joke you shall make in this world; and if it's true, I -- I -- I'm an old fool, that's all."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Jack; "didn't you know that afore?"

"Charles -- Charles!" cried Flora. He heard the voice. Her name escaped his lips, and rang with a pleasant echo through the house.

In another moment he was in the room, and had clasped her to his breast.

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"My own — my beautiful — my true!"

"Charles, dear Charles!"

"Oh, Flora, what have I not endured since last we met; but this repays me — more than repays me for all."

"What is the past now," cried Flora — "what are all its miseries placed against this happy, happy moment?"

"D — me, nobody thinks of me," said the admiral.

"My dear uncle," said Charles, looking over Flora's shoulder, as he still held her in his arms, "is that you?"

"Yes, yes, swab, it is me, and you know it; but give us your five, you mutinous vagabond; and I tell you what, I'll do you the greatest favour I've had an opportunity of doing you some time — I'll leave you alone, you dog. Come along, Jack."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Jack; and away they went out of the apartment.

And now those two loving hearts were alone — they who had been so long separated by malignant destiny, once again were heart to heart, looking into each other's faces with all the beaming tenderness of an affection of the truest, holiest character.

The admiral had done a favour to them both to leave them alone, although we much doubt whether his presence or the presence of the whole world would have had the effect of controlling one generous sentiment of noble feeling.

They would have forgotten everything but that they were together, and that once again each looked into the other's eyes with all the tenderness of a love purer and higher than ordinarily belongs to mortal affections.

Language was weak to give utterance to the full gust of happy feelings that now were theirs. It was ecstasy enough to feel, to know that the evil fortune which had so long separated them, depriving each existence of its sunniest aspect, was over. It was enough for Charles Holland to feel that she loved him still. It was enough for Flora Bannerworth to know, as she looked into his beaming countenance, that that love was not misplaced, but was met by feelings such as she herself would have dictated to be the inhabitants of the of the heart of him whom she would have chosen from the mass of mankind as her own.

"Flora — dear Flora," said Charles, "and you have never doubted me?"

"I've never doubted, Charles, Heaven or you. To doubt one would have been to doubt both."

"Generous and best of girls, what must you have thought of my enforced absence! Oh! Flora, I was unjust enough to your truth to make my greatest pang the thought that you might doubt me, and cast me from your heart for ever."

"Ah! Charles, you ought to have known me better. I stood amid sore temptation to do so much. There were those who would have urged me on to think that you had cast me from your heart for ever. There were those ready and willing to place the worst construction upon your conduct, and with a devilish ingenuity to strive to make me participate in such a feeling; but, no, Charles, no — I loved you, and I trusted you, and I could not so far belie my own judgment as to tell you other than what you always seemed to my young fancy."

"And you are right, my Flora, right; and is it not a glorious triumph to see that love — that sentiment of passion — has enabled you to have so enduring and so noble a confidence in aught human?"

"Ay, Charles, it is the sentiment of passion, for our love has been more a sentiment than a passion. I would fain think that we had loved each other with an affection not usually known, appreciated, or understood, and so, in the vanity of my best affections, I would strive to think them something exclusive, and beyond the common feelings of humanity."

"And you are right, my Flora; such love as yours is the exception; there may be preferences, there may be passions, and there may be sentiments, but never, never, surely was there a heart like yours."

"Nay, Charles, now you speak from a too poetical fancy; but is it possible that I have had you here so long, with your hand clasped in mine, and asked you not the causes of your absence?"

"Oh, Flora, I have suffered much — much physically, but more mentally. It was the thought of you that was at once the bane and the antidote of my existence."

"Indeed, Charles! Did I present myself in such contradictory colours to you?"

"Yes, dearest, as thus. When I thought of you, sometimes, in the deep seclusion of a dungeon, that thought almost goaded me to madness, because it brought with it the conviction — a conviction peculiar to a lover — that none could so effectually stand between you and all evil as myself."

"Yes, yes, Charles; most true."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"It seemed to me as if all the world in arms could not have protected you so well as this one heart, clad in the triple steel of its affections, could have shielded you from evil."

"Ay, Charles; and then I was the bane of your existence, because I filled you with apprehension?"

"For a time, dearest; and then came the antidote; for when exhausted alike in mind and body -- when lying helpless, with chains upon my limbs -- when expecting death at every visit of those who had dragged me from light and from liberty, and from love; it was but the thought of thy beauty and thy affection that nerved me, and gave me a hope even amidst the cruellest disasters."

"And then -- and then, Charles?"

"You were my blessing, as you have ever been -- as you are, and as you will ever be -- my own Flora, my beautiful -- my true!"

We won't go so far as to say it is the fact; but, from a series of singular sounds which reached even to the passage of the cottage, we have our own private opinion to the effect that Charles began kissing Flora at the top of her forehead, and never stopped, somehow or another, till he got down to her chin -- no, not her chin -- her sweet lips -- he could not get past them. Perhaps it was wrong; but we can't help it -- we are faithful chroniclers. Reader, if you be of the sterner sex, what would you have done? -- if of the gentler, what would you have permitted?

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## Chapter LXXV. MUTUAL EXPLANATIONS, AND THE VISIT TO THE RUINS.

During the next hour, Charles informed Flora of the whole particulars of his forcible abduction; and to his surprise he heard, of course, for the first time, of those letters, purporting to be written by him, which endeavoured to give so bad an aspect to the fact of his sudden disappearance from Bannerworth Hall.

Flora would insist upon the admiral, Henry, and the rest of the family, hearing all that Charles had to relate concerning Mr. Marchdale; for well she knew that her mother, from early associations, was so far impressed in the favour of that hypocritical personage, that nothing but damning facts, much to his prejudice, would suffice to convince her of the character he really was.

But she was open to conviction, and when she really found what a villain she had cherished and given her confidence to, she shed abundance of tears, and blamed herself exceedingly as the cause of some of the misfortunes which had fallen upon her children.

"Very good," said the admiral; "I ain't surprised a bit. I knew he was a vagabond from the first time I clapped eyes upon him. There was a down look about the fellow's figure—head that I didn't like, and he hanged to him, but I never thought he would have gone the length he has done. And so you say you've got him safe in the ruins, Charles?"

"I have, indeed, uncle."

"And then there let him remain, and a good place, too, for him."

"No, uncle, no. I'm sure you speak without thought. I intend to release him in a few hours, when I have rested from my fatigues. He could not come to any harm if he were to go without food entirely for the time that I leave him; but even that he will not do, for there is bread and water in the dungeon."

"Bread and water! that's too good for him. But, however, Charles, when you go to let him out, I'll go with you, just to tell him what I think of him, the vagabond."

"He must suffer amazingly, for no doubt knowing well, as he does, his own infamous intentions, he will consider that if I were to leave him to starve to death, I should be but retailing upon him the injuries he would have inflicted upon me."

"The worst of it is," said the admiral, "I can't think what to do with him."

"Do nothing, uncle, but just let him go; it will be a sufficient punishment for such a man to feel that, instead of succeeding in his designs, he has only brought upon himself the bitterest contempt of those whom he would fain have injured. I can have no desire for revenge on such a man as Marchdale."

"You are right, Charles," said Flora; "let him go, and let him go with a feeling that he has acquired the contempt of those whose best opinions might have been his for a far less amount of trouble than he has taken to acquire their worst."

Excitement had kept up Charles to this point, but now, when he arose and expressed his intention of going to the ruins, for the purpose of releasing Marchdale, he exhibited such unequivocal symptoms of exhaustion and fatigue that neither his uncle nor Flora would permit him to go, so, in deference to them, he gave up the point, and commissioned the admiral and Jack, with Henry, to proceed to the place, and give the villain his freedom; little suspecting what had occurred since he had himself left the neighbourhood of those ruins.

Of course Charles Holland couldn't be at all accountable for the work of the elements, and it was not for him to imagine that when he left Marchdale in the dungeon that so awful a catastrophe as that we have recorded to the reader was to ensue.

The distance to the ruins was not so great from this cottage even as it was from Bannerworth Hall, provided those who went knew the most direct and best road to take; so that the admiral was not gone above a couple of hours, and when he returned he sat down and looked at Charles with such a peculiar expression, that the latter could not for the life of him tell what to make of it.

"Something has happened, uncle," he said, "I am certain; tell me at once what it is."

"Oh! nothing, nothing," said the admiral, "of any importance."

"Is that what you call your feelings?" said Jack Pringle. "Can't you tell him as there came on a squall last night, and the ruins have come in with a dab upon old Marchdale, crushing his guts, so that we smelt him as soon

as we got nigh at hand?"

"Good God!" said Charles, "has such a catastrophe occurred?"

"Yes, Charles, that's just about the catastrophe that has occurred. He's dead; and rum enough it is that it should happen on the very night that you escaped."

"Rum!" said Jack, suddenly; "my eye, who mentions rum? What a singular sort of liquor rum must be. I heard of a chap as used to be fond of it once on board a ship; I wonder if there's any in the house."

"No!" said the admiral; "but there's a fine pump of spring water outside if you feel a little thirsty, Jack; and I'll engage it shall do you more good than all the rum in the world."

"Uncle," said Charles, "I'm glad to hear you make that observation."

"What for?"

"Why, to deal candidly with you, uncle, Jack informed me that you had lately taken quite a predilection for drinking."

"Me!" cried the admiral; "why the infernal rascal, I've had to threaten him with his discharge a dozen times, at least, on that very ground, and no other."

"There's somebody calling me," said Jack. "I'm a coming! I'm a coming!" and so he bolted out of the room, just in time to escape an inkstand, which the admiral caught up and flung after him.

"I'll strike that rascal off the ship's books this very day," muttered Admiral Bell. "The drunken vagabond, to pretend that I take anything, when all the while it's himself!"

"Well, well, I ought certainly to have suspected the quarter from whence the intelligence came; but he told it to me so circumstantially, and with such an apparent feeling of regret for the weakness into which he said you had fallen, that I really thought there might be some truth in it."

"The rascal! I've done with him from this moment; I have put up with too much from him for years past."

"I think now that you have given him a great deal of liberty, and that, with a great deal more he has taken, makes up an amount which you find it difficult to endure."

"And I won't endure it."

"Let me talk to him, and I dare say I shall be able to convince him that he goes too far, and when he finds that such is the case he will mend."

"Speak to him, if you like, but I have done with such a mutinous rascal, I have. You can take him into your service, if you like, till you get tired of him; and that won't be very long."

"Well, well we shall see. Jack will apologise to you I have no doubt; and then I shall intercede for him, and advise you to give him another trial."

"If you get him into the apology, then there's no doubt about me giving him another trial. But I know him too well for that; he's as obstinate as a mule, he is, and you won't get a civil word out of him; but never mind that, now. I tell you what, Master Charley, it will take a good lot of roast beef to get up your good looks again."

"It will, indeed, uncle; and I require, now, rest, for I am thoroughly exhausted. The great privations I have undergone, and the amount of mental excitement which I have experienced, in consequence of the sudden and unexpected release from a fearful confinement, have greatly weakened all my energies. A few hours' sleep will make quite a different being of me."

"Well, my boy, you know best," returned the admiral; "and I'll take care, if you sleep till to-morrow, that you sha'n't be disturbed. So now be off to bed at once."

The young man shook his uncle's hand in a cordial manner, and then repaired to the apartment which had been provided for him.

Charles Holland did, indeed, stand in need of repose; and for the first time now for many days he laid down with serenity at his heart, and slept for many hours. And was there not now a great and a happy change in Flora Bannerworth! As if by magic, in a few short hours, much of the bloom of her before-fading beauty returned to her. Her step again recovered its springy lightness; again she smiled upon her mother, and suffered herself to talk of a happy future; for the dread even of the vampyre's visitations had faded into comparative insignificance against the heart's deep dejection which had come over her at the thought that Charles Holland must surely be murdered, or he would have contrived to come to her.

And what a glorious recompense she had now for the trusting confidence with which she had clung to a conviction of his truth! Was it not great, now, to feel that when he was condemned by others, and when strong

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and unimpeachable evidence seemed to be against him, she had clung to him and declared her faith in his honour, and wept for him instead of condemning?

Yes, Flora; you were of that order of noble minds that, where once confidence is given, give it fully and completely, and will not harbour a suspicion of the faith of the loved one, a happy disposition when verified, as in this instance, by an answering truthfulness.

But when such a heart trusts not with judgment — when that pure, exalted, and noble confidence is given to an object unworthy of it — then comes, indeed, the most fearful of all mental struggles; and if the fond heart, that has hugged to its inmost core so worthless a treasure, do not break in the effort to discard it, we may well be surprised at the amount of fortitude that has endured so much.

Although the admiral had said but little concerning the fearful end Marchdale had come to, it really did make some impression upon him; and, much as he held in abhorrence the villany of Marchdale's conduct, he would gladly in his heart have averted the fate from him that he had brought upon himself.

On the road to the ruins, he calculated upon taking a different kind of vengeance.

When they had got some distance from the cottage, Admiral Bell made a proposal to Henry to be his second while he fought Marchdale, but Henry would not hear of it for a moment.

"My dear sir," he said, "could I, do you think, stand by and see a valuable, a revered, and a respected life like yours exposed to any hazard merely upon the chance of punishing a villain? No, no; Marchdale is too base now to be met in honourable encounter. If he is dealt with in any way let it be by the laws."

This was reasonable enough, and after some argument the admiral coincided in it, and then they began to wonder how, without Charles, they should be able to get an entrance to the dungeons, for it had been his intention originally, had he not felt so fatigued, to go with them.

As soon, however, as they got tolerably near to the ruins, they saw what had happened. Neither spoke, but they quickened their pace, and soon stood close to the mass of stone-work which now had assumed so different a shape to what it had a few short hours before.

It needed little examination to let them feel certain that whoever might have been in any of the underground dungeons must have been crushed to death.

"Heaven have mercy upon his soul!" said Henry.

"Amen!" said the admiral.

They both turned away, and for some time they neither of them spoke, for their thoughts were full of reflection upon the horrible death which Marchdale must have endured. At length the admiral said —

"Shall we tell this or not?"

"Tell it at once," said Henry; "let us have no secrets."

"Good. Then I will not make one you may depend. I only wish that while he was about it, Charley could have popped that rascal Varney as well in the dungeon, and then there would have been an end and a good riddance of them both."

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## Chapter LXXVI. THE SECOND NIGHT-WATCH OF MR. CHILLINGWORTH AT THE HALL.

The military party in the morning left Bannerworth Hall, and the old place resumed its wonted quiet. But Dr. Chillingworth found it difficult to get rid of his old friend, the hangman, who seemed quite disposed to share his watch with him.

The doctor, without being at all accused of being a prejudiced man, might well object to the continued companionship of one, who, according to his own account, was decidedly no better than he should be, if he were half so good.

Moreover, it materially interfered with the proceedings of our medical friend, whose object was to watch the vampyre with all imaginable quietness and secrecy, in the event of his again visiting Bannerworth Hall.

"Sir," he said, to the hangman, "now that you have so obligingly related to me your melancholy history, I will not detain you."

"Oh, you are not detaining me."

"Yes, but I shall probably remain here for a considerable time."

"I have nothing to do; and one place is about the same as another to me."

"Well, then, if I must speak plainly, allow me to say, that as I came here upon a very important and special errand, I desire most particularly to be left alone. Do you understand me now?"

"Oh! ah! — I understand; you want me to go?"

"Just so."

"Well, then, Dr. Chillingworth, allow me to tell you, I have come here on a very special errand likewise."

"You have?"

"I have. I have been putting one circumstance to another, and drawing a variety of conclusions from a variety of facts, so that I have come to what I consider an important resolve, namely, to have a good look at Bannerworth Hall, and if I continue to like it as well as I do now, I should like to make the Bannerworth family an offer for the purchase of it."

"The devil you would! Why all the world seems mad upon the project of buying this old building, which really is getting into such a state of dilapidation, that it cannot last many years longer."

"It is my fancy."

"No, no; there is something more in this than meets the eye. The same reason, be it what may, that has induced Varney the vampyre to become so desirous of possessing the Hall, actuates you."

"Possibly."

"And what is that reason? You may as well be candid with me."

"Yes, I will, and am. I like the picturesque aspect of the place."

"No, you know that that is a disingenuous answer, that you know well. It is not the aspect of the old Hall that has charms for you. But I feel, only from your conduct, more than ever convinced, that some plot is going on, having the accomplishment of some great object as its climax, a something of which you have guessed."

"How much you are mistaken!"

"No, I am certain I am right; and I shall immediately advise the Bannerworth family to return, and to take up their abode again here, in order to put an end to the hopes which you, or Varney, or any one else may have, of getting possession of the place."

"If you were a man," said the hangman, "who cared a little more for yourself, and a little less for others, I would make a confidant of you."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean, candidly, that you are not selfish enough to be entitled to my confidence."

"That is a strange reason for withholding confidence from any man."

"It is a strange reason; but, in this case, a most abundantly true one. I cannot tell you what I would tell you, because I cannot make the agreement with you that I would fain make."

"You talk in riddles."



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"To explain which, then, would be to tell my secret."

Dr. Chillingworth was, evidently, much annoyed, and yet he was in an extremely helpless condition; for as to forcing the hangman to leave the Hall, if he did not feel disposed to do so, that was completely out of the question, and could not be done. In the first place, he was a much more powerful man than the doctor, and in the second, it was quite contrary to all Mr. Chillingworth's habits, to engage in anything like personal warfare.

He could only, therefore, look his vexation, and say, —

"If you are determined upon remaining, I cannot help it; but, when some one, as there assuredly will, comes from the Bannerworths, here, to me, or I shall be under the necessity of stating candidly that you are intruding."

"Very good. As the morning air is keen, and as we now are not likely to be as good company to each other as we were, I shall go inside the house."

This was a proposition which the doctor did not like, but he was compelled to submit to it; and he saw, with feelings of uneasiness, the hangman make his way into the Hall by one of the windows.

Then Dr. Chillingworth sat down to think. Much he wondered what could be the secret of the great desire which Varney, Marchdale, and even this man had, all of them to be possessors of the old Hall.

That there was some powerful incentive he felt convinced, and he longed for some conversation with the Bannerworths, or with Admiral Bell, in order that he might state what had now taken place. That some one would soon come to him, in order to bring fresh provisions for the day, he was certain, and all he could do, in the interim, was, to listen to what the hangman was about in the Hall.

Not a sound, for a considerable time, disturbed the intense stillness of the place; but, now, suddenly, Mr. Chillingworth thought he heard a hammering, as if some one was at work in one of the rooms of the Hall.

"What can be the meaning of that?" he said, and he was about to proceed at once to the interior of the building, through the same window which had enabled the hangman to gain admittance, when he heard his own name pronounced by some one at the back of the garden fence, and upon casting his eyes in that direction, he, to his great relief, saw the admiral and Henry Bannerworth.

"Come round to the gate," said the doctor. "I am more glad to see you than I can tell you just now. Do not make more noise than you can help; but, come round to the gate at once."

They obeyed the injunction with alacrity, and when the doctor had admitted them, the admiral said, eagerly,

—

"You don't mean to tell us that he is here?"

"No, no, not Varney; but he is not the only one who has taken a great affection for Bannerworth Hall; you may have another tenant for it, and I believe at any price you like to name."

"Indeed!"

"Hush! creep along close to the house, and then you will not be seen. There! do you hear that noise in the hall?"

"Why it sounds," said the admiral, "like the ship's carpenter at work."

"It does, indeed, sound like a carpenter; it's only the new tenant making, I dare say, some repairs."

"D — n his impudence!"

"Why, it certainly does look like a very cool proceeding, I must admit."

"Who, and what is he?"

"Who he is now, I cannot tell you, but he was once the hangman of London, at a time when I was practising in the metropolis, and so I became acquainted with him. He knows Sir Francis Varney, and, if I mistake not, has found out the cause of that mysterious personage's great attachment to Bannerworth Hall, and has found the reasons so cogent, that he has got up an affection for it himself."

"To me," said Henry, "all this is as incomprehensible as anything can possibly be. What on earth does it all mean?"

"My dear Henry," said the doctor, "will you be ruled by me?"

"I will be ruled by any one whom I know I can trust; for I am like a man groping his way in the dark."

"Then allow this gentleman who is carpentering away so pleasantly within the house, to do so to his heart's content, but don't let him leave it. Show yourselves now in the garden, he has sufficient prudence to know that three constitute rather fearful odds against one, and so he will be careful, and remain where he is. If he should come out, we need not let him go until we thoroughly ascertain what he has been about."

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"You shall command the squadron, doctor," said the admiral, "and have it all your own way, you know, so here goes! Come along, Henry, and let's show ourselves; we are both armed too!"

They walked out into the centre of the garden, and they were soon convinced that the hangman saw them, for a face appeared at the window, and was as quickly withdrawn again.

"There," said the doctor, "now he knows he is a prisoner, and we may as well place ourselves in some position which commands a good view of the house, as well as of the garden gate, and so see if we cannot starve him out, though we may be starved out ourselves."

"Not at all!" said Admiral Bell, producing from his ample pockets various parcels, — "we came to bring you ample supplies."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; we have been as far as the ruins."

"Oh, to release Marchdale. Charles told me how the villain had fallen into the trap he had laid for him."

"He has, indeed, fallen into the trap, and it's one he won't easily get out of again. He's dead."

"Dead! — dead!"

"Yes; in the storm of last night the ruins have fallen, and he is by this time as flat as a pancake."

"Good God! and yet it is but a just retribution upon him. He would have assassinated poor Charles Holland in the cruelest and most cold-blooded manner, and, however we may shudder at the manner of his death, we cannot regret it."

"Except that he has escaped your friend the hangman," said the admiral.

"Don't call him my friend, if you please," said Dr. Chillingworth, "but, hark how he is working away, as if he really intended to carry the house away piece by piece, as opportunity may serve, if you will not let it to him altogether, just as it stands."

"Confound him! he is evidently working on his own account," said the admiral, "or he would not be half so industrious."

There was, indeed, a tremendous amount of hammering and noise, of one sort and another, from the house, and it was quite clear that the hangman was too heart and soul in his work, whatever may have been the object of it, to care who was listening to him, or to what conjecture he gave rise.

He thought probably that he could but be stopped in what he was about, and, until he was so, that he might as well go on.

And on he went, with a vengeance, vexing the admiral terribly, who proposed so repeatedly to go into the house and insist upon knowing what he was about, that his wishes were upon the point of being conceded to by Henry, although they were combatted by the doctor, when, from the window at which he had entered, out stepped the hangman.

"Good morning, gentlemen! good morning," he said, and he moved towards the garden gate. "I will not trouble you any longer. Good morning!"

"Not so fast," said the admiral, "or we may bring you up with a round turn, and I never miss my mark when I can see it, and I shall not let it get out of sight, you may depend."

He drew a pistol from his pocket, as he spoke, and pointed it at the hangman, who, thereupon, paused and said: —

"What! am I not to be permitted to go in peace? Why it was but a short time since the doctor was quarrelling with me because I did not go, and now it seems that I am to be shot if I do."

"Yes," said the admiral, "that's it."

"Well! but, — "

"You dare," said he, "stir another inch towards the gate, and you are a dead man!"

The hangman hesitated a moment, and looked at Admiral Bell; apparently the result of the scrutiny was, that he would keep his word, for he suddenly turned and dived in at the window again without saying another word.

"Well; you have certainly stopped him from leaving," said Henry; "but what's to be done now?"

"Let him be, let him be," said the doctor; "he must come out again, for there are no provisions in the place, and he will be starved out."

"Hush! what is that?" said Henry.

There was a very gentle ring at the bell which hung over the garden gate.

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"That's an experiment, now, I'll be bound," said the doctor, "to ascertain if any one is here; let us hide ourselves, and take no notice."

The ring in a few moments was repeated, and the three confederates hid themselves effectually behind some thick laurel bushes and awaited with expectation what might next ensue.

Not long had they occupied their place of concealment, before they heard a heavy fall upon the gravelled pathway, immediately within the gate, as if some one had clambered to the top from the outside, and then jumped down.

That this was the case the sound of footsteps soon convinced them, and to their surprise as well as satisfaction, they saw through the interstices of the laurel bush behind which they were concealed, no less a personage than Sir Francis Varney himself.

"It is Varney," said Henry.

"Yes, yes," whispered the doctor. "Let him be, do not move for any consideration, for the first time let him do just what he likes."

"D -- n the fellow!" said the admiral; "there are some points about him that I like, after all, and he's quite an angel compared to that rascal Marchdale."

"He is, -- he saved Charles."

"He did, and not if I know it shall any harm come to him, unless he were terribly to provoke it by becoming himself the assailant."

"How sad he looks!"

"Hush! he comes nearer; it is not safe to talk. Look at him."

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## Chapter LXXVII. VARNEY IN THE GARDEN. -- THE COMMUNICATION OF DR. CHILLINGWORTH TO THE ADMIRAL AND HENRY.

Kind reader, it was indeed Varney who had clambered over the garden wall, and thus made his way into the garden of Bannerworth Hall; and what filled those who looked at him with the most surprise was, that he did not seem in any particular way to make a secret of his presence, but walked on with an air of boldness which either arose from a feeling of absolute impunity, from his thinking there was no one there, or from an audacity which none but he could have compassed.

As for the little party that was there assembled, and who looked upon him, they seemed thunderstricken by his presence; and Henry, probably, as well as the admiral, would have burst out into some sudden exclamation, had they not been restrained by Dr. Chillingworth, who, suspecting that they might in some way give an alarm, hastened to speak first, saying in a whisper, --

"For Heaven's sake, be still; fortune, you see, favours us most strangely. Leave Varney alone. You have no other mode whatever of discovering what he really wants at Bannerworth Hall."

"I am glad you have spoken," said Henry, as he drew a long breath. "If you had not, I feel convinced that in another moment I should have rushed forward and confronted this man who has been the very bane of my life."

"And so should I," said the admiral; "although I protest against any harm being done to him, on account of some sort of good feeling that he has displayed, after all, in releasing Charles from that dungeon in which Marchdale has perished."

"At the moment," said Henry, "I had forgotten that; but I will own that his conduct has been tinctured by a strange and wild kind of generosity at times, which would seem to bespeak, at the bottom of his heart, some good feelings, the impulses of which were only quenched by circumstances."

"That is my firm impression of him, I can assure you," said Dr. Chillingworth.

They watched Varney now from the leafy covert in which they were situated, and, indeed, had they been less effectually concealed, it did not seem likely that the much dreaded vampyre would have perceived them; for not only did he make no effort at concealment himself, but he took no pains to see if any one was watching him in his progress to the house.

His footsteps were more rapid than they usually were, and there was altogether an air and manner about him, as if he were moved to some purpose which of itself was sufficiently important to submerge in its consequences all ordinary risks and all ordinary cautions.

He tried several windows of the house along that terrace of which we have more than once had occasion to speak, before he found one that opened; but at length he did succeed, and stepped at once into the Hall, leaving those, who now for some moments in silence had regarded his movements, to lose themselves in a fearful sea of conjecture as to what could possibly be his object.

"At all events," said the admiral, "I'm glad we are here. If the vampyre should have a fight with that other fellow, that we heard doing such a lot of carpentering work in the house, we ought, I think, to see fair play."

"I, for one," said the doctor, "would not like to stand by and see the vampyre murdered; but I am inclined to think he is a good match for any mortal opponent."

"You may depend he is," said Henry. "But how long, doctor, do you purpose that we should wait here in such a state of suspense as to what is going on within the house?"

"I hope not long; but that something will occur to make us have food for action. Hark! what is that?"

There was a loud crash within the building, as of broken glass. It sounded as if some window had been completely dashed in; but although they looked carefully over the front of the building, they could see no evidences of such a thing having happened, and were compelled, consequently, to come to the opinion that Varney and the other man must have met in one of the back rooms, and that the crash of glass had arisen from some personal conflict in which they had engaged.

"I cannot stand this," said Henry.

"Nay, nay," said the doctor; "be still, and I will tell you something, than which there can be no more fitting time than this to reveal it."

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"Refers it to the vampyre?"

"It does — it does."

"Be brief, then; I am in an agony of impatience."

"It is a circumstance concerning which I can be brief; for, horrible as it is, I have no wish to dress it in any adventitious colours. Sir Francis Varney, although under another name, is an old acquaintance of mine."

"Acquaintance!" said Henry.

"Why, you don't mean to say you are a vampyre?" said the admiral; "or that he has ever visited you?"

"No; but I knew him. From the first moment that I looked upon him in this neighbourhood, I thought I knew him; but the circumstance which induced me to think so was of so terrific a character, that I made some efforts to chase it from my mind. It has, however, grown upon me day by day, and, lately, I have had proof sufficient to convince me of his identity with one whom I first saw under most singular circumstances of romance."

"Say on, — you are agitated."

"I am, indeed. This revelation has several times, within the last few days, trembled on my lips, but now you shall have it; because you ought to know all that it is possible for me to tell you of him who has caused you so serious an amount of disturbance."

"You awaken, doctor," said Henry, "all my interest."

"And mine, too," remarked the admiral. "What can it be all about? and where, doctor, did you first see this Varney the vampyre?"

"In his coffin."

Both the admiral and Henry gave starts of surprise as, with one accord, they exclaimed, —

"Did you say coffin?"

"Yes; I tell you, on my word of honour, that the first time in my life I saw ever Sir Francis Varney, was in his coffin."

"Then he is a vampyre, and there can be no mistake," said the admiral.

"Go on, I pray you, doctor, go on," said Henry, anxiously.

"I will. The reason why he became the inhabitant of a coffin was simply this: — he had been hanged, — executed at the Old Bailey, in London, before ever I set eyes upon that strange countenance of his. You know that I was practising surgery at the London schools some years ago, and that, consequently as I commenced the profession rather late in life, I was extremely anxious to do the most I could in a very short space of time."

"Yes — yes."

"Arrived, then, with plenty of resources, which I did not, as the young men who affected to be studying in the same classes as myself, spend in the pursuit of what they considered life in London, I was indefatigable in my professional labours, and there was nothing connected with them which I did not try to accomplish.

"At that period, the difficulty of getting a subject for anatomization was very great, and all sorts of schemes had to be put into requisition to accomplish so desirable, and, indeed, absolutely necessary a purpose.

"I became acquainted with the man who, I have told you, is in the Hall, at present, and who then filled the unenviable post of public executioner. It so happened too, that I had read a learned treatise, by a Frenchman, who had made a vast number of experiments with galvanic and other apparatus, upon persons who had come to death in different ways, and, in one case, he asserted that he had actually recovered a man who had been hanged, and he had lived five weeks afterwards.

"Young as I then was, in comparison to what I am now, in my profession, this inflamed my imagination, and nothing seemed to me so desirable as getting hold of some one who had only recently been put to death, for the purpose of trying what I could do in the way of attempting a resuscitation of the subject. It was precisely for this reason that I sought out the public executioner, and made his acquaintance, whom every one else shunned, because I thought he might assist me by handing over to me the body of some condemned and executed man, upon whom I could try my skill.

"I broached the subject to him, and found him not averse. He said, that if I would come forward and claim, as next of kin, the body of the criminal who was to be executed the first time, from that period, that he could give me a hint that I should have no real next of kin opponents, he would throw every facility in my way, and allow the body to be removed to his house.

"This was just what I wanted; and, I believe, I waited with impatience for some poor wretch to be hurried to

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his last account by the hands of my friend, the public executioner.

"At length a circumstance occurred which favoured my designs most effectually, — a man was apprehended for a highway robbery of a most aggravated character. He was tried, and the evidence against him was so conclusive, that the defence which was attempted by his counsel, became a mere matter of form.

"He was convicted, and sentenced. The judge told him not to flatter himself with the least notion that mercy would be extended to him. The crime of which he had been found guilty was on the increase; it was highly necessary to make some great public example, to show evil doers that they could not, with impunity, thus trample upon the liberty of the subject, and had suddenly, just as it were, in the very nick of time, committed the very crime, attended with all the aggravated circumstances which made it easy and desirable to hang him out of hand.

"He heard his sentence, they tell me, unmoved. I did not see him, but he was represented to me as a man of a strong, and well-knit frame, with rather a strange, but what some would have considered a handsome expression of countenance, inasmuch as that there was an expression of much haughty resolution depicted on it.

"I flew to my friend, the executioner.

"Can you, I said, 'get me that man's body, who is to be hanged for the highway robbery, on Monday?'

"Yes,' he said; 'I see nothing to prevent it. Not one soul has offered to claim even common companionship with him, — far less kindred. I think if you in your claim as a cousin, who will bear the expense of his decent burial, you will have every chance of getting possession of the body.'

"I did not hesitate, but, on the morning before the execution, I called upon one of the sheriffs.

"I told him that the condemned man, I regretted to say, was related to me; but as I knew nothing could be done to save him on the trial, I had abstained from coming forward; but that as I did not like the idea of his being rudely interred by the authorities, I had come forward to ask for the body, after the execution should have taken place, in order that I might, at all events, bestow upon it, in some sequestered spot, a decent burial, with all the rites of the church.

"The sheriff was a man not overburdened with penetration. He applauded my pious feelings, and actually gave me, without any inquiry, a written order to receive the body from the hands of the hangman, after it had hung the hour prescribed by the law.

"I did not, as you may well suppose, wish to appear more in the business than was absolutely necessary; but I gave the executioner the sheriff's order for the body, and he promised that he would get a shell ready to place it in, and four stout men to carry it at once to his house, when he should cut it down.

"Good!" I said; 'and now as I am not a little anxious for the success of my experiment, do you not think that you can manage so that the fall of the criminal shall not be so sudden as to break his neck?'

"I have thought of that,' he said, 'and I believe that I can manage to let him down gently, so that he shall die of suffocation, instead of having his neck put out of joint. I will do my best.'

"If you can but succeed in that,' said I, for I was quite in a state of mania upon the subject, 'I shall be much indebted to you, and will double the amount of money which I have already promised.'

"This was, as I believed it would be, a powerful stimulus to him to do all in his power to meet my wishes, and he took, no doubt, active measures to accomplish all that I desired.

"You can imagine with what intense impatience I waited the result. He resided in an old ruinous looking house, a short distance on the Surrey side of the river, and there I had arranged all my apparatus for making experiments upon the dead man, in an apartment the windows of which commanded a view of the entrance."

"I was completely ready by half-past eight, although a moment's consideration of course told me that at least another hour must elapse before there could be the least chance of my seeing him arrive, for whom I so anxiously longed.

"I can safely say so infatuated was I upon the subject, that no fond lover ever looked with more nervous anxiety for the arrival of the chosen object of his heart, than I did for that dead body, upon which I proposed to exert all the influences of professional skill, to recall back his soul to its earthly dwelling-place.

"At length I heard the sound of wheels. I found that my friend the hangman had procured a cart, in which he brought the coffin, that being a much quicker mode of conveyance than by bearers, so that about a quarter past nine o'clock the vehicle, with its ghastly contents, stopped at the door of his house.

"In my impatience I ran down stairs to meet that which ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have gone some distance to avoid the sight of, namely, a corpse, livid and fresh from the gallows. I, however, heralded it as a

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great gift, and already, in imagination, I saw myself imitating the learned Frenchman, who had published such an elaborate treatise on the mode of restoring life under all sorts of circumstances, to those who were already pronounced by unscientific persons to be dead.

"To be sure, a sort of feeling had come over me at times, knowing as I did that the French are a nation that do not scruple at all to sacrifice truth on the altar of vanity, that it might be after all a mere rhodomontade; but, however, I could only ascertain so much by actually trying, so the suspicion that such might, by a possibility, be the end of the adventure, did not deter me.

"I officiously assisted in having the coffin brought into the room where I had prepared everything that was necessary in the conduction of my grand experiment; and then, when no one was there with me but my friend the executioner, I, with his help, the one of us taking the head and the other the feet, took the body from the coffin and laid it upon a table.

"Hastily I placed my hand upon the region of the heart, and to my great delight I found it still warm. I drew off the cap that covered the face, and then, for the first time, my eyes rested upon the countenance of him who now calls himself — Heaven only knows why — Sir Francis Varney."

"Good God!" said Henry, "are you certain?"

"Quite."

"It may have been some other rascal like him," said the admiral.

"No, I am quite sure now; I have, as I have before mentioned to you, tried to get out of my own conviction upon the subject, but I have been actually assured that he is the man by the very hangman himself."

"Go on, go on! Your tale certainly is a strange one, and I do not say it either to compliment you or to cast a doubt upon you, but, except from the lips of an old and valued friend, such as you yourself are, I should not believe it."

"I am not surprised to hear you say that," replied the doctor; "nor should I be offended even now if you were to entertain a belief that I might, after all, be mistaken."

"No, no; you would not be so positive upon the subject, I well know, if there was the slightest possibility of an error."

"Indeed I should not."

"Let us have the sequel, then."

"It is this. I was most anxious to effect an immediate resuscitation, if it were possible, of the hanged man. A little manipulation soon convinced me that the neck was not broken, which left me at once everything to hope for. The hangman was more prudent than I was, and before I commenced my experiments, he said, —

"'Doctor, have you duly considered what you mean to do with this fellow, in case you should be successful in restoring him to life?'

"'Not I,' said I.

"'Well,' he said, 'you can do as you like; but I consider that it is really worth thinking of.'

"I was headstrong on the matter, and could think of nothing but the success or the non-success, in a physiological point of view, of my plan for restoring the dead to life; so I set about my experiments without any delay, and with a completeness and a vigour that promised the most completely successful results, if success could at all be an ingredient in what sober judgment would doubtless have denominated a mad-headed and wild scheme.

"For more than half an hour I tried in vain, by the assistance of the hangman, who acted under my directions. Not the least symptom of vitality presented itself; and he had a smile upon his countenance, as he said in a bantering tone, —

"'I am afraid, sir, it is much easier to kill than to restore their patients with doctors.'

"Before I could make him any reply, for I felt that his observation had a good amount of truth in it, joined to its sarcasm, the hanged man uttered a loud scream, and opened his eyes.

"I must own I was myself rather startled; but I for some moments longer continued the same means which had produced such an effect, when suddenly he sprang up and laid hold of me, at the same time exclaiming, —

"'Death, death, where is the treasure?'

"I had fully succeeded — too fully; and while the executioner looked on with horror depicted in his countenance, I fled from the room and the house, taking my way home as fast as I possibly could.

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"A dread came over me, that the restored man would follow me if he should find out to whom it was he was indebted for the rather questionable boon of a new life. I packed up what articles I set the greatest store by, bade adieu to London, and never have I since set foot within that city."

"And you never met the man you had so resuscitated?"

"Not till I saw Varney, the vampyre; and, as I tell you, I am now certain that he is the man."

"That is the strangest yarn that ever I heard," said the admiral.

"A most singular circumstance," said Henry.

"You may have noticed about his countenance," said Dr. Chillingworth, "a strange distorted look?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, that has arisen from a spasmodic contraction of the muscles, in consequence of his having been hanged. He will never lose it, and it has not a little contributed to give him the horrible look he has, and to invest him with some of the seeming outward attributes of the vampyre."

"And that man who is now in the hall with him, doctor," said Henry, "is the very hangman who executed him?"

"The same. He tells me that after I left, he paid attention to the restored man, and completed what I had nearly done. He kept him in his house for a time, and then made a bargain with him, for a large sum of money per annum, all of which he has regularly been paid, although he tells me he has no more idea where Varney gets it, than the man in the moon."

"It is very strange; but, hark! do you not hear the sound of voices in angry altercation?"

"Yes, yes, they have met. Let us approach the windows now. We may chance to hear something of what they say to each other."

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## Chapter LXXVIII. THE ALTERCATION BETWEEN VARNEY AND THE EXECUTIONER IN THE HALL. -- THE MUTUAL AGREEMENT.

There was certainly a loud wrangling in the Hall, just as the doctor finished his most remarkable revelation concerning Sir Francis Varney, a revelation which by no means attacked the fact of his being a vampyre or not; but rather on the contrary, had a tendency to confirm any opinion that might arise from the circumstance of his being restored to life after his execution, favourable to that belief.

They all three now carefully approached the windows of the Hall, to listen to what was going on, and after a few moments they distinctly heard the voice of the hangman, saying in loud and rather angry accents, —

"I do not deny but that you have kept your word with me — our bargain has been, as you say, a profitable one; but, still I cannot see why that circumstance should give you any sort of control over my actions."

"But what do you here?" said Varney, impatiently.

"What do you?" cried the other.

"Nay, to ask another question, is not to answer mine. I tell you that I have special and most important business in this house; you can have no motive but curiosity."

"Can I not, indeed? What, too, if I have serious and important business here?"

"Impossible."

"Well, I may as easily use such a term as regards what you call important business, but here I shall remain."

"Here you shall not remain."

"And will you make the somewhat hazardous attempt to force me to leave?"

"Yes, much as I dislike lifting my hand against you, I must do so; I tell you that I must be alone in this house. I have most special reasons — reasons which concern my continued existence."

"Your continued existence you talk of. — Tell me, now, how is it that you have acquired so frightful a reputation in this neighbourhood? Go where I will, the theme of conversation is Varney, the vampyre! and it is implicitly believed that you are one of those dreadful characters that feed upon the life—blood of others, only now and then revisiting the tomb to which you ought long since to have gone in peace."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; what, in the name of all that's inexplicable, has induced you to enact such a character?"

"Enact it! you say. Can you, then, from all you have heard of me, and from all you know of me, not conceive it possible that I am not enacting any such character? Why may it not be real? Look at me. Do I look like one of the inhabitants of the earth?"

"In sooth, you do not."

"And yet I am, as you see, upon it. Do not, with an affected philosophy, doubt all that may happen to be in any degree repugnant to your usual experiences."

"I am not one disposed to do so; nor am I prepared to deny that such dreadful beings may exist as vampyres. However, whether or not you belong to so frightful a class of creatures, I do not intend to leave here; but, I will make an agreement with you."

Varney was silent; and after a few moments' pause, the other exclaimed, —

"There are people, even now, watching the place, and no doubt you have been seen coming into it."

"No, no, I was satisfied no one was here but you."

"Then you are wrong. A Doctor Chillingworth, of whom you know something, is here; and him, you have said, you would do no harm to, even to save your life."

"I do know him. You told me that it was to him that I was mainly indebted for my mere existence; and although I do not consider human life to be a great boon, I cannot bring myself to raise my hand against the man who, whatever might have been the motives for the deed, at all events, did snatch me from the grave."

"Upon my word," whispered the admiral, "there is something about that fellow that I like, after all."

"Hush!" said Henry, "listen to them. This would all have been unintelligible to us, if you had not related to us what you have."

"I have just told you in time," said Chillingworth, "it seems."

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"Will you then," said the hangman, "listen to proposals?"

"Yes," said Varney.

"Come along, then, and I will show you what I have been about; and I rather think you have already a shrewd guess as to my motive. This way -- this way."

They moved off to some other part of the mansion, and the sound of their voices gradually died away, so that after all, the friends had not got the least idea of what that motive was, which still induced the vampyre and the hangman, rather than leave the other on the premises, to make an agreement to stay with each other.

"What's to be done now?" said Henry.

"Wait," said Dr. Chillingworth, "wait, and watch still. I see nothing else that can be done with any degree of safety."

"But what are we to wait for?" said the admiral.

"By waiting, we shall, perhaps, find out," was the doctor's reply; "but you may depend that we never shall by interfering."

"Well, well, be it so. It seems that we have no other resource. And when either or both of those fellows make their appearance, and seem about to leave, what is to be done with them?"

"They must be seized then, and in order that that may be done without any bloodshed, we ought to have plenty of force here. Henry, could you get your brother, and Charles, if he be sufficiently recovered, to come?"

"Certainly, and Jack Pringle."

"No," said the admiral, "no Jack Pringle for me; I have done with him completely, and I have made up my mind to strike him off the ship's books, and have nothing more to do with him."

"Well, well," added the doctor, "we will not have him, then; and it is just as well, for, in all likelihood, he would come drunk, and we shall be -- let me see -- five strong without him, which ought to be enough to take prisoners two men."

"Yes," said Henry, "although one of them may be a vampyre."

"That makes no difference," said the admiral. "I'd as soon take a ship manned with vampyres as with Frenchmen."

Henry started off upon his errand, certainly leaving the admiral and the doctor in rather a critical situation while he was gone; for had Varney the vampyre and the hangman chosen, they could certainly easily have overcome so inefficient a force.

The admiral would, of course, have fought, and so might the doctor, as far as his hands would permit him; but if the others had really been intent upon mischief, they could, from their downright superior physical power, have taken the lives of the two that were opposed to them.

But somehow the doctor appeared to have a great confidence in the affair. Whether that confidence arose from what the vampyre had said with regard to him, or from any hidden conviction of his own that they would not yet emerge from the Hall, we cannot say; but certain it is, he waited the course of events with great coolness.

No noise for some time came from the house; but then the sounds, as if workmen were busy within it, were suddenly resumed, and with more vigour than before.

It was nearly two hours before Henry made the private signal which had been agreed upon as that which should proclaim his return; and then he and his brother, with Charles, who, when he heard of the matter, would, notwithstanding the persuasions of Flora to the contrary, come, got quietly over the fence at a part of the garden which was quite hidden from the house by abundant vegetation, and the whole three of them took up a position that tolerably well commanded a view of the house, while they were themselves extremely well hidden behind a dense mass of evergreens.

"Did you see that rascal, Jack Pringle?" said the admiral.

"Yes," said Henry; "he is drunk."

"Ah, to be sure."

"And we had no little difficulty in shaking him off. He suspected where we were going; but I think, by being peremptory, we got fairly rid of him."

"The vagabond! if he comes here, I'll brain him, I will, the swab. Why, lately he's done nothing but drink. That's the way with him. He'll go on sometimes for a year and more, and not take more than enough to do him good, and then all at once, for about six or eight weeks, he does nothing but drink."

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"Well, well, we can do without him," said Henry.

"Without him! I should think so. Do you hear those fellows in the Hall at work? D — n me, if I haven't all of a sudden thought what the reason of it all is."

"What — what?" said the doctor, anxiously.

"Why, that rascal Varney, you know, had his house burnt down."

"Yes; well?"

"Yes, well. I dare say he didn't think it well. But, however, he no doubt wants another; so, you see, my idea is, that he's stealing the material from Bannerworth Hall."

"Oh, is that your notion?"

"Yes, and a very natural one, I think, too, Master Doctor, whatever you may think of it. Come, now, have you a better?"

"Oh, dear, no, certainly not; but I have a notion that something to eat would comfort the inward man much."

"And so would something to drink, blow me if it wouldn't," said Jack Pringle, suddenly making his appearance.

The admiral made a rush upon him; but he was restrained by the others, and Jack, with a look of triumph, said,

"Why, what's amiss with you now? I ain't drunk now. Come, come, you have something dangerous in the wind, I know, so I've made up my mind to be in it, so don't put yourself out of the way. If you think I don't know all about it, you are mistaken, for I do. The vampyre is in the house yonder, and I'm the fellow to tackle him, I believe you, my boys."

"Good God!" said the doctor, "what shall we do?"

"Nothing," said Jack, as he took a bottle from his pocket and applied the neck of it to his lips — "nothing — nothing at all."

"There's something to begin with," said the admiral, as with his stick he gave the bottle a sudden blow that broke it and spilt all its contents, leaving Jack petrified, with the bit of the neck of it still in his mouth.

"My eye, admiral," he said, "was that done like a British seaman? My eye — was that the trick of a lubber, or of a thorough-going first-rater? My eye —"

"Hold your noise, will you; you are not drunk yet, and I was determined that you should not get so, which you soon would with that rum-bottle, if I had not come with a broadside across it. Now you may stay; but, mark me, you are on active service now, and must do nothing without orders."

"Ay, ay, your honour," said Jack, as he dropped the neck of the bottle, and looked ruefully upon the ground, from whence arose the aroma of rum — "ay, ay; but it's a hard case, take it how you will, to have your grog stopped; but, d — n it, I never had it stopped yet when it was in my mouth."

Henry and Charles could not forbear a smile at Jack's discomfiture, which, however, they were very glad of, for they knew full well his failing, and that in the course of another half hour he would have been drunk, and incapable of being controlled, except, as on some former occasions, by the exercise of brute force.

But Jack was evidently displeased, and considered himself to be grievously insulted, which, after all, was the better, inasmuch as, while he was brooding over his wrongs, he was quiet; when, otherwise, it might have been a very difficult matter to make him so.

They partook of some refreshments, and, as the day advanced, the brothers Bannerworth, as well as Charles Holland, began to get very anxious upon the subject of the proceedings of Sir Francis Varney in the Hall.

They conversed in low tones, exhausting every, as they considered, possible conjecture to endeavour to account for his mysterious predilection for that abode, but nothing occurred to them of a sufficiently probable motive to induce them to adopt it as a conclusion.

They more than suspected Dr. Chillingworth, because he was so silent, and hazarded no conjecture at all of knowing something, or of having formed to himself some highly probable hypothesis upon the subject; but they could not get him to agree that such was the case.

When they challenged him upon the subject, all he would say was, —

"My good friends, you perceive that there is a great mystery somewhere, and I do hope that to-night it will be cleared up satisfactorily."

With this they were compelled to be satisfied; and now the soft and sombre shades of evening began to creep

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over the scene, enveloping all objects in the dimness and repose of early night.

The noise from the house had ceased, and all was profoundly still. But more than once Henry fancied he heard footsteps outside the garden.

He mentioned his suspicions to Charles Holland, who immediately said, --

"The same thing has come to my ears."

"Indeed! Then it must be so; we cannot both of us have merely imagined such a thing. You may depend that this place is beleaguered in some way, and that to-night will be productive of events which will throw a great light upon the affairs connected with this vampyre that have hitherto baffled conjecture."

"Hush!" said Charles; "there, again; I am quite confident I heard a sound as of a broken twig outside the garden-wall. The doctor and the admiral are in deep discussion about something, -- shall we tell them?"

"No; let us listen, as yet."

They bent all their attention to listening, inclining their ears towards the ground, and, after a few moments, they felt confident that more than one footstep was creeping along, as cautiously as possible, under the garden wall. After a few moments' consultation, Henry made up his mind -- he being the best acquainted with the localities of the place -- to go and reconnoitre, so he, without saying anything to the doctor or the admiral, glided from where he was, in the direction of a part of the fence which he knew he could easily scale.

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## Chapter LXXIX. THE VAMPYRE'S DANGER. -- THE LAST REFUGE. -- THE RUSE OF HENRY BANNERWORTH.

Yet knowing to what deeds of violence the passions of a lawless mob will sometimes lead them, and having the experience of what had been attempted by the alarmed and infuriated populace on a former occasion, against the Hall, Henry Bannerworth was, reasonably enough, not without his fears that something might occur of a nature yet highly dangerous to the stability of his ancient house.

He did not actually surmount the fence, but he crept so close to it, that he could get over in a moment, if he wished; and, if any one should move or speak on the other side, he should be quite certain to hear them.

For a few moments all was still, and then suddenly he heard some one say, in a low voice, --

"Hist! hist! did you hear nothing?"

"I thought I did," said another; "but I now am doubtful."

"Listen again."

"What," thought Henry, "can be the motives of these men lying secreted here? It is most extraordinary what they can possibly want, unless they are brewing danger for the Hall."

Most cautiously now he raised himself, so that his eyes could just look over the fence, and then, indeed, he was astonished.

He had expected to see two or three persons, at the utmost; what was his surprise to find a compact mass of men crouching down under the garden wall, as far as his eye could reach.

For a few moments, he was so surprised, that he continued to gaze on, heedless of the danger there might be from a discovery that he was playing the part of a spy upon them.

When, however, his first sensations of surprise were over, he cautiously removed to his former position, and, just as he did so, he heard those who had before spoken, again, in low tones, breaking the stillness of the night.

"I am resolved upon it," said one; "I am quite determined. I will, please God, rid the country of that dreadful man."

"Don't call him a man," said the other.

"Well, well; it is a wrong name to apply to a vampyre."

"It is Varney, after all, then," said Henry Bannerworth, to himself; -- "it is his life that they seek. What can be done to save him? -- for saved he shall be if I can compass such an object. I feel that there is yet a something in his character which is entitled to consideration, and he shall not be savagely murdered while I have an arm to raise in his defence. But if anything is now to be done, it must be done by stratagem, for the enemy are, by far, in too great force to be personally combatted with."

Henry resolved to take the advice of his friends, and with that view he went silently and quietly back to where they were, and communicated to them the news that he had so unexpectedly discovered.

They were all much surprised, and then the doctor said,

"You may depend, that since the disappointment of the mob in the destruction of this place, they have had their eye upon Varney. He has been dogged here by some one, and then by degrees that assemblage has sought the spot."

"He's a doomed man, then," remarked the admiral; "for waht can save him from a determined number of persons, who, by main force, will overcome us, let us make what stand we may in his defence."

"Is there no hiding-place in the house," said Charles, "where you might, after warning him of his danger, conceal him?"

"There are plenty, but of what avail would that be, if they burn down the Hall, which in all probability they will?"

"None, certainly."

"There is but one chance," said Henry, "and that is to throw them off the scent, and induce them to think that he whom they seek is not here; I think that may possibly be done by boldness."

"But how?"

"I will go among them and make the effort."

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He at once left the friends, for he felt that there might be no time to lose, and hastening to the same part of the wall, over which he had looked so short a time before, he clambered over it, and cried, in a loud voice,

"Stop the vampyre! stop the vampyre!"

"Where, where?" shouted a number of persons at once, turning their eyes eagerly towards the spot where Henry stood.

"There, across the fields," cried Henry. "I have lain in wait for him long; but he has eluded me, and is making his way again towards the old ruins, where I am sure he has some hiding-place that he thinks will elude all search. There, I see his dusky form speeding onwards."

"Come on," cried several; "to the ruins! to the ruins! We'll smoke him out if he will not come by fair means: we must have him, dead or alive."

"Yes, to the ruins!" shouted the throng of persons, who up to this time had preserved so cautious a silence, and, in a few moments more, Henry Bannerworth had the satisfaction of finding that his ruse had been perfectly successful, for Bannerworth Hall and its vicinity were completely deserted, and the mob, in a straggling mass, went over hedge and ditch towards those ruins in which there was nothing to reward the exertions they might choose to make in the way of an exploration of them, but the dead body of the villain Marchdale, who had come there to so dreadful, but so deserved a death.

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## Chapter LXXX. THE DISCOVERY OF THE BODY OF MARCHDALE IN THE RUINS BY THE MOB. -- THE BURNING OF THE CORPSE. -- THE MURDER OF THE HANGMAN.

The mob reached the ruins of Bannerworth Hall, and crowded round it on all sides, with the view of ascertaining if a human creature, dead or alive, were there; various surmises were afloat, and some were for considering that everybody but themselves, or their friends, must be nothing less than vampyres. Indeed, a strange man, suddenly appearing among them, would have caused a sensation, and a ring would no doubt have been formed round him, and then a hasty council held, or, what was more probable, some shout, or word uttered by some one behind, who could not understand what was going on in front, would have determined them to commit some desperate outrage, and the sacrifice of life would have been the inevitable result of such an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances.

There was a pause before any one ventured among the ruins; the walls were carefully looked to, and in more than one instance, but they were found dangerous, what were remaining; some parts had been so completely destroyed, that there was nothing but heaps of rubbish.

However, curiosity was exerted to such an extraordinary pitch that it overcame the fear of danger, in search of the horrible; for they believed that if there were any one in the ruins he must be a vampyre, of course, and they were somewhat cautious in going near such a creature, lest in so doing they should meet with some accident, and become vampyres too.

This was a dreadful reflection, and one that every now and then impressed itself upon the individuals composing the mob; but at the same time any new impulse, or a shout, and they immediately became insensible to all fear; and mere impulse is the dominant one, and then all is forgotten.

The scene was an impressive one; the beautiful house and grounds looked desolate and drear; many of the trees were stripped and broken down, and many scorched and burned, while the gardens and flower beds, the delight of the Bannerworth family, were rudely trodden under foot by the rabble, and all those little beauties so much admired and tended by the inhabitants, were now utterly destroyed, and in such a state that their site could not even be detected by their former owners.

It was a sad sight to see such a sacrilege committed, -- such violence done to private feelings, as to have all these places thrown open to the scrutiny of the brutal and vulgar, who are incapable of appreciating or understanding the pleasures of a refined taste.

The ruins presented a remarkable contrast to what the place had been but a very short time before; and now the scene of desolation was complete, there was no one spot in which the most wretched could find shelter.

To be sure, under the lee of some broken and crumbling wall, that tottered, rather than stood, a huddled wretch might have found shelter from the wind, but it would have been at the risk of his life, and not there complete.

The mob became quiet for some moments, but was not so long; indeed, a mob of people, -- which is, in fact, always composed of the most disorderly characters to be found in a place, is not exactly the assembly that is most calculated for quietness; somebody gave a shout, and then somebody else shouted, and the one wide throat of the whole concourse was opened, and sent forth a mighty yell.

After this exhibition of power, they began to run about like mad, -- traverse the ground from one end to the other, and then the ruins were in progress of being explored.

This was a tender affair, and had to be done with some care and caution by those who were so engaged; and they walked over crumbling and decayed masses.

In one or two places, they saw what appeared to be large holes, into which the building materials had been sunk, by their own weight, through the flooring, that seemed as roofs to some cellars or dungeons.

Seeing this, they knew not how soon some other part might sink in, and carry their precious bodies down with the mass of rubbish; this gave an interest to the scene, -- a little danger is a sort of salt to an adventure, and enables those who have taken their part in it to talk of their exploits, and of their dangers, which is pleasant to do, and to hear in the ale-house, and by the inglenook in the winter.

However, when a few had gone some distance, others followed, when they saw them enter the place in safety:

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and at length the whole ruins were covered with living men, and not a few women, who seemed necessary to make up the elements of mischief in this case.

There were some shouting and hallooing from one to the other as they hurried about the ruins.

At length they had explored the ruins nearly all over, when one man, who had stood a few minutes upon a spot, gazing intently upon something, suddenly exclaimed, —

"Hilloa! hurrah! here we are, altogether, — come on, — I've found him, I've found — recollect it's me and nobody else has found, — hurrah!"

Then, with a wild kind of frenzy, he threw his hat up into the air, as if to attract attention, and call others round him, to see what it was he had found.

"What's the matter, Bill?" exclaimed one who came up to him, and who had been close at hand.

"The matter? why, I've found him; that's the matter, old man," replied the first.

"What, a whale?"

"No, a wampyre; the blessed wampyre! there he is, — don't you see him under them ere bricks?"

"Oh, that's not him; he's got away."

"I don't care," replied the other, "who got away, or who didn't; I know this much, that he's a wampire, — he wouldn't be there if he warn't."

This was an unanswerable argument, and nobody could deny it; consequently, there was a cessation of talk, and the people then came up, as the two first were looking at the body.

"Whose is it?" inquired a dozen voices.

"Not Sir Francis Varney's?" said the second speaker; "the clothes are not his —"

"No, no; not Sir Francis's."

"But I tell you what, mates," said the first speaker; "that if it isn't Sir Francis Varney's, it is somebody else's as bad. I dare say, now, he's a wictim."

"A what?"

"A wictim to the wampyre; and, if he sees the blessed moonlight, he will be a wampyre hisself, and so shall we be, too, if he puts his teeth into us."

"So we shall, — so we shall," said the mob, and their flesh began to run cold, and there was feeling of horror creeping over the whole body of persons within hearing.

"I tell you what it is; our only plan will be to get him out of the ruins, then," remarked another.

"What!" said one; "who's going to handle such cattle? if you've a sore about you, and his blood touches you, who's to say you won't a be a wampyre, too!"

"No, no you won't," said an old woman.

"I won't try," was the happy rejoinder; "I ain't a-going to carry a wampyre on my two legs home to my wife and small family of seven children, and another a-coming."

There was a pause for a few moments, and then one man more adventurous than the rest, exclaimed, —

"Well, wampyre, or no wampyre, his dead body can harm no one; so here goes to get it out, help me who will; once have it out, and then we can prevent any evil, by burning it, and thus destroying the whole body."

"Hurrah!" shouted three or four more, as they jumped down into the hole formed by the falling in of the materials which had crushed Marchdale to death, for it was his body they had discovered.

They immediately set to work to displace such of the materials as lay on the body, and then, having cleared it of all superincumbent rubbish, they proceeded to lift it up, but found that it had got entangled, as they called it, with some chains: with some trouble they got them off, and the body was lifted out to a higher spot.

"Now, what's to be done?" inquired one.

"Burn it," said another.

"Hurrah!" shouted a female voice; "we've got the wampyre! run a stake through his body, and then place him upon some dry wood, — there's plenty to be had about here, I am sure, — and then burn him to a cinder."

"That's right, old woman, — that's right," said a man; "nothing better: the devil must be in him if he come to life after that, I should say."

There might be something in that, and the mob shouted its approbation, as it was sure to do at anything stupid or senseless, and the proposal might be said to have been carried by acclamation, and it required only the execution.



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This was soon done. There were plenty of laths and rafters, and the adjoining wood furnished an abundant supply of dry sticks, so there was no want of fuel.

There was a loud shout as each accession of sticks took place, and, as each individual threw his bundle into the heap, each man felt all the self-devotion to the task as the Scottish chieftain who sacrificed himself and seven sons in the battle for his superior; and, when one son was cut down, the man filled up his place with the exclamation, — "Another for Hector," until he himself fell as the last of his race.

Soon now the heap became prodigious, and it required an effort to get the mangled corpse upon his funeral bier; but it was then a shout from the mob that rent the air announced both the fact and their satisfaction.

The next thing to be done was to light the pile — this was no easy task; but like all others, it was accomplished, and the dead body of the vampyre's victim was thrown on to prevent that becoming a vampyre too, in its turn.

"There, boys," said one, "he'll not see the moonlight, that's certain, and the sooner we put a light to this the better: for it may be, the soldiers will be down upon us before we know anything of it; so, now, who's got a light?"

This was a question that required a deal of searching; but, at length one was found, by one of the mob coming forward, and after drawing his pipe vigorously for some moments, he collected some scraps of paper, upon which he emptied the contents of the pipe, with the hope they would take fire.

In this, however, he was doomed to disappointment; for it produced nothing but a deal of smoke, and the paper burned without producing any flame.

This act of disinterestedness, however, was not without its due consequences, for there were several who had pipes, and first with the hope of emulating the first projector of the scheme for raising the flame, they joined together, and putting the contents of their pipes together on some paper, straw, and chips, they produced, after some little trouble, a flame.

Then there was a shout, and the burning mass was then placed in a favourable position nearer the pile of materials collected for burning, and then, in a few moments, it began to take light; one piece communicated the fire to another, until the whole was in a blaze.

When the first flame fairly reached the top, a loud and tremendous shout arose from the mob, and the very welkin reechoed with its fullness.

Then the forked flames rushed through the wood, and hissed and crackled as they flew, throwing up huge masses of black smoke, and casting a peculiar reflection around. Not a sound was heard save the hissing and roaring of the flames, which seemed like the approaching of a furious whirlwind.

At length there was nothing to be seen but the blackened mass; it was enveloped in one huge flame, that threw out a great heat, so much so, that those nearest to it felt induced to retire from before it.

"I reckon," said one, "that he's pretty well done by this time — he's had a warm berth of it up there."

"Yes," said another, "farmer Watkins's sheep he roasted whole at last harvest—home hadn't such a fire as this, I'll warrant; there's no such fire in the county — why, it would prevent a frost, I do believe it would."

"So it would, neighbour," answered another.

"Yes," replied a third, "but you'd want such a one corner of each field though." \* \* \* \*

There was much talk and joking going on among the men who stood around, in the midst of which, however, they were disturbed by a loud shout, and upon looking in the quarter whence it came, they saw stealing from among the ruins, the form of a man.

He was a strange, odd looking man, and at the time it was very doubtful among the mob as to whom it was — nobody could tell, and more than one looked at the burning pile, and then at the man who seemed to be so mysteriously present, as if they almost imagined that the body had got away.

"Who is it?" exclaimed one.

"Danged if I knows," said another, looking very hard, and very white at the same time; — "I hope it ain't the chap what we've burned here jist now."

"No," said the female, "that you may be sure of, for he's had a stake through his body, and as you said, he can never get over that, for as the stake is consumed, so are his vitals, and that's a sure sign he's done for."

"Yes, yes, she's right — a vampyre may live upon blood, but cannot do without his inside."

This was so obvious to them all, that it was at once conceded, and a general impression pervaded the mob that it might be Sir Francis Varney: a shout ensued.

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"Hurrah! — After him — there's a vampyre — there he goes! — after him — catch him — burn him!"

And a variety of other exclamations were uttered, at the same time; the victim of popular wrath seemed to be aware that he was now discovered, and made off with all possible expedition, towards some wood.

Away went the mob in pursuit, hooting and hallooing like demons, and denouncing the unfortunate being with all the terrors that could be imagined, and which naturally added greater speed to the unfortunate man.

However, some among the mob, seeing that there was every probability of the stranger's escaping at a mere match of speed, brought a little cunning to bear upon the matter, and took a circuit round, and thus intercepted him.

This was not accomplished without a desperate effort, and by the best runners, who thus reached the spot he made for, before he could get there.

When the stranger saw himself thus intercepted, he endeavoured to fly in a different direction; but was soon secured by the mob, who made somewhat free with his person, and commenced knocking him about.

"Have mercy on me," said the stranger. "What do you want? I am not rich; but take all I have."

"What do you do here?" inquired twenty voices. "Come, tell us that — what do you do here, and who are you?"

"A stranger, quite a stranger to these parts."

"Oh, yes! he's a stranger; but that's all the worse for him — he's a vampyre — there's no doubt about that."

"Good God," said the man, "I am a living and breathing man like yourselves. I have done no wrong, and injured no man — be merciful unto me; I intend no harm."

"Of course not; send him to the fire — take him back to the ruins — to the fire."

"Ay, and run a stake through his body, and then he's safe for life. I am sure he has something to do with the vampyre; and who knows, if he ain't a vampyre, how soon he may become one?"

"Ah! that's very true; bring him back to the fire, and we'll try the effects of the fire upon his constitution."

"I tell you what, neighbour, it's my opinion, that as one fool makes many, so one vampyre makes many."

"So it does; there's much truth and reason in that neighbour; I am decidedly of that opinion, too."

"Come along then," cried the mob, cuffing and pulling the unfortunate stranger with them.

"Mercy, mercy!"

But it was useless to call for mercy to men whose superstitious feelings urged them on; for when the demon of superstition is active, no matter what form it may take, it always results in cruelty and wickedness to all.

Various were the shouts and menaces of the mob, and the stranger, who was certainly a somewhat odd and remarkable looking man, and who appeared in their eyes the very impersonation of their notions of a vampyre, was thrust from one to the other, kicked by one, and then cuffed by the other, as if he was doomed to run the gauntlet.

"Down with the vampyre!" said the mob.

"I am no vampyre," said the stranger; "I am new to these parts, and I pray you have mercy upon me. I have done you no wrong. Hear me, — I know nothing of these people of whom you speak."

"That won't do; you've come here to see what you can do, I dare say; and, though you may have been hurt by the vampyre, and may be only your misfortune, and not your fault, yet the mischief is as great as ever it was or can be, you become, in spite of yourself, a vampyre, and do the same injury to others that has been done to you — there's no help for you."

"No help, — we can't help it," shouted the mob; "he must die, — throw him on the pile."

"Put a stake through him first, though," exclaimed the humane female; "put a stake through him and then he's safe."

This horrible advice had an electric effect on the stranger, who jumped up, and eluded the grasp of several hands that were stretched forth to seize him.

"Throw him upon the burning wood!" shouted one.

"And a stake through his body," suggested the humane female again, who seemed to have this one idea in her heart, and no other, and, upon every available opportunity, she seemed to be anxious to give utterance to the comfortable notion.

"Seize him!" exclaimed one.

"Never let him go," said another; "we've gone too far to hang back now; and, if he escape, he will visit us in

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our sleep, were it only out of spite."

The stranger made a dash among the ruins, and, for a moment, out-stripped his pursuers; but a few, more adventurous than the rest, succeeded in driving him into an angle formed by two walls, and the consequence was, he was compelled to come to a stand.

"Seize him — seize him!" exclaimed all those at a distance.

The stranger, seeing he was now nearly surrounded, and had no chance of escape, save by some great effort, seized a long piece of wood, and struck two of his assailants down at once, and then dashed through the opening.

He immediately made for another part of the ruins, and succeeded in making his escape for some short distance, but was unable to keep up the speed that was required, for his great exertion before had nearly exhausted him, and the fear of a cruel death before his eyes was not enough to give him strength, or lend speed to his flight. He had suffered too much from violence, and, though he ran with great speed, yet those who followed were uninjured, and fresher, — he had no chance.

They came very close upon him at the corner of a field, which he endeavoured to cross, and had succeeded in doing, and he made a desperate attempt to scramble up the bank that divided the field from the next, but he slipped back, almost exhausted, into the ditch, and the whole mob came up.

However, he got on the bank, and leaped into the next field, and then he was immediately surrounded by those who pursued him, and he was struck down.

"Down with the vampyre! — kill him, — he's one of 'em, — run a stake through him!" were a few of the cries of the infuriated mob of people, who were only infuriated because he attempted to escape their murderous intentions.

It was strange to see how they collected in a ring as the unfortunate man lay on the ground, panting for breath, and hardly able to speak — their infuriated countenances plainly showing the mischief they were intent upon.

"Have mercy upon me!" he exclaimed, as he lay on the earth; "I have no power to help myself."

The mob returned no answer, but stood collecting their numbers as they came up.

"Have mercy on me! it cannot be any pleasure to you to spill my blood. I am unable to resist — I am only one man among many, — you surely cannot wish to beat me to death?"

"We want to hurt no one, except in our own defence, and we won't be made vampyres of because you don't like to die."

"No, no; we won't be vampyres," exclaimed the mob, and there arose a great shout from the mob.

"Are you men — fathers? — have you families? if so, I have the same ties as you have; spare me for their sakes, — do not murder me, — you will leave one an orphan if you do; besides, what have I done? I have injured no one."

"I tell you what, friends, if we listen to him we shall all be vampyres, and all our children will all be vampyres and orphans."

"So we shall, so we shall; down with him!"

The man attempted to get up, but, in doing so, he received a heavy blow from a hedge-stake, wielded by the herculean arm of a peasant. The sound of the blow was heard by those immediately around, and the man fell dead. There was a pause, and those nearest, apparently fearful of the consequences, and hardly expecting the catastrophe, began to disperse, and the remainder did so very soon afterwards.

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## Chapter LXXXI. THE VAMPYRE'S FLIGHT. -- HIS DANGER, AND THE LAST PLACE OF REFUGE.

Leaving the disorderly and vicious mob, who were thus sacrificing human life to their excited passions, we return to the brothers Bannerworth and the doctor, who together with Admiral Bell, still held watch over the hall.

No indication of the coming forth of Varney presented itself for some time longer, and then, at least they thought, they heard a window open; and, turning their eyes in the direction whence the sound proceeded, they could see the form of a man slowly and cautiously emerging from it.

As far as they could judge, from the distance at which they were, that form partook much of the appearance and the general aspect of Sir Francis Varney, and the more they looked and noticed its movements the more they felt convinced that such was the fact.

"There comes your patient, doctor," said the admiral.

"Don't call him my patient," said the doctor, "if you please."

"Why you know he is; and you are, in a manner of speaking, bound to look after him. Well, what is to be done?"

"He must not, on any account," said Dr. Chillingworth, "be allowed to leave the place. Believe me, I have the very strongest reasons for saying so."

"He shall not leave it then," said Henry.

Even as he spoke, Henry Bannerworth darted forward, and Sir Francis Varney dropped from the window, out of which he had clambered, close to his feet.

"Hold!" cried Henry, "you are my prisoner."

With the most imperturbable coolness in the world, Sir Francis Varney turned upon him, and replied, --

"And pray, Henry Bannerworth, what have I done to provoke your wrath?"

"What have you done? -- have you not, like a thief, broken into my house? Can you ask what you have done?"

"Ay," said the vampyre, "like a thief, perchance, and yet no thief. May I ask you, what there is to steal, in the house?"

By the time this short dialogue had been uttered, the rest of the party had come up, and Varney was, so far as regarded numbers, a prisoner.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, with that strange contortion of countenance which, now they all understood, arose from the fact of his having been hanged, and restored to life again. "Well, gentlemen, now that you have beleaguered me in such a way, may I ask you what it is about?"

"If you will step aside with me, Sir Francis Varney, for a moment," said Dr. Chillingworth, "I will make you a communication which will enable you to know what it is all about."

"Oh, with pleasure," said the vampyre. "I am not ill at present; but still, sir, I have no objection to hear what you have to say."

He stepped a few paces on one side with the doctor, while the others waited, not without some amount of impatience for the result of the communication. All that they could hear was, that Varney said, suddenly --

"You are quite mistaken."

And then the doctor appeared to be insisting upon something, which the vampyre listened to patiently; and, at the end, burst out with, --

"Why, doctor, you must be dreaming."

At this, Dr. Chillingworth at once left him, and advancing to his friends, he said, --

"Sir Francis Varney denies in toto all that I have related to you concerning him; therefore, I can say no more than that I earnestly recommend you, before you let him go, see that he takes nothing of value with him."

"Why, what can you mean?" said Varney.

"Search him," said the doctor; "I will tell you why, very shortly."

"Indeed -- indeed!" said Sir Francis Varney. "Now, gentlemen, I will give you a chance of behaving justly and quietly, so saving yourself the danger of acting otherwise. I have made repeated offers to take this house,

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either as a tenant or as a purchaser, all of which offers have been declined, upon, I dare say, a common enough principle, namely, one which induces people to enhance the value of anything they have for disposal, if it be unique, by making it difficult to come at. Seeing that you had deserted the place, I could make no doubt but that it was to be had, so I came here to make a thorough examination of its interior, to see if it would suit me. I find that it will not; therefore, I have only to apologise for the intrusion, and to wish you a remarkably good evening."

"That won't do," said the doctor.

"What won't do, sir?"

"This excuse will not do, Sir Francis Varney. You are, although you deny it, the man who was hanged in London some years ago for a highway robbery."

Varney laughed, and held up his hands, exclaiming, --

"Alas! alas! our good friend, the doctor, has studied too hard; his wits, probably, at the best of times, none of the clearest, have become hopelessly entangled."

"Do you deny," said Henry, "then that you are that man?"

"Most unequivocally."

"I assert it," said the doctor, "and now, I will tell you all, for I perceive you hesitate about searching, Sir Francis Varney, I tell you all why it is that he has such an affection for Bannerworth Hall."

"Before you do," said Varney, "there is a pill for you, which you may find more nauseous and harder of digestion, than any your shop can furnish."

As Varney uttered these words, he suddenly drew from his pocket a pistol, and, leveling it at the unfortunate doctor, he fired it full at him.

The act was so sudden, so utterly unexpected, and so stunning, that it was done before any one could move hand or foot to prevent it. Henry Bannerworth and his brother were the furthest off from the vampyre; and, unhappily, in the rush which they, as soon as possible, made towards him, they knocked down the admiral, who impeded them much; and, before they could spring over, or past him, Sir Francis Varney was gone.

So sudden, too, had been his departure, that they had not the least idea in which direction he had gone; so that to follow him would have been a work of the greatest possible difficulty.

Notwithstanding, however, both the difficulty and the danger, for no doubt the vampyre was well enough armed, Henry and his brother both rushed after the murderer, as they now believed him to be, in the route which they thought it was most probable he would take, namely, that which led towards the garden gate.

They reached that spot in a few moments, but all was profoundly still. Not the least trace of any one could be seen, high or low, and they were compelled, after a cursory examination, to admit that Sir Francis Varney had again made his escape, despite the great odds that were against him in point of numbers.

"He has gone," said Henry. "Let us go back, and see into the state of poor Dr. Chillingworth, who, I fear, is a dead man."

They hurried back to the spot, and there they found the admiral looking as composed as possible, and solacing himself with a pinch of snuff, as he gazed upon the apparently lifeless form at his feet.

"Is he dead?" said Henry.

"I should say he was," replied the admiral; "such a shot as that was don't want to be repeated. Well, I liked the doctor with all his faults. He only had one foolish way with him and that was, that he shirked his grog."

"This is an awful catastrophe," said Henry, as he knelt down by the side of the body. "Assist me, some of you. Where is Charles?"

"I'll be hanged," said the admiral, "if I know. He disappeared somewhere."

"This is a night of mystery as well as terror. Alas! poor Dr. Chillingworth! I little thought that you would have fallen a victim to the man whom you preserved from death. How strange it is that you should have snatched from the tomb the very individual who was, eventually, to take your own life."

The brothers gently raised the body of the doctor, and carried it on to the grass plot, which was close at hand.

"Farewell, kind and honest-hearted Chillingworth," said Henry; "I shall, many and many a time, feel your loss; and now I will rest not until I have delivered up to justice your murderer. All consideration, or feeling, for what seemed to be latent virtues in that strange and inexplicable man, Varney, shall vanish, and he shall reap the consequences of the crime he has now committed."

"It was a cold blooded, cowardly murder," said his brother.

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"It was; but you may depend the doctor was about to reveal something to us, which Varney so much dreaded, that he took his life as the only effectual way, at the moment, of stopping him."

"It must be so," said Henry.

"And now," said the admiral, "it's too late, and we shall not know it at all. That's the way. A fellow saves up what he has got to tell till it is too late to tell it, and down he goes to Davy Jones's locker with all his secrets aboard."

"Not always," said Dr. Chillingworth, suddenly sitting bolt upright — "not always."

Henry and his brother started back in amazement, and the admiral was so taken by surprise, that had not the resuscitated doctor suddenly stretched out his hand and laid hold of him by the ankle, he would have made a precipitate retreat.

"Hilloa! murder!" he cried. "Let me go! How do I know but you may be a vampyre by now, as you were shot by one."

Henry soonest recovered from the surprise of the moment, and with the most unfeigned satisfaction, he cried, —

"Thank God you are unhurt, Dr. Chillingworth! Why he must have missed you by a miracle."

"Not at all," said the doctor. "Help me up — thank you — all right. I'm only a little singed about the whiskers. He hit me safe enough."

"Then how have you escaped?"

"Why from the want of a bullet in the pistol, to be sure. I can understand it all well enough. He wanted to create sufficient confusion to cover a desperate attempt to escape, and he thought that would be best done by seeming to shoot me. The suddenness of the shock, and the full belief, at the moment, that he had sent a bullet into my brains, made me fall, and produced a temporary confusion of ideas, amounting to insensibility."

"From which you are happily recovered. Thank Heaven for that, after all, he is not such a villain as this act would have made him."

"Ah!" said the admiral, "it takes people who have lived little in these affairs to know the difference in sound between a firearm with a bullet in it and one without. I knew it was all right."

"Then why did you not say so, admiral?"

"What was the use? I thought the doctor might be amused to know what you should say of him, so you see I didn't interfere; and, as I am not a good hand at galloping after anybody, I didn't try that part of the business, but just remained where I was."

"Alas! alas!" cried the doctor, "I much fear that, by his going, I have lost all that I expected to be able to do for you, Henry. It's of not the least use now telling you or troubling you about it. You may now sell or let Bannerworth Hall to whomever you please, for I am afraid it is really worthless."

"What on earth do you mean?" said Henry. "Why, doctor, will you keep up this mystery among us? If you have anything to say, why not say it at once?"

"Because, I tell you it's of no use now. The game is up, Sir Francis Varney has escaped; but still I don't know that I need exactly hesitate."

"There can be no reason for your hesitating about making a communication to us," said Henry. "It is unfriendly not to do so."

"My dear boy, you will excuse me for saying that you don't know what you are talking about."

"Can you give any reason?"

"Yes; respect for the living. I should have to relate something about the dead which would be hurtful to their feelings."

Henry was silent for a few moments, and then he said, —

"What dead? And who are the living?"

"Another time," whispered the doctor to him; "another time, Henry. Do not press me now. But you shall know all another time."

"I must be content. But now let us remember that another man yet lingers in Bannerworth Hall. I will endure suspense on his account no longer. He is an intruder there; so I go at once to dislodge him."

No one made any opposition to this move, not even the doctor; so Henry preceeded them all to the house. They passed through the open window into the long hall, and from thence into every apartment of the mansion,

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without finding the object of their search. But from one of the windows up to which there grew great masses of ivy, there hung a rope, by which any one might easily have let himself down; and no doubt, therefore, existed in all their minds that the hangman had sufficiently profited by the confusion incidental to the supposed shooting of the doctor, to make good his escape from the place.

"And so, after all," said Henry, "we are completely foiled?"

"We may be," said Dr. Chillingworth; "but it is, perhaps, going too far to say that we actually are. One thing, however, is quite clear; and that is, no good can be done here."

"Then let us go home," said the admiral. "I did not think from the first that any good would be done here."

They all left the garden together now; so that almost for the first time, Bannerworth Hall was left to itself, unguarded and unwatched by any one whatever. It was with an evident and marked melancholy that the doctor proceeded with the party to the cottage-house of the Bannerworths; but, as after what he has said, Henry forebore to question him further upon those subjects which he admitted he was keeping secret; and as none of the party were much in a cue for general conversation, the whole of them walked on with more silence than usually characterized them.

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## Chapter LXXXII. CHARLES HOLLAND'S PURSUIT OF THE VAMPYRE. -- THE DANGEROUS INTERVIEW.

It will be recollected that the admiral had made a remark about Charles Holland having suddenly disappeared; and it is for us now to account for that disappearance and to follow him to the pathway he had chosen.

The fact was, that he, when Varney fired the shot at the doctor, or what was the supposed shot, was the farthest from the vampyre; and he, on that very account, had the clearest and best opportunity of marking which route he took when he had discharged the pistol.

He was not confused by the smoke, as the others were; nor was he stunned by the noise of the discharge; but he distinctly saw Varney dart across one of the garden beds, and make for the summer house, instead of for the garden gate, as Henry had supposed was the most probable path he had chosen.

Now, Charles Holland either had an inclination, for some reasons of his own, to follow the vampyre alone; or, on the spur of the moment, he had not time to give an alarm to the others; but certain it is that he did, unaided, rush after him. He saw him enter the summer-house, and pass out of it again at the back portion of it, as he had once before done, when surprised in his interview with Flora.

But the vampyre did not now, as he had done on the former occasion, hide immediately behind the summer-house. He seemed to be well aware that that expedient would not answer twice; so he at once sped onwards, clearing the garden fence, and taking to the meadows.

It formed evidently no part of the intentions of Charles Holland to come up with him. He was resolved upon dogging his footsteps, to know where he should go; so that he might have a knowledge of his hiding-place if he had one.

"I must and will," said Charles to himself, "penetrate the mystery that hangs about this most strange and inexplicable being. I will have an interview with him, not in hostility, for I forgive him the evil he has done me, but with a kindly spirit; and I will ask him to confide in me."

Charles, therefore, did not keep so close upon the heels of the vampyre as to excite any suspicions of his intention to follow him; but he waited by the garden paling long enough not only for Varney to get some distance off, but long enough likewise to know that the pistol which had been fired at the doctor had produced no real bad effects, except singing some curious tufts of hair upon the sides of his face, which the doctor was pleased to call whiskers.

"I thought as much," was Charles's exclamation when he heard the doctor's voice. "It would have been strikingly at variance with all Varney's other conduct, if he had committed such a deliberate and heartless murder."

Then, as the form of the vampyre could be but dimly seen, Charles ran on for some distance in the direction he had taken, and then paused again; so that if Varney heard the sound of footsteps, and paused to listen they had ceased again probably, and nothing was discernible.

In this manner he followed the mysterious individual, if we may really call him such, for above a mile; and then Varney made a rapid detour, and took his way towards the town.

He went onwards with wonderful precision now in a right line, not stopping at any obstruction, in the way of fences, hedges, or ditches, so that it took Charles some exertion, to which, just then, he was scarcely equal, to keep up with him.

At length the outskirts of the town were gained, and then Varney paused, and looked around him, scarcely allowing Charles, who was now closer to him than he had been, time to hide himself from observation, which, however, he did accomplish, by casting himself suddenly upon the ground, so that he could not be detected against the sky, which then formed a back ground to the spot where he was.

Apparently satisfied that he had completely now eluded pursuit, if any had been attempted, of those whom he had left in such a state of confusion, the vampyre walked hastily towards a house which was to let, and which was only to be reached by going up an avenue of trees, and then unlocking a gate in a wall which bounded the premises next to the avenue. But the vampyre appeared to be possessed of every facility for effecting an entrance



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to the place and, producing from his pocket a key, he at once opened the gate, and disappeared within the precincts of those premises.

He, no doubt, felt that he was hunted by the mob of the town, and hence his frequent change of residence, since his own had been burnt down, and, indeed, situated as he was, there can be no manner of doubt that he would have been sacrificed to the superstitious fury of the populace, if they could but have got hold of him.

He had, from his knowledge, which was no doubt accurate and complete, of what had been done, a good idea of what his own fate would be, were he to fall into the hands of that ferocious multitude; each individual composing which, felt a conviction that there would be no peace, nor hope of prosperity or happiness, in the place, until he, the arch vampyre of all the supposed vampyres, was destroyed.

Charles did pause for a few moments, after having thus become housed, to consider whether he should then attempt to have the interview he had resolved upon having by some means or another, or defer it, now that he knew where Varney was to be found, until another time.

But when he came to consider how extremely likely it was that, even in the course of a few hours, Varney might shift his abode for some good and substantial reasons, he at once determined upon attempting to see him.

But how to accomplish such a purpose was not the easiest question in the world to answer. If he rung the bell that presented itself above the garden gate, was it at all likely that Varney, who had come there for concealment, would pay any attention to the summons?

After some consideration, he did, however, think of a plan by which, at all events, he could ensure effecting an entrance into the premises, and then he would take his chance of finding the mysterious being whom he sought, and who probably might have no particular objection to meeting with him, Charles Holland, because their last interview in the ruins could not be said to be otherwise than of a peaceable and calm enough character.

He saw by the board, which was nailed in front of the house, that all applications to see it were to be made to a Mr. Nash, residing close at hand; and, as Charles had the appearance of a respectable person, he thought he might possibly have the key entrusted to him, ostensibly to look at the house, preparatory possibly to taking it, and so he should, at all events, obtain admission.

He, accordingly, went at once to this Mr. Nash, and asked about the house; of course he had to affect an interest in its rental and accommodations, which he did not feel, in order to lull any suspicion, and, finally, he said, --

"I should like to look over it if you will lend me the key, which I will shortly bring back to you."

There was an evident hesitation about the agent when this proposal was communicated by Charles Holland, and he said, --

"I dare say, sir, you wonder that I don't say yes, at once; but the fact is there came a gentleman here one day when I was out, and got a key, for we have two to open the house, from my wife, and he never came back again."

That this was the means by which Varney, the vampyre, had obtained the key, by the aid of which Charles had seen him effect so immediate an entrance to the house, there could be no doubt.

"How long ago were you served that trick?" he said.

"About two days ago, sir."

"Well, it only shows how, when one person acts wrongly, another is at once suspected of a capability to do so likewise. There is my name and address; I should like rather to go alone to see the house, because I always fancy I can judge better by myself of the accommodation, and I can stay as long as I like, and ascertain the sizes of all the rooms without the disagreeable feeling upon my mind, which no amount of complaisance on your part could ever get me over, that I was most unaccountably detaining somebody from more important business of their own."

"Oh, I assure you, sir," said Mr. Nash, "that I should not be at all impatient. But if you would rather go alone -- "

"Indeed I would."

"Oh, then, sir, there is the key. A gentleman who leaves his name and address, of course, we can have no objection to. I only told you of what happened, sir, in the mere way of conversation, and I hope you won't imagine for a moment that I meant to insinuate that you were going to keep the key."

"Oh, certainly not -- certainly not," said Charles, who was only too glad to get the key upon any terms. "You are quite right, and I beg you will say no more about it; I quite understand."

He then walked off to the empty house again, and, proceeding to the avenue, he fitted the key to the lock, and

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had the satisfaction of finding the gate instantly yield to him.

When he passed thought it, and closed the door after him, which he did carefully, he found himself in a handsomely laid-out garden, and saw the house a short distance in front of him, standing upon a well got-up lawn.

He cared not if Varney should see him before he reached the house, because the fact was sufficiently evident to himself that after all he could not actually enforce an interview with the vampyre. He only hoped that as he had found him out it would be conceded to him.

He, therefore, walked up the lawn without making the least attempt at concealment, and when he reached the house he allowed his footsteps to make what noise they would upon the stone steps which led up to it. But no one appeared; nor was there, either by sight or by sound, any indication of the presence of any living being in the place besides himself.

Insensibly, as he contemplated the deserted place around him, the solemn sort of stillness began to have its effect upon his imagination, and, without being aware that he did so, he had, with softness and caution, glided onwards, as if he were bent on some errand requiring the utmost amount of caution and discrimination in the conduction of it.

And so he entered the hall of the house, where he stood some time, and listened with the greatest attention, without, however, being able to hear the least sound throughout the whole of the house.

"And yet he must be here," thought Charles to himself; "I was not gone many minutes, and it is extremely unlikely that in so short a space of time he has left, after taking so much trouble, by making such a detour around the meadows to get here, without being observed. I will examine every room in the place, but I will find him."

Charles immediately commenced going from room to room of that house in his search for the vampyre. There were but four apartments upon the ground floor, and these, of course, he quickly ran through. Nothing whatever at all indicative of any one having been there met his gaze, and with a feeling of disappointment creeping over him, he commenced the ascent of the staircase.

The day had now fairly commenced, so that there was abundance of light, although, even for the country, it was an early hour, and probably Mr. Nash had been not a little surprised to have a call from one whose appearance bespoke no necessity for rising with the lark at such an hour.

All these considerations, however, sank into insignificance in Charles's mind, compared with the object he had in view, namely, the unravelling the many mysteries that hung around that man. He ascended to the landing of the first story, and then, as he could have no choice, he opened the first door that his eyes fell upon, and entered a tolerably large apartment. It was quite destitute of furniture, and at the moment Charles was about to pronounce it empty; but then his eyes fell upon a large black-looking bundle of something, that seemed to be lying jammed up under the window on the floor — that being the place of all others in the room which was enveloped in the most shadow.

He started back involuntarily at the moment, for the appearance was one so shapeless, that there was no such thing as defining, from even that distance, what it really was.

Then he slowly and cautiously approached it, as we always approach that of the character of which we are ignorant, and concerning the powers of which to do injury we can consequently have no defined idea.

That it was a human form there, was the first tangible opinion he had about it; and from its profound stillness, and the manner in which it seemed to be laid close under the window, he thought that he was surely upon the point of finding out that some deed of blood had been committed, the unfortunate victim of which was now lying before him.

Upon a nearer examination, he found that the whole body, including the greater part of the head and face, was wrapped in a large cloak; and there, as he gazed, he soon found cause to correct his first opinion as to the form belonging to the dead, for he could distinctly hear the regular breathing, as of some one in a sound and dreamless sleep.

Closer he went, and closer still. Then, as he clasped his hands, he said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, — "It is — it is the vampyre."

Yes, there could be no doubt of the fact. It was Sir Francis Varney who lay there, enveloped in the huge horseman's cloak, in which, on two or three occasions during the progress of this narrative, he has figured. There he lay, at the mercy completely of any arm that might be raised against him, apparently so overcome by fatigue

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that no ordinary noise would have awakened him.

Well might Charles Holland gaze at him with mingled feelings. There lay the being who had done almost enough to drive the beautiful Flora Bannerworth distracted — the being who had compelled the Bannerworth family to leave their ancient house, to which they had been bound by every description of association. The same mysterious existence, too, who, the better to carry on his plots and plans, had, by dint of violence, immured him, Charles, in a dungeon, and loaded him with chains. There he lay sleeping, and at his mercy.

"Shall I awaken him," said Charles, "or let him sleep off the fatigue, which, no doubt, is weighing down his limbs, and setting heavily on his eyelids. No, my business with him is too urgent."

He then raised his voice, and cried, —

"Varney, Varney, awake!"

The sound disturbed, without altogether breaking up, the deep slumber of the vampyre, and he uttered a low moan, and moved one hand restlessly. Then, as if that disturbance of the calm and deep repose which had sat upon him, had given at once the reign to fancy, he began to mutter strange words in his sleep, some of which could be heard by Charles distinctly, while others were too incoherently uttered to be clearly understood.

"Where is it?" he said; "where — where hidden? — Pull the house down! — Murder! — No, no, no! no murder! — I will not, I dare not. Blood enough is upon my hands. — The money! — the money! Down, villains! down! down!"

What these incoherent words alluded to specifically, Charles, of course, could not have the least idea, but he listened attentively, with a hope that something might fall from his lips that would afford a key to some of the mysterious circumstances with which he was so intimately connected.

Now, however, there was a longer silence than before, only broken occasionally by low moans; but suddenly, as Charles was thinking of again speaking, he uttered some more disjointed sentences.

"No harm," he said, "no harm, — Marchdale is a villain! — Not a hair of his head injured — no, no. Set him free — yes, I will set him free. Beware! beware, Marchdale! and you, Mortimer. The scaffold! ay, the scaffold! but where is the bright gold? The memory of the deed of blood will not cling to it. Where is it hidden? The gold! the gold! the gold! It is not in the grave — it cannot be there — no, no, no! — not there, not there! Load the pistols. There, there! Down, villain, down! — down, down!"

Despairing, now, of obtaining anything like tangible information from these ravings, which, even if they did, by accident, so connect themselves together as to seem to mean something, Charles again cried aloud, —

"Varney, awake, awake!"

But, as before, the sleeping man was sufficiently deaf to the cry to remain, with his eyes closed, still in a disturbed slumber, but yet a slumber which might last for a considerable time.

"I have heard," said Charles, "that there are many persons whom no noise will awaken, which the slightest touch rouses them in an instant. I will try that upon this slumbering being."

As he spoke, he advanced close to Sir Francis Varney, and touched him slightly with the toe of his boot.

The effect was as startling as it was instantaneous. The vampyre sprang to his feet, as he had been suddenly impelled up by some powerful machinery; and, casting his cloak away from his arms, so as to have them at liberty, he sprang upon Charles Holland, and hurled him to the ground, where he held him in a giant's gripe, as he cried, —

"Rash fool! be you whom you may. Why have you troubled me to rid the world of your intrusive existence?"

The attack was so sudden and so terrific, that resistance to it, even if Charles had had the power, was out of the question. All he could say, was, —

"Varney, Varney! do you not know me? I am Charles Holland. Will you now, in your mad rage, take the life you might more easily have taken when I lay in the dungeon from which you released me?"

The sound of his voice at once convinced Sir Francis Varney of his identity; and it was with a voice that had some tones of regret in it, that he replied, —

"And wherefore have you thought proper, when you were once free and unscathed, to cast yourself into such a position of danger as to follow me to my haunt?"

"I contemplated no danger," said Charles, "because I contemplated no evil. I do not know why you should kill me."

"You came here, and yet you say you do not know why I should kill you. Young man, have you a dozen lives

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that you can afford to tamper with them thus? I have, at much chance of imminence to myself, already once saved you, when another, with a sterner feeling, would have gladly taken your life; but now, as if you were determined to goad me to an act which I have shunned committing, you will not let me close my eyes in peace."

"Take your hand from off my throat, Varney, and I will then tell you what brought me here."

Sir Francis Varney did so.

"Rise," he said — "rise; I have seen blood enough to be sickened at the prospect of more; but you should not have come here and tempted me."

"Nay, believe me, I came here for good and not for evil. Sir Francis Varney, hear me out, and then judge for yourself whether you can blame the perseverance which enabled me to find out this secret place of refuge; but let me first say that now it is as good a place of concealment to you as before it was, for I shall not betray you."

"Go on, go on. What is it you desire?"

"During the long and weary hours of my captivity, I thought deeply, and painfully too, as may be well imagined, of all the circumstances connected with your appearance at Bannerworth Hall, and your subsequent conduct. Then I felt convinced that there was something far more than met the eye, in the whole affair, and, from what I have been informed of since, I am the more convinced that some secret, some mystery, which it is in your power only perhaps to explain, lurks at the bottom of all your conduct."

"Well, proceed," said Varney.

"Have I not said enough now to enable you to divine the object of my visit? It is that you should shake off the trammels of mystery in which you have shrouded yourself, and declare what it is you want, what it is you desire, that has induced you to set yourself up such a determined foe to the Bannerworth family."

"And that, you say, is the modest request that brings you here?"

"You speak as if you thought it was idle curiosity that prompts me, but you know it is not. Your language and manner are those of a man of too much sagacity not to see that I have higher notions."

"Name them."

"You have yourself, in more than one instance, behaved with a strange sort of romantic generosity, as if, but for some great object which you felt impelled to seek by any means, and at any sacrifice, you would be something in character and conduct very different from what you are. One of my objects, then, is to awaken that better nature which is slumbering within you, only now and then rousing itself to do some deed which should be the character of all your actions — for your own sake I have come."

"But not wholly?"

"Not wholly, as you say. There is another than whom, the whole world is not so dear to me. That other one was serene as she was beautiful. Happiness danced in her eyes, and she ought — for not more lovely is the mind that she possesses than the glorious form that enshrines it — to be happy. Her life would have passed like one long summer's day of beauty, sunshine, and pure heavenly enjoyment. You have poisoned the cup of joy that the great God of nature had permitted her to place to her lips and taste of mistrustingly. Why have you done this?"

"Have you said all that you came to say?"

"I have spoken the substance of my message. Much could I elaborate upon such a theme; but it is not one, Varney, which is congenial to my heart; for your sake, however, and for the sakes of those whom I hold most dear, let me implore you to act in this matter with a kindly consideration. Proclaim your motives; you cannot say that they are not such as we may aid you in."

Varney was silent for several moments; he seemed perceptibly moved by the manner of the young man, as well as by the matter of his discourse. In fact, one would suppose that Charles Holland had succeeded in investing what he said with some sort of charm that won much upon the fancy of Sir Francis Varney, for when he ceased to speak, the latter said in a low voice, —

"Go on, go on; you have surely much more to say."

"No, Varney; I have said enough, and not thus much would I have said had I not been aware, most certainly and truly aware, without the shadow of a doubt, by your manner, that you were most accessible to human feeling."

"I accessible to human feeling! know you to whom you speak? Am I not he before whom all men shudder, whose name has been a terror and desolation; and yet you can talk of my human feelings. Nay, if I had had any, be sure they would have been extinguished by the persecutions I have endured from those who, you know, with savage ferocity have sought my life."

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"No, Varney; I give you credit for being a subtler reasoner than thus to argue; you know well that you were the aggressor to those parties who sought your life; you know well that with the greatest imaginable pains you held yourself up to them as a thing of great terror."

"I did -- I did."

"You cannot, then, turn round upon ignorant persons, and blame them because your exertions to make yourself seem what you wish were but too successful."

"You use the word seem," said Varney, with a bitterness of aspect, "as if you would imply a doubt that I am that which thousands, by their fears, would testify me to be."

"Thousands might," said Charles Holland; "but not among them am I, Varney; I will not be made the victim of superstition. Were you to enact before my very eyes some of those feats which, to the senses of others, would stamp you as the preternatural being you assume to be, I would doubt the evidence of my own senses ere I permitted such a bugbear to oppress my brain."

"Go," said Sir Francis Varney, "go: I have no more words for you; I have nothing to relate to you."

"Nay, you have already listened sufficiently to me to give me hope that I had awakened some of the humanity that was in your nature. Do not, Sir Francis Varney, crush that hope, even as it was budding forth; not for my own sake do I ask you for revelations; that may, perhaps -- must be painful for you; but for the sake of Flora Bannerworth, to whom you own abundance of reparation."

"No, no."

"In the name of all that is great, and good, and just, I call upon you for justice."

"What have I to do with such an invocation? Utter such a sentiment to men who, like yourself, are invested with the reality as well as the outward show of human nature."

"Nay, Sir Francis Varney, now you belie yourself. You have passed through a long, and, perchance, a stormy life. Can you look back upon your career, and find no reminiscences of the past that shall convince you that you are of the great family of man, and have had abundance of human feelings and human affections?"

"Peace, peace!"

"Nay, Sir Francis Varney, I will take your word, and if you will lay your hand upon your heart, and tell me truly that you never felt what it was to love -- to have all feeling, all taste, and all hope of future joy, concentrated in one individual, I will despair, and leave you. If you will tell me that never, in your whole life, you have felt for any fair and glorious creature, as I now feel for Flora Bannerworth, a being for whom you could have sacrificed not only existence, but all the hopes of a glorious future that bloom around it -- if you will tell me, with the calm, dispassionate aspect of truth, that you have held yourself aloof from such human feelings, I will no longer press you to a disclosure which I shall bring no argument to urge."

The agitation of Sir Francis Varney's countenance was perceptible, and Charles Holland was about to speak again, when, striking him upon the breast with his clinched hand, the vampyre checked him, saying --

"Do you wish to drive me mad, that you thus, from memory's hidden cells, conjure up images of the past?"

"Then there are such images to conjure up -- there are such shadows only sleeping, but which require only, as you did even now, but a touch to awaken them to life and energy. Oh, Sir Francis Varney, do not tell me that you are not human."

The vampyre made a furious gesture, as if he would have attacked Charles Holland; but then he sank nearly to the floor, as if soul-stricken by some recollection that unnerved his arm; he shook with unwonted emotion, and, from the frightful livid aspect of his countenance, Charles dreaded some serious accession of indisposition, which might, if nothing else did, prevent him from making the revelation he so much sought to hear from his lips.

"Varney," he cried, "Varney, be calm! you will be listened to by one who will draw no harsh -- no hasty conclusions; by one, who, with that charity, I grieve to say, is rare, will place upon the words you utter the most favourable construction. Tell me all, I pray you, tell me all."

"This is strange," said the vampyre. "I never thought that aught human could have moved me. Young man, you have touched the chords of memory; they vibrate throughout my heart, producing cadences and sounds of years long past. Bear with me awhile."

"And you will speak to me?"

"I will."

"Having your promise, then, I am content, Varney."

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"But you must be secret; not even in the wildest waste of nature, where you can well presume that nought but Heaven can listen to your whispering, must you utter one word of that which I shall tell to you."

"Alas!" said Charles, "I dare not take such a confidence; I have said that it is not for myself; I seek such knowledge of what you are, and what you have been, but it is for another so dear to me, that all the charms of life that make up other men's delights, equal not the witchery of one glance from her, speaking as it does of the glorious light from that Heaven which is eternal, from whence she sprung."

"And you reject my communication," said Varney, "because I will not give you leave to expose it to Flora Bannerworth."

"It must be so."

"And you are most anxious to hear that which I have to relate?"

"Most anxious, indeed — indeed, most anxious."

"Then have I found in that scruple which besets your mind, a better argument for trusting you, than had ye been loud in protestation. Had your promises of secrecy been but those which come from the lip, and not from the heart, my confidence would not have been rejected on such grounds. I think that I dare trust you."

"With leave to tell to Flora that which you shall communicate."

"You may whisper it to her, but to no one else, without my special leave and licence."

"I agree to those terms, and will religiously preserve them."

"I do not doubt you for one moment; and now I will tell to you what never yet has passed my lips to mortal man. Now will I connect together some matters which you may have heard piecemeal from others."

"What others are they?"

"Dr. Chillingworth, and he who once officiated as a London hangman."

"I have heard something from those quarters."

"Listen then to me, and you shall better understand that which you have heard. Some years ago, it matters not the number, on a stormy night, towards the autumn of the year, two men sat alone in poverty, and that species of distress which beset the haughty, profligate, daring man, who has been accustomed all his life to its most enticing enjoyments, but never to that industry which alone ought to produce them, and render them great and magnificent."

"Two men; and who were they?"

"I was one. Look upon me! I was one of those men; and strong and evil passions were battling in my heart."

"And the other?"

"Was Marmaduke Bannerworth."

"Gracious Heaven! the father of her whom I adore; the suicide."

"Yes, the same; that man stained with a thousand vices — blasted by a thousand crimes — the father of her who partakes nothing of his nature, who borrows nothing from his memory but his name — was the man who there sat with me, plotting and contriving how, by fraud or violence, we were to lead our usual life of revelry and wild audacious debauch."

"Go on, go on; believe me, I am deeply interested."

"I can see as much. We were not nice in the various schemes which our prolific fancies engendered. If trickery, and the false dice at the gaming table, sufficed not to fill our purses, we were bold enough for violence. If simple robbery would not succeed, we could take a life."

"Murder?"

"Ay, call it by its proper name, a murder. We sat till the midnight hour had passed, without arriving at a definite conclusion; we saw no plan of practicable operation, and so we wandered onwards to one of those deep dens of iniquity, a gaming house, wherein we had won and lost thousands.

"We had no money, but we staked largely, in the shape of a wager, upon the success of one of the players; we knew not, or cared not, for the consequences, if we had lost; but, as it happened, we were largely successful, and beggars as we had walked into that place, we might have left it independent men.

"But when does the gambler know when to pause in his career? If defeat awakens all the raging passions of humanity within his bosom, success but feeds the great vice that has been there engendered. To the dawn of morn we played; the bright sun shone in, and yet we played — the midday came, and went — the stimulant of wine supported us, and still we played; then came the shadows of evening, stealing on in all their beauty. But what

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were they to us, amid those mutations of fortune, which, at one moment, made us princes, and placed palaces at our control, and, at another, debased us below the veriest beggar, that craves the stinted alms of charity from door to door.

"And there was one man who, from the first to the last, stayed by us like a very fiend; more than man, I thought he was not human. We won of all, but of him. People came and brought their bright red gold, and laid it down before us, but for us to take it up, and then, by a cruel stroke of fortune, he took it from us.

"The night came on; we won, and he won of us; the clock struck twelve — we were beggars. God knows what was he.

"We saw him place his winnings about his person — we saw the smile that curved the corners of his lips; he was calm, and we were maddened. The blood flowed temperately through his veins, but in ours it was burning lava, scorching as it went through every petty artery, and drying up all human thought — all human feeling.

"The winner left, and we tracked his footsteps. When he reached the open air, although he had taken much less than we of the intoxicating beverages that are supplied gratis to those who frequent those haunts of infamy, it was evident that some sort of inebriation attacked him; his steps were disordered and unsteady, and, as we followed him, we could perceive, by the devious track that he took, that he was somewhat uncertain of his route.

"We had no fixed motive in so pursuing this man. It was but an impulsive proceeding at the best; but as he still went on and cleared the streets, getting into the wild and open country, and among the hedge-rows, we began to whisper together, and to think that what we did not owe to fortune, we might to our own energy and courage at such a moment.

"I need not hesitate to say so, since, to hide the most important feature of my revelation from you, would be but to mock you; we resolved upon robbing him."

"And was that all?"

"It was all that our resolution went to. We were not anxious to spill blood; but still we were resolved that we would accomplish our purpose, even if it required murder for its consummation. Have you heard enough?"

"I have not heard enough, although I guess the rest."

"You may well guess it, from its preface. He turned down a lonely pathway, which, had we chosen it ourselves, could not have been more suitable for the attack we meditated.

"There were tall trees on either side, and a hedge-row stretching high up between them. We knew that that lane led to a suburban village, which, without a doubt, was the object of his destination.

"Then Marmaduke Bannerworth spoke, saying, —

"'What we have to do, must be done now or never. There needs not two in this adventure. Shall you or I require him to refund what he has won from us?'

"'I care not,' I said; 'but if we are to accomplish our purpose without arousing even a shadow of resistance, it is better to show him its futility by both appearing, and take a share in the adventure.'

"This was agreed upon, and we hastened forward. He heard footsteps pursuing him, and quickened his pace. I was the fleetest runner, and overtook him. I passed him a pace or two, and then turning, I faced him, and impeded his progress.

"The lane was narrow, and a glance behind him showed him Marmaduke Bannerworth; so that he was hemmed in between two enemies, and could move neither to the right nor to the left on account of the thick brushwood that intervened between the trees.

"Then, with an amazing courage, that sat but ill upon him, he demanded of us what we wanted, and proclaimed his right to pass, despite the obstruction we placed in his way.

"The dialogue was brief. I, being foremost, spoke to him.

"'Your money,' I said; 'your winnings at the gaming-table. We cannot, and we will not lose it.'

"So suddenly, that he had nearly taken my life, he drew a pistol from his pocket, and levelling it at my head, he fired upon me.

"Perhaps, had I moved, it might have been my death; but, as it was, the bullet furrowed my cheek, leaving a scar, the path of which is yet visible in a white cicatrix.

"I felt a stunning sensation, and thought myself a dead man. I cried aloud to Marmaduke Bannerworth, and he rushed forward. I knew not that he was armed, and that he had the power about him to do the deed which he then accomplished; but there was a groan, a slight struggle, and the successful gamester fell upon the green sward,

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bathed in his blood."

"And this is the father of her whom I adore?"

"It is. Are you shocked to think of such a near relationship between so much beauty and intelligence and a midnight murderer? Is your philosophy so poor, that the daughter's beauty suffers from the commission of a father's crime?"

"No, no, it is not so. Do not fancy that, for one moment, I can entertain such unworthy opinions. The thought that crossed me was that I should have to tell one of such a gentle nature that her father had done such a deed."

"On that head you can use your own discretion. The deed was done; there was sufficient light for us to look upon the features of the dying man. Ghastly and terrific they glared upon us; while the glazed eyes, as they were upturned to the bright sky, seemed appealing to Heaven for vengeance against us, for having done the deed."

"Many a day and many an hour since, at all those times and all seasons, I have seen them, following me, and gloating over the misery they had the power to make. I think I see them now."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; look -- look -- see how they glare upon me -- with what a fixed and frightful stare the bloodshot pupils keep their place -- there, there! oh! save me from such a visitation again. It is too horrible. I dare not -- I cannot endure it; and yet why do you gaze at me with such an aspect, dread visitant? You know that it was not my hand that did the deed -- who laid you low. You know that not to me are you able to lay the heavy charge of your death!"

"Varney, you look upon vacancy," said Charles Holland.

"No, no; vacancy it may be to you, but to me 'tis full of horrible shapes."

"Compose yourself; you have taken me far into your confidence already; I pray you now to tell me all. I have in my brain no room for horrible conjectures such as those which might else torment me."

Varney was silent for a few minutes, and then he wiped from his brow the heavy drops of perspiration that had there gathered, and heaved a deep sigh.

"Speak to me," added Charles; "nothing will so much relieve you from the terrors of this remembrance as making a confidence which reflection will approve of, and which you will know that you have no reason to repent."

"Charles Holland," said Varney, "I have already gone too far to retract -- much too far, I know, and can well understand all the danger of half confidence. You already know so much, that it is fit you should know more."

"Go on then, Varney, I will listen to you."

"I know not if, at this juncture, I can command myself to say more. I feel that what next has to be told will be most horrible for me to tell -- most sad for you to hear told."

"I can well believe, Varney, from your manner of speech, and from the words you use, that you have some secret to relate beyond the simple fact of the murder of this gamester by Marmaduke Bannerworth."

"You are right -- such is the fact; the death of that man could not have moved me as you now see me moved. There is a secret connected with his fate which I may well hesitate to utter -- a secret too horrible even to whisper to the winds of heaven -- although I did not do the deed; no, no -- I did not strike the blow -- not I -- not I!"

"Varney, it is astonishing to me the pains you take to assure yourself of your innocence of this deed; no one accuses you, but still, were it not that I am impressed with a strong conviction that you're speaking to me nothing but the truth, the very fact of your extreme anxiety to acquit yourself, would engender suspicion."

"I can understand that feeling, Charles Holland; I can fully understand it. I do not blame you for it -- it is a most natural one; but when you know all, you will feel with me how necessary it must have been to my peace to seize upon every trivial circumstance that can help me to a belief in my own innocence."

"It may be so; as yet, you well know, I speak in ignorance. But what could there have been in the character of that gambler, that has made you so sympathetic concerning his decease?"

"Nothing -- nothing whatever in his character. He was a bad man; not one of these free, open spirits which are seduced into crime by thoughtlessness -- not one of those whom we pity, perchance, more than we condemn; but a man without a redeeming trait in his disposition -- a man so heaped up with vices and iniquities, that society gained much by his decease, and not an individual could say that he had lost a friend."

"And yet the mere thought of the circumstances connected with his death seems almost to drive you to the



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verge of despair."

"You are right; the mere thought has that effect."

"You have aroused all my curiosity to know the causes of such a feeling."

Varney paced the apartment in silence for many minutes. He seemed to be enduring a great mental struggle, and at length, when he turned to Charles Holland and spoke, there were upon his countenance traces of deep emotion.

"I have said, young man, that I will take you into my confidence. I have said that I will clear up many seeming mysteries, and that I will enable you to understand what was obscure in the narrative of Dr. Chillingworth, and of that man who filled the office of public executioner, and who has haunted me so long."

"It is true, then, as the doctor states, that you were executed in London?"

"I was."

"And resuscitated by the galvanic process, put into operation by Dr. Chillingworth?"

"As he supposed; but there are truths connected with natural philosophy which he dreamed not of. I bear a charmed life, and it was but accident which produced a similar effect upon the latent springs of my existence in the house to which the executioner conducted me, to what would have been produced had I been suffered, in the free and open air, to wait until the cool moonbeams fell upon me."

"Varney, Varney," said Charles Holland, "you will not succeed in convincing me of your supernatural powers. I hold such feelings and sensations at arm's length. I will not — I cannot assume you to be what you affect."

"I ask for no man's belief. I know that which I know, and, gathering experience from the coincidence of different phenomena, I am compelled to arrive at certain conclusions. Believe what you please, doubt what you please; but I say again that I am not as other men."

"I am in no condition to dispute your proposition; I wish not to dispute it; but you are wandering, Varney, from the point. I wait anxiously for a continuation of your narrative."

"I know that I am wandering from it — I know well that I am wandering from it, and that the reason I do so is that I dread that continuation."

"That dread will not be the less for its postponement."

"You are right; but tell me, Charles Holland, although you are young you have been about in the great world sufficiently to form correct opinions, and to understand that which is related to you, drawing proper deductions from certain facts, and arriving possibly at more correct conclusions than some of maturer years with less wisdom."

"I will freely answer, Varney, any question you may put to me."

"I know it; tell me then what measure of guilt you attach to me in the transaction I have noticed to you."

"It seems then to me that, not contemplating the man's murder, you cannot be accused of the act, although a set of fortuitous circumstances made you appear an accomplice to its commission."

"You think I may be acquitted?"

"You can acquit yourself, knowing that you did not contemplate the murder."

"I did not contemplate it. I know not what desperate deed I should have stopped short at then, in the height of my distress, but I neither contemplated taking that man's life, nor did I strike the blow which sent him from existence."

"There is even some excuse as regards the higher crime for Marmaduke Bannerworth."

"Think you so?"

"Yes; he thought that you were killed, and impulsively he might have struck the blow that made him a murderer."

"Be it so. I am willing, extremely willing that anything should occur that should remove the odium of guilt from any man. Be it so, I say, with all my heart; but now, Charles Holland, I feel that we must meet again ere I can tell you all; but in the meantime let Flora Bannerworth rest in peace — she need dread nothing from me. Avarice and revenge, the two passions which found a home in my heart, are now stifled forever."

"Revenge! did you say revenge?"

"I did; whence the marvel, am I not sufficiently human for that?"

"But you coupled it with the name of Flora Bannerworth."

"I did, and that is part of my mystery."

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"A mystery, indeed, to imagine that such a being as Flora could awaken any such feeling in your heart — a most abundant mystery."

"It is so. I do not affect to deny it; but yet it is true, although so greatly mysterious; but tell her that although at one time I looked upon her as one whom I cared not if I injured, her beauty and distress changed the current of my thoughts, and won me greatly. From the moment I found I had the power to become the bane of her existence, I ceased to wish to be so, and never again shall she experience a pang of alarm from Varney, the vampyre."

"Your message shall be faithfully delivered, and doubt not that it will be received with grateful feelings. Nevertheless I should have much wished to have been in a position to inform her of more particulars."

"Come to me here at midnight to-morrow, and you shall know all. I will have no reservation with you, no concealments; you shall know whom I have had to battle against, and how it is that a world of evil passions took possession of my heart and made me what I am."

"Are you firm in this determination, Varney — will you indeed tell me no more to-night?"

"No more, I have said it. Leave me now, I have need of more repose; for of late sleep has seldom closed my eyelids."

Charles Holland was convinced, from the positive manner in which he spoke, that nothing more in the shape of information, at that time, was to be expected from Varney; and being fearful that if he urged this strange being too far, at a time when he did not wish it, he might refuse all further communication, he thought it prudent to leave him, so he said to him, —

"Be assured, Varney, I shall keep the appointment you have made, with an expectation when we do meet of being rewarded by a recital of some full particulars."

"You shall not be disappointed; farewell, farewell!"

Charles Holland bade him adieu, and left the place.

Although he had now acquired all the information he hoped to take away with him when Varney first began to be communicative, yet, when he came to consider how strange and unaccountable a being he had been in communication with, Charles could not but congratulate himself that he had heard so much; for, from the manner of Varney, he could well suppose that that was, indeed, the first time he had been so communicative upon subjects which evidently held so conspicuous a place in his heart.

And he had abundance of hope, likewise, from what had been said by Varney, that he would keep his word, and communicate to him fully all else that he required to know and when he recollected those words which Varney had used, signifying that he knew the danger of half confidences, that hope grew into a certainty, and Charles began to have no doubt but that on the next evening all that was mysterious in the various affairs connected with the vampyre would become clear and open to the light of day.

He strolled down the lane in which the lone house was situated, revolving these matters in his mind, and when he arrived at its entrance, he was rather surprised to see a throng of persons hastily moving onward, with some appearance of dismay about them, and anxiety depicted upon their countenances.

He stopped a lad, and inquired of him the cause of the seeming tumult.

"Why, sir, the fact is," said the boy, "a crowd from the town's been burning down Bannerworth Hall, and they've killed a man."

"Bannerworth Hall! you must be mistaken."

"Well, sir, I ought not to call it Bannerworth Hall, because I mean the old ruins in the neighbourhood that are supposed to have been originally Bannerworth Hall before the house now called such was built; and, moreover, as the Bannerworths have always had a garden there, and two or three old sheds, the people in the town called it Bannerworth Hall in common with the other building."

"I understand. And do you say that all have been destroyed?"

"Yes, sir. All that was capable of being burnt has been burnt, and, what is more, a man has been killed among the ruins. We don't know who he is, but the folks said he was a vampyre, and they left him for dead."

"When will these terrible outrages cease? Oh! Varney, Varney, you have much to answer for; even if in your conscience you succeed in acquitting yourself of the murder, some of the particulars concerning which you have informed me of."

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## Chapter LXXXIII. THE MYSTERIOUS ARRIVAL AT THE INN. -- THE HUNGARIAN NOBLEMAN. -- THE LETTER TO VARNEY.

While these affairs are proceeding, and when there seems every appearance of Sir Francis Varney himself quickly putting an end to some of the vexatious circumstances connected with himself and the Bannerworth family, it is necessary that we should notice an occurrence which took place at the same inn which the admiral had made such a scene of confusion upon the occasion of his first arrival in the town.

Not since the admiral had arrived with Jack Pringle, and so disturbed the whole economy of the household, was there so much curiosity excited as on the morning following the interview which Charles Holland had had with Varney, the vampyre.

The inn was scarcely opened, when a stranger arrived, mounted on a coal-black horse, and, alighting, he surrendered the bridle into the hands of a boy who happened to be at the inn-door, and stalked slowly and solemnly into the building.

He was tall, and of a cadaverous aspect; in attire he was plainly apparelled, but there was no appearance of poverty about him; on the contrary, what he really had on was of a rich and costly character, although destitute of ornament.

He sat down in the first room that presented itself, and awaited the appearance of the landlord, who, upon being informed that a guest of apparently ample means, and of some consequence, had entered the place, hastily went to him to receive his commands.

With a profusion of bows, our old friend, who had been so obsequious to Admiral Bell, entered the room, and begged to know what orders the gentleman had for him.

"I presume," said the stranger, in a deep, solemn voice, "I presume that you have no objection, for a few days that I shall remain in this town, to board and lodge me for a certain price which you can name to me at once?"

"Certainly, sir," said the landlord; "any way you please; without wine, sir, I presume?"

"As you please; make your own arrangements."

"Well, sir, as we can't tell, of course, what wine a gentleman may drink, but when we come to consider breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper, and a bed, and all that sort of thing, and a private sitting-room, I suppose, sir?"

"Certainly."

"You would not, then, think, sir, a matter of four guineas a week will be too much, perhaps."

"I told you to name your own charge. Let it be four guineas; if you had said eight I should have paid it."

"Good God!" said the publican, "here's a damned fool that I am. I beg your pardon, sir, I didn't mean you. Now I could punch my own head -- will you have breakfast at once, sir, and then we shall begin regularly, you know, sir?"

"Have what?"

"Breakfast, breakfast, you know, sir; tea, coffee, cocoa, or chocolate; ham, eggs, or a bit of grilled fowl, cold sirloin of roast beef, or a red herring -- anything you like, sir."

"I never take breakfast, so you may spare yourself the trouble of providing anything for me."

"Not take breakfast, sir! not take breakfast! Would you like to take anything to drink then, sir? People say it's an odd time, at eight o'clock in the morning, to drink; but, for my part, I always have thought that you couldn't begin a good thing too soon."

"I live upon drink," said the stranger; "but you have none in the cellar that will suit me."

"Indeed, sir."

"No, no, I am certain."

"Why, we've got some claret now, sir," said the landlord.

"Which may look like blood, and yet not be it."

"Like what, sir? -- damn my rags!"

"Begone, begone."

The stranger uttered these words so peremptorily that the landlord hastily left the room, and going into his own bar, he gave himself so small a tap on the side of the head, that it would not have hurt a fly, as he said, --

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"I could punch myself into bits, I could tear my hair out by the roots;" and then he pulled a little bit of his hair, so gently and tenderly that it showed what a man of discretion he was, even in the worst of all his agony of passion.

"The idea," he added, "of a fellow coming here, paying four guineas a week for board and lodging, telling me he would not have minded eight, and then not wanting any breakfast; it's enough to aggravate half a dozen saints; but what an odd fish he looks."

At this moment the ostler came in, and, standing at the bar, he wiped his mouth with his sleeve, as he said, —

"I suppose you'll stand a quart for that, master?"

"A quart for what, you vagabond? A quart because I've done myself up in heaps; a quart because I'm fit to pull myself into fiddlestrings?"

"No," said the ostler; "because I've just put up the gentleman's horse."

"What gentleman's horse?"

"Why, the big-looking fellow with the white face, now in the parlour."

"What, did he come on a horse, Sam? What sort of a looking creature is it? you may judge of a man from the sort of horse-company he keeps."

"Well, then, sir, I hardly know. It's coal black, and looks as knowing as possible; it's tried twice to get a kick at me, but I was down upon him, and put the bucket in his way. Howsomdever, I don't think it's a bad animal, as a animal, mind you, sir, though a little bit vicious or so."

"Well," said the publican, as he drew the ostler half a pint instead of a quart, "you're always drinking; take that."

"Blow me," said the ostler, "half a pint, master!"

"Plague take you, I can't stand parleying with you, there's the parlour bell; perhaps after all, he will have some breakfast."

While the landlord was away the ostler helped himself to a quart of the strongest ale, which, by a singular faculty that he had acquired, he poured down his throat without any effort at swallowing, holding his head back, and the jug at a little distance from his mouth.

Having accomplished this feat, he reversed the jug, giving it a knowing tap with his knuckles as though he would have signified to all the world that it was empty, and that he had accomplished what he desired.

In the meantime, the landlord had made his way to his strange guest, who said to him, when he came into the room,

"Is there not one Sir Francis Varney residing in this town?"

"The devil!" thought the landlord; "this is another of them, I'll bet a guinea. Sir Francis Varney, sir, did you say? Why, sir, there was a Sir Francis Varney, but folks seem to think as how he's no better than he should be — a sort of vampyre, sir, if you know what that is."

"I have, certainly, heard of such things; but can you not tell me Varney's address? I wish to see him."

"Well, then, sir, I cannot tell it to you, for there's really been such a commotion and such a riot about him that he's taken himself off, I think, altogether, and we can hear nothing of him. Lord bless you, sir, they burnt down his house, and hunted him about so, that I don't think that he'll ever show his face here again."

"And cannot you tell me where he was seen last?"

"That I cannot, sir; but, if anybody knows anything about him, it's Mr. Henry Bannerworth, or perhaps Dr. Chillingworth, for they have had more to do with him than anybody else."

"Indeed; and can you tell me the address of the former individual?"

"That I cannot, sir, for the Bannerworths have left the Hall. As for the doctor, sir, you'll see his house in High-street, with a large brass plate on the door, so that you cannot mistake it. It's No. 9, on the other side of the way."

"I thank you for so much information," said the stranger, and rising, he walked to the door. Before, however, he left, he turned, and added, — "You can say, if you should by chance meet Mr. Bannerworth, that a Hungarian nobleman wishes to speak to him concerning Sir Francis Varney, the vampyre?"

"A what, sir?"

"A nobleman from Hungary," was the reply.

"The deuce!" said the landlord, as he looked after him. "He don't seem at all hungry here, not thirsty neither."

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What does he mean by a nobleman from Hungary? The idea of a man talking about hungry, and not taking any breakfast. He's queering me. I'll be hanged if I'll stand it. Here I clearly lose four guineas a week, and then get made a game of besides. A nobleman, indeed! I think I see him. Why, he isn't quite so big as old Slaney, the butcher. It's a do. I'll have at him when he comes back."

Meanwhile, the unconscious object of this soliloquy passed down High-street, until he came to Dr. Chillingworth's, at whose door he knocked.

Now Mrs. Chillingworth had been waiting the whole night for the return of the doctor, who had not yet made his appearance, and, consequently, that lady's temper had become acidulated to an uncommon extent, and when she heard a knock at the door, something possessed her that it could be no other than her spouse, and she prepared to give him that warm reception which she considered he had a right, as a married man, to expect after such conduct.

She hurriedly filled a tolerably sized hand-basin with not the cleanest water in the world, and then, opening the door hurriedly with one hand, she slouched the contents into the face of the intruder, exclaiming, —

"Now you've caught it!"

"D — n!" said the Hungarian nobleman, and then Mrs. Chillingworth uttered a scream, for she feared she had made a mistake.

"Oh, sir! I'm very sorry; but I thought it was my husband."

But if you did," said the stranger, "there was no occasion to drown him with a basin of soap-suds. It is your husband I want, madam, if he be Dr. Chillingworth."

"Then, indeed, you must go on wanting him, sir, for he's not been to his own home for a day and a night. He takes up all his time in hunting after that beastly vampyre."

"Ah! Sir Francis Varney, you mean."

"I do; and I'd Varney him if I caught hold of him."

"Can you give me the least idea of where he can be found?"

"Of course I can."

"Indeed! where?" said the stranger, eagerly.

"In some churchyard, to be sure, gobbling up the dead bodies."

With this Mrs. Chillingworth shut the door with a bang that nearly flattened the Hungarian's nose with his face, and he was fain to walk away, quite convinced that there was no information to be had in that quarter.

He returned to the inn, and having told the landlord that he would give a handsome reward to any one who would discover to him the retreat of Sir Francis Varney, he shut himself up in an apartment alone, and was busy for a time in writing letters.

Although the sum which the the stranger offered was an indefinite one, the landlord mentioned the matter across the bar to several persons; but all of them shook their heads, believing it to be a very perilous adventure indeed to have anything to do with so troublesome a subject as Sir Francis Varney. As the day advanced, however, a young lad presented himself, and asked to see the gentleman who had been inquiring for Varney.

The landlord severely questioned and cross-questioned him, with the hope of discovering if he had any information; but the boy was quite obdurate, and would speak to no one but the person who had offered the reward, so that mine host was compelled to take him to the Hungarian nobleman, who, as yet, had neither eaten nor drunk in the house.

The boy wore upon his countenance the very expression of juvenile cunning, and when the stranger asked him if he really was in possession of any information concerning the retreat of Sir Francis Varney, he said, —

"I can tell you where he is, but what are you going to give?"

"What sum do you require?" said the stranger.

"A whole half-crown."

"It is your's; and, if your information prove correct, come to-morrow, and I'll add another to it, always provided, likewise, you keep the secret from any one else."

"Trust me for that," said the boy. "I live with my grandmother; she's precious old, and has got a cottage. We sell milk and cakes, sticky stuff, and pennywinkles."

"A goodly collection. Go on."

"Well, sir, this morning, there comes a man in with a bottle, and he buys a bottle full of milk and a loaf. I saw

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him, and I knew it was Varney, the vampyre."

"You followed him?"

"Of course I did, sir; and he's staying at the house that's to let down the lane, round the corner, by Mr. Biggs's, and past Lee's garden, leaving old Slaney's stacks on your right hand, and so cutting on till you come to Grant's meadow, when you'll see old Madhunter's brick-field staring of you in the face; and arter that -- "

"Peace -- peace! -- you shall yourself conduct me. Come to this place at sunset; be secret, and, probably, ten times the reward you have already received may be yours," said the stranger.

"What, ten half-crowns?"

"Yes; I will keep my word with you."

"What a go! I know what I'll do. I'll set up as a showman, and what a glorious treat it will be, to peep through one of the holes all day myself, and get somebody to pull the strings up and down, and when I'm tired of that, I can blaze away upon the trumpet like one o'clock. I think I see me. Here you sees the Duke of Marlborough a whopping of everybody, and here you see the Frenchmen flying about like parched peas in a sifter."

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## Chapter LXXXIV. THE EXCITED POPULACE. -- THE PLACE OF REFUGE.

There seemed now a complete lull in the proceedings as connected with Varney, the vampyre. We have reason to believe that the executioner who had been as solicitous as Varney to obtain undisputed possession of Bannerworth Hall, has fallen a victim to the indiscriminate rage of the mob. Varney himself is a fugitive, and bound by the most solemn ties to Charles Holland, not only to communicate to him such particulars of the past, as will bring satisfaction to his mind, but to abstain from any act which, for the future, shall exercise a disastrous influence upon the happiness of Flora.

The doctor and the admiral, with Henry, had betaken themselves from the Hall as we had recorded, and, in due time, reached the cottage where Flora and her mother had found a temporary refuge.

Mrs. Bannerworth was up; but Flora was sleeping, and, although the tidings they had to tell were of a curious and mixed nature, they would not have her disturbed to listen to them.

And, likewise, they were rather pleased than otherwise, since they knew not exactly what had become of Charles Holland, to think that they would probably be spared the necessity of saying they could not account for his absence.

That he had gone upon some expedition, probably dangerous, and so one which he did not wish to communicate the particulars of to his friends, lest they should make a strong attempt to dissuade him from it, they were induced to believe.

But yet they had that confidence in his courage and active intellectual resources, to believe that he would come through it unscathed, and, probably, shortly show himself at the cottage.

In this hope they were not disappointed, for in about two hours Charles made his appearance; but, until he began to be questioned concerning his absence by the admiral, he scarcely considered the kind of dilemma he had put himself into by the promise of secrecy he had given to Varney, and was a little puzzled to think how much he might tell, and how much he was bound in honour to conceal.

"Avast there!" cried the admiral; "what's become of your tongue, Charles? You've been on some cruize, I'll be bound. Haul over the ship's books, and tell us what's happened."

"I have been upon an adventure," said Charles, "which I hope will be productive of beneficial results to us all; but, the fact is, I have made a promise, perhaps incautiously, that I will not communicate what I know."

"Whew!" said the admiral; "that's awkward; but, however, if a man sails under sealed instructions, there's an end of it. I remember when I was off Candia once -- "

"Ha!" interposed Jack, "that was the time you tumbled over the blessed binnacle, all in consequence of taking too much Madiera. I remember it, too -- it's an out and out good story, that 'ere. You took a rope's end, you know, and laid into the bowsprit; and, says you, 'Get up, you lubber,' says you, all the while a thinking, I suppose, as it was long Jack Ingram, the carpenter's mate, laying asleep. What a lark!"

"This scoundrel will be the death of me," said the admiral; "there isn't one word of truth in what he says. I never got drunk in all my life, as everybody knows. Jack, affairs are getting serious between you and I -- we must part, and for good. It's a good many times that I've told you you've forgot the difference between the quarter-deck and the caboose. Now, I'm serious -- you're off the ship's books, and there's an end of you."

"Very good," said Jack; "I'm willing. I'll leave you. Do you think I want to keep you any longer? Good by, old bloak -- I'll leave you to repent, and when old grim death comes yard-arm with you, and you can't shake off his boarding-tackle, you'll say, 'Where's Jack Pringle?' says you; and then what's his name -- oh, ah! echo you call it -- echo'll say, it's d -- -- d if it knows."

Jack turned upon his heel, and before the admiral could make any reply, he left the place.

"What's the rascal up to now?" said the admiral. "I really didn't think he'd have taken me at my word."

"Oh, then, after all, you didn't mean it, uncle?" said Charles.

"What's that to you, you lubber, whether I mean it, or not, you shore-going squab? Of course I expect everybody to desert an old hulk, rats and all -- and now Jack Pringle's gone; the vagabond, couldn't he stay? and get drunk as long as he liked! Didn't he say what he pleased, and do what he pleased, the mutinous thief? Didn't he say I run away from a Frenchman off Cape Ushant, and didn't I put up with that?"

"But, my dear uncle, you sent him away yourself."

"I didn't, and you know I didn't; but I see how it is, you've disgusted Jack among you. A better seaman never trod the deck of a man-of-war."

"But his drunkenness, uncle?"

"It's a lie. I don't believe he ever got drunk. I believe you all invented it, and Jack's so good-natured, he tumbled about just to keep you in countenance."

"But his insolence, uncle; his gross insolence towards you -- his inventions, his exaggerations of the truth?"

"Avast, there -- avast, there, -- none of that, Master Charlie; Jack couldn't do anything of the sort; and I means to say this, that if Jack was here now, I'd stick up for him, and say he was a good seaman."

"Tip us your fin, then," said Jack, darting into the room; "do you think I'd leave you, you d -- -- d old fool? What would become of you, I wonder, if I wasn't to take you in to dry nurse? Why, you blessed old babby, what do you mean by it?"

"Jack, you villain!"

"Ah! go on and call me a villain as much as you like. Don't you remember when the bullets were scuttling our nobs?"

"I do, I do, Jack; tip us your fin, old fellow. You've saved my life more than once."

"It's a lie."

"It ain't. You did, I say."

"You be d -- -- d!"

And thus was the most serious misunderstanding that these two worthies ever had together made up. The real fact is, that the admiral could as little do without Jack, as he could have done without food; and as for Pringle, he no more thought of leaving the old commodore, than of -- what shall we say? forswearing rum. Jack himself could not have taken a stronger oath.

But the old admiral had suffered so much from the idea that Jack had actually left him, that although he abused him as usual often enough, he never again talked of taking him off the ship's books; and, to the credit of Jack be it spoken, he took no advantage of the circumstance, and only got drunk just as usual, and called his master an old fool whenever it suited him.

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## Chapter LXXXV. THE HUNGARIAN NOBLEMAN GETS INTO DANGER. -- HE IS FIRED AT, AND SHOWS SOME OF HIS QUALITY.

Considerably delighted was the Hungarian, not only at the news he had received from the boy, but as well for the cheapness of it. Probably he did not conceive it possible that the secret of the retreat of such a man as Varney could have been attained so easily.

He waited with great impatience for the evening, and stirred not from the inn for several hours; neither did he take any refreshment, notwithstanding he had made so liberal an arrangement with the landlord to be supplied.

All this was a matter of great excitement and speculation in the inn, so much so, indeed, that the landlord sent for some of the oldest customers of his house, regular toppers, who sat there every evening, indulging in strong drinks, and pipes and tobacco, to ask their serious advice as to what he should do, as if it were necessary he should do anything at all.

But, somehow or another, these wisecracks who assembled at the landlord's bidding, and sat down, with something strong before them, in the bar parlour, never once seemed to think that a man might, if he choosed, come to an inn, and agree to pay four guineas a week for board and lodging, and yet take nothing at all.

No; they could not understand it, and therefore they would not have it. It was quite monstrous that anybody should attempt to do anything so completely out of the ordinary course of proceeding. It was not to be borne; and as in this country it happens, free and enlightened as we are, that no man can commit a greater social offence than doing something his neighbours never thought of doing themselves, the Hungarian nobleman was voted a most dangerous character, and, in fact, not to be put up with.

"I shouldn't have thought so much of it," said the landlord; "but only look at the aggravation of the thing. After I have asked him four guineas a week, and expected to be beaten down to two, to be then told that he would not have cared if it had been eight. It is enough to aggravate a saint."

"Well, I agree with you there," said another; "that's just what it is, and I only wonder that a man of your sagacity has not quite understood it before."

"Understood what?"

"Why, that he is a vampyre. He has heard of Sir Francis Varney, that's the fact, and he's come to see him. Birds of a feather, you know, flock together, and now we shall have two vampyres in the town instead of one."

The party looked rather blank at this suggestion, which, indeed, seemed rather uncomfortable probably. The landlord had just opened his mouth to make some remark, when he was stopped by the violent ringing of what he now called the vampyre's bell, since it proceeded from the room where the Hungarian nobleman was.

"Have you an almanack in the house?" was the question of the mysterious guest.

"An almanack, sir? well, I really don't know. Let me see, an almanack."

"But, perhaps, you can tell me. I was to know the moon's age."

"The devil!" thought the landlord; "he's a vampyre, and no mistake. Why, sir, as to the moon's age, it was a full moon last night; very bright and beautiful, only you could not see it for the clouds."

"A full moon last night," said the mysterious guest, thoughtfully; "it may shine, then, brightly to-night, and if so, all will be well. I thank you, -- leave the room."

"Do you mean to say, sir, you don't want anything to eat now?"

"What I want I will order."

"But you have ordered nothing."

"Then presume that I want nothing."

The discomfited landlord was obliged to leave the room, for there was no such thing as making any answer to this, and so, still further confirmed in his opinion that the stranger was a vampyre that came to see Sir Francis Varney from a sympathetic feeling towards him, he again reached the bar-parlour.

"You may depend," he said, "as sure as eggs is eggs, that he is a vampyre. Hilloa! he's gone off, -- after him -- after him; he thinks we suspect him. There he goes -- down the High-street."

The landlord ran out, and so did those who were with him, one of whom carried his brandy and water in his hand, which, being too hot for him to swallow all at once, he still could not think of leaving behind.

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It was now getting rapidly dark, and the mysterious stranger was actually proceeding towards the lane to keep his appointment with the boy who had promised to conduct him to the hiding-place of Sir Francis Varney.

He had not proceeded far, however, before he began to suspect that he was followed, as it was evident on the instant that he altered his course; for, instead of walking down the lane, where the boy was waiting for him, he went right on, and seemed desirous of making his way into the open country between the town and Bannerworth Hall.

His pursuers — for they assumed that character — when they saw this became anxious to intercept him; and thinking that the greater force they had the better, they called out aloud as they passed a smithy, where a man was shoeing a horse, —

"Jack Burdon, here is another vampyre!"

"The deuce there is!" said the person who was addressed. "I'll soon settle him. Here's my wife gets no sleep of a night as it is, all owing to that Varney, who has been plaguing us so long. I won't put up with another."

So saying, he snatched from a hook on which it hung, an old fowling-piece, and joined the pursuit, which now required to be conducted with some celerity, for the stranger had struck into the open country, and was getting on at a good speed.

The last remnants of the twilight were fading away, and although the moon had actually risen, its rays were obscured by a number of light, fleecy clouds, which, although they did not promise to be of long continuance, as yet certainly impeded the light.

"Where is he going?" said the blacksmith. "He seems to be making his way towards the mill-stream."

"No," said another; "don't you see he is striking higher up towards the old ford, where the stepping-stones are?"

"He is — he is," cried the blacksmith, "Run on — run on; don't you see he is crossing it now? Tell me, all of you, are you quite sure he is a vampyre, and no mistake? He ain't the exciseman, landlord, now, is he?"

"The exciseman, the devil! Do you think I want to shoot the exciseman?"

"Very good — then here goes," exclaimed the Smith.

He stopped, and just as the brisk night air blew aside the clouds from before the face of the moon, and as the stranger was crossing the slippery stones, he fired at him. \* \* \* \*

How silently and sweetly the moon's rays fall upon the water, upon the meadows, and upon the woods. The scenery appeared the work of enchantment, some fairy land, waiting the appearance of its inhabitants. No sound met the ear; the very wind was hushed; nothing was there to distract the sense of sight, save the power of reflection.

This, indeed, would aid the effect of such a scene. A cloudless sky, the stars all radiant with beauty, while the moon, rising higher and higher in the heavens, increasing in the strength and refulgence of her light, and dimming the very stars, which seemed to grow gradually invisible as the majesty of the queen of night became more and more manifest.

The dark woods and the open meadows contrasted more and more strongly; like light and shade, the earth and sky were not more distinct and apart; and the rippling stream, that rushed along with all the impetuosity of uneven ground.

The banks are clothed with verdure; the tall sedges, here and there, lined the sides; beds of bulrushes raised their heads high above all else, and threw out their round clumps of blossoms like tufts, and looked strange in the light of the moon.

Here and there, too, the willows bent gracefully over the stream, and their long leaves were wafted and borne up and down by the gentler force of the stream.

Below, the stream widened, and ran foaming over a hard, stony bottom, and near the middle is a heap of stones — of large stones, that form the bed of the river, from which the water has washed away all earthy particles, and left them by themselves.

These stones in winter could not be seen, they were all under water, and the stream washed over in a turbulent and tumultuous manner. But now, when the water was clear and low, they are many of them positively out of the water, the stream running around and through their interstices; the water-weeds here and there lying at the top of the stream, and blossoming beautifully.

The daisy-like blossoms danced and waved gently on the moving flood, at the same time they shone in the

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moonlight, like fairy faces rising from the depths of the river, to receive the principle of life from the moon's rays.

'Tis sweet to wander in the moonlight at such an hour, and it is sweet to look upon such a scene with an unruffled mind, and to give way to the feelings that are engendered by a walk by the river side.

See, the moon is rising higher and higher, the shadows grow shorter and shorter; the river, which in places was altogether hidden by the tall willow trees, now gradually becomes less and less hidden, and the water becomes more and more lit up.

The moonbeams play gracefully on the rippling surface, here and there appearing like liquid silver, that each instant changed its position and surface exposed to the light.

Such a moment — such a scene, were by far too well calculated to cause the most solemn and serious emotions of the mind, and he must have been but at best insensible, who could wander over meadow and through grove, and yet remain untouched by the scene of poetry and romance in which he breathed and moved.

At such a time, and in such a place, the world is alive with all the finer essences of mysterious life. 'Tis at such an hour that the spirits quit their secret abodes, and visit the earth, and whirl round the enchanted trees.

'Tis now the spirits of earth and air dance their giddy flight from flower to flower. 'Tis now they collect and exchange their greetings; the wood is filled with them, the meadows teem with them, the hedges at the river side have them hidden among the deep green leaves and blades.

But what is that yonder, on the stones, partially out of the water — what can it be?

The more it is looked at, the more it resembles the human form — and yet it is still and motionless on the hard stones — and yet it is a human form. The legs are lying in the water, the arms appear to be partially in and partially out, they seem moved by the stream now and then, but very gently — so slightly, indeed, that it might well be questioned if it moved at all.

The moon's rays had not reached it; the bank on the opposite side of the stream was high, and some tall trees rose up and obscured the moon. But she was rising higher and higher each moment, and, finally, when it has reached the tops of those trees, then the rays will reach the middle of the river, and then, by degrees, it will reach the stones in the river, and, finally, the body that lies there so still and so mysteriously.

How it came there it would be difficult to say. It appeared as though, when the waters were high, the body had floated down, and, at the subsidence of the waters, it had been left upon the stones, and now it was exposed to view.

It was strange and mysterious, and those who might look upon such a sight would feel their blood chill, and their body creep, to contemplate the remains of humanity in such a place, and in such a condition as that must be in.

A human life had been taken! How? Who could tell? Perhaps accident alone was the cause of it; perhaps some one had taken a life by violent means, and thrown the body in the waters to conceal the fact and the crime.

The waters had brought it down, and deposited it there in the middle of the river, without any human creature being acquainted with the fact.

But the moon rises — the beams come trembling through the tree tops and straggling branches, and fall upon the opposite bank, and there lies the body, midstream, and in comparative darkness.

By the time the river is lit up by the moon's rays, then the object on the stones will be visible, then it can be ascertained what appears now only probable, namely, is the dark object a human form or not?

In the absence of light it appears to be so, but when the flood of silver light falls upon it, it would be placed then beyond a doubt.

The time is approaching — the moon each moment approaches her meridian, and each moment do the rays increase in number and in strength, while the shadows shorten.

The opposite bank each moment becomes more and more distinct, and the side of the stream, the green rushes and sedges, all by degrees come full into view.

Now and then a fish leaps out of the stream, and just exhibits itself, as much as to say, "There are things living in the stream, and I am one of them."

The moment is one of awe — the presence of that mysterious and dreadful-looking object, even while its identity remains doubt, chills the heart — it contracts the expanding thoughts to that one object — all interest in the scene lies centered in that one point.

What could it be? What else but a human body? What else could assume such a form? But see, nearly half the

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stream is lit by the moonbeams struggling through the tree tops, and now rising above them. The light increases, and the shadows shorten.

The edge of the bed of stones now becomes lit up by the moonlight; the rippling stream, the bubbles, and the tiny spray that was caused by the rush of water against the stones, seemed like sparkling flashes of silver fire.

Then came the moonbeams upon the body, for it was raised above the level of the water, and shewed conspicuously; of the moonbeams reached the body before they fell on the surrounding water; for that reason then it was the body presented a strange and ghastly object against a deep, dark background, by which it was surrounded.

But this did not last long — the water in another minute was lit up by the moon's pale beams, and then indeed could be plainly enough seen the body of a man lying on the heap of stones motionless and ghastly.

The colourless hue of the moonlight gave the object a most horrific and terrible appearance! The face of the dead man was turned towards the moon's rays, and the body seemed to receive all the light that could fall upon it.

It was a terrible object to look upon, and one that added a new and singular interest to the scene! The world seemed then to be composed almost exclusively of still life, and the body was no impediment to the stillness of the scene.

It was, all else considered, a calm, beautiful scene, lovely the night, gorgeous the silvery rays that lit up the face of nature; the hill and dale, meadow, and wood, and river, all afforded contrasts strong, striking, and strange.

But strange, and more strange than any contrast in nature, was that afforded to the calm beauty of the night and placed by the deep stillness and quietude imposed upon the mind by that motionless human body.

The moon's rays now fell upon its full length; the feet were lying in the water, the head lay back, with its features turned towards the quarter of the heavens where the moon shone from; the hair floated on the shallow water, while the face and body were exposed to all influences, from its raised and prominent position.

The moonbeams had scarcely settled upon it — scarce a few minutes — when the body moved. Was it the water that moved it? it could not be, surely, that the moonbeams had the power of recalling life into that inanimate mass, that lay there for some time still and motionless as the very stones on which it lay.

It was endued with life; the dead man gradually rose up, and leaned himself upon his elbow; he paused a moment like one newly recalled to life; he seemed to become assured he did live. He passed one hand through his hair, which was wet, and then rose higher into a sitting posture, and then he leaned on one hand, inclining himself towards the moon.

His breast heaved with life, and a kind of deep inspiration, or groan, came from him, as he first awoke to life, and then he seemed to pause for a few moments. He turned gradually over, till his head inclined down the stream.

Just below, the water deepened, and ran swiftly and silently on amid meads and groves of trees. The vampyre was revived; he awoke again to a ghastly life; he turned from the heap of stones, he gradually allowed himself to sink into deep water, and then, with a loud plunge, he swam to the centre of the river.

Slowly and surely did he swim into the centre of the river, and down the stream he went. He took long, but easy strokes, for he was going down the stream, and that aided him.

For some distance might he be heard and seen through the openings in the trees, but he became gradually more and more indistinct, till sound and sight both ceased, and the vampyre had disappeared.

During the continuance of this singular scene, not one word had passed between the landlord and his companions. When the blacksmith fired the fowling-piece, and saw the stranger fall, apparently lifeless, upon the stepping-stones that crossed the river, he became terrified at what he had done, and gazed upon the seeming lifeless form with a face on which the utmost horror was depicted.

They all seemed transfixed to the spot, and although each would have given worlds to move away, a kind of nightmare seemed to possess them, which stunned all their faculties, and brought over them a torpidity from which they found it impossible to arouse themselves.

But, when the apparently dead man moved again, and when, finally, the body, which appeared so destitute of life, rolled into the stream, and floated away with the tide, their fright might be considered to have reached its climax. The absence of the body, however, had seemingly, at all events, the effect of releasing them from the mental and physical thralldom in which they were, and they were enabled to move from the spot, which they did immediately, making their way towards the town with great speed.

As they got near, they held a sort of council of war as to what they should do under the circumstances, the

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result of which was, that they came to a conclusion to keep all that they had done and seen to themselves; for, if they did not, they might be called upon for some very troublesome explanations concerning the fate of the Hungarian nobleman whom they had taken upon themselves to believe was a vampyre, and to shoot accordingly, without taking the trouble to inquire into the legality of such an act.

How such a secret was likely to be kept, when it was shared amongst seven people, it is hard to say; but, if it were so kept, it could only be under the pressure of a strong feeling of self-preservation.

They were forced individually, of course, to account for their absence during the night at their respective homes, and how they managed to do that is best known to themselves.

As to the landlord, he felt compelled to state that, having his suspicions of his guest aroused, he followed him on a walk that he pretended to take, and he had gone so far, that at length he had given up the chase, and lost his own way in returning.

Thus was it, then, that this affair still preserved all its mystery, with a large superadded amount of fear attendant upon it; for, if the mysterious guest were really anything supernatural, might he not come again in a much more fearful shape, and avenge the treatment he had received?

The only person who felt any disappointment in the affair, or whose expectations were not realised, was the boy who had made the appointment with the supposed vampyre at the end of the lane, and who was to have received what he considered so large a reward for pointing out the retreat of Sir Francis Varney.

He waited in vain for the arrival of the Hungarian nobleman, and, at last, indignation got the better of him, and he walked away. Feeling that he had been jilted, he resolved to proceed to the public-house and demand the half-crowns which had been so liberally promised him; but when he reached there he found that the party whom he sought was not within, nor the landlord either, for that was the precise time when that worthy individual was pursuing his guest over meadow and hill, through brake and briar, towards the stepping stones on the river.

What the boy further did on the following day, when he found that he was to reap no more benefit for the adventure, we shall soon perceive.

As for the landlord, he did endeavour to catch a few hours' brief repose; but as he dreamed that the Hungarian nobleman came in the likeness of a great toad, and sat upon his chest, feeling like the weight of a mountain, while he, the landlord, tried to scream and cry for help, but found that he could neither do one thing nor the other, we may guess that his repose did not at all invigorate him.

As he himself expressed it, he got up all of a shake, with a strong impression that he was a very ill-used individual, indeed, to have had the night-mare in the day time.

And now we will return to the cottage where the Bannerworth family were at all events, making themselves quite as happy as they did at their ancient mansion, in order to see what is there passing, and how Dr. Chillingworth made an effort to get up some evidence of something that the Bannerworth family knew nothing of, therefore could not very well be expected to render him much assistance. That he did, however, make what he considered an important discovery, we shall perceive in the course of the ensuing chapter, in which it will be seen that the best hidden things will, by the merest accident, sometimes come to light, and that, too, when least expected by any one at all connected with the result.

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## Chapter LXXXVI. THE DISCOVERY OF THE POCKETBOOK OF MARMADUKE BANNERWORTH. -- ITS MYSTERIOUS CONTENTS.

The little episode had just taken place which we have recorded between the old admiral and Jack Pringle, when Henry Bannerworth and Charles Holland stepped aside to converse.

"Charles," said Henry, "it has become absolutely necessary that I should put an end to this state of dependence in which we all live upon your uncle. It is too bad to think, that because, through fighting the battles of his country, he has amassed some money, we are to eat it up."

"My dear friend," said Charles, "does it not strike you, that it would be a great deal worse than too bad, if my uncle could not do what he liked with his own?"

"Yes; but, Charles, that is not the question."

"I think it is, though I know not what other question you can make of it."

"We have talked it over, my mother, my brother, and Flora; and my brother and I have determined, if this state of things should last much longer, to find out some means of honourable exertion by which we may, at all events, maintain ourselves without being burdensome to any."

"Well, well, we will talk of that another time."

"Nay, but hear me; we were thinking that if we went into some branch of the public service, your uncle would have the pleasure, such we are quite sure it would be to him, of assisting us greatly by his name and influence."

"Well, well, Henry, that's all very well; but for a little time do not throw up the old man and make him unhappy. I believe I am his only relative in the world, and, as he has often said, he intended leaving me heir to all he possesses, you see there is no harm done by your receiving a small portion of it beforehand."

"And," said Henry, "by that line of argument, we are to find an excuse for robbing your uncle; in the fact, that we are robbing you likewise."

"No, no; indeed, you do not view the matter rightly."

"Well, all I can say is, Charles, that while I feel, and while we all feel, the deepest debt of gratitude towards your uncle, it is our duty to do something. In a box which we have brought with us from the Hall, and which has not been opened since our father's death, I have stumbled over some articles of ancient jewellery and plate, which, at all events, will produce something."

"But which you must not part with."

"Nay, but, Charles, these are things I knew not we possessed, and most ill-suited do they happen to be to our fallen fortunes. It is money we want, not the gewgaws of a former state, to which we can have now no sort of pretension."

"Nay, I know you have all the argument; but still is there something sad and uncomfortable to one's feelings in parting with such things as those which have been in families for many years."

"But we knew not that we had them; remember that, Charles. Come and look at them. Those relics of a bygone age may amuse you, and, as regards myself, there are no circumstances whatever associated with them that give them any extrinsic value; so laugh at them or admire them, as you please, I shall most likely be able to join with you in either feeling."

"Well, be it so -- I will come and look at them; but you must think better of what you say concerning my uncle, for I happen to know -- which you ought likewise by this time -- how seriously the old man would feel any rejection on your part of the good he fancies he is doing you. I tell you, Henry, it is completely his hobby, and let him have earned his money with ten times the danger he has, he could not spend it with anything like the satisfaction that he does, unless he were allowed to dispose of it in this way."

"Well, well; be it so for a time."

"The fact is, his attachment to Flora is so great -- which is a most fortunate circumstance for me -- that I should not be at all surprised that she cuts me out of one half my estate, when the old man dies. But come, we will look at your ancient bijouterie."

Henry led Charles into an apartment of the cottage where some of the few things had been placed that were brought from Bannerworth Hall, which were not likely to be in constant and daily use.

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Among these things happened to be the box which Henry had mentioned, and from which he had taken a miscellaneous assortment of things of an antique and singular character.

There were old dresses of a season and of a taste long gone by; ancient articles of defence; some curiously wrought daggers; and a few ornaments, pretty, but valueless, along with others of more sterling pretensions, which Henry pointed out to Charles.

"I am almost inclined to think," said the latter, "that some of these things are really of considerable value; but I do not profess to be an accurate judge, and, perhaps, I am more taken with the beauty of an article, than the intrinsic worth. What is that which you have just taken from the box?"

"It seems a half-mask," said Henry, "made of silk; and here are initial letters within it — M. B."

"To what do they apply?"

"Marmaduke Bannerworth, my father."

"I regret I asked you."

"Nay, Charles, you need not. Years have now elapsed since that misguided man put a period to his own existence, in the gardens of Bannerworth Hall. Of course, the shock was a great one to us all, although I must confess that we none of us knew much of a father's affections. But time reconciles one to these dispensations, and to a friend, like yourself, I can talk upon these subjects without a pang."

He laid down the mask, and proceeded further in his search in the old box.

Towards the bottom of it there were some books, and, crushed in by the side of them, there was an ancient-looking pocket-book, which Charles pointed out, saying, —

"There, Henry, who knows but you may find a fortune when you least expect it?"

"Those who expect nothing," said Henry, "will not be disappointed. At all events, as regards this pocket-book, you see it is empty."

"Not quite. A card has fallen from it."

Charles took up the card, and read upon it the name of Count Barrare.

"That name," he said, "seems familiar to me. Ah! now I recollect, I have read of such a man. He flourished some twenty, or five-and-twenty years ago, and was considered a roue of the first water — a finished gamester; and, in a sort of brief memoir I read once of him, it said that he disappeared suddenly one day, and was never again heard of."

"Indeed! I'm not puzzled to think how his card came into my father's pocket-book. They met at some gaming-house; and, if some old pocket-book of Count Barrare's were shaken, there might fall from it a card, with the name of Mr. Marmaduke Bannerworth upon it."

"Is there nothing further in the pocket-book — no memoranda?"

"I will look. Stay! here is something upon one of the leaves — let me see — 'Mem., twenty-five thousand pounds! He who robs the robber, steals little; it was not meant to kill him: but it will be unsafe to use the money for a time — my brain seems on fire — the remotest hiding place in the house is behind the picture.'"

"What do you think of that?" said Charles.

"I know not what to think. There is one thing though, that I do know."

"And what is that?"

"It is my father's handwriting. I have many scraps of his and his peculiar hand is familiar to me."

"It is very strange, then, what it can refer to."

"Charles — Charles! there is a mystery connected with our fortunes, that I never could unravel; and once or twice it seemed as if we were upon the point of discovering all; but something has ever interfered to prevent us, and we have been thrown back into the realms of conjecture. My father's last words were, 'The money is hidden;' and then he tried to add something; but, death stopped his utterance. Now, does it not almost seem that this memorandum alluded to the circumstance?"

"It does, indeed."

"And then, scarcely had my father breathed his last, when a man comes and asked for him at the garden-gate, and, upon hearing that he is dead, utters some imprecations, and walks away."

"Well, Henry, you must trust to time and circumstances to unravel these mysteries. For myself, I own that I cannot do so; I see no earthly way out of the difficulty whatever. But still it does appear to me as if Dr. Chillingworth knew something or had heard something, with which he really ought to make you acquainted."

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"Do not blame the worthy doctor; he may have made an error in judgment, but never one of feeling; and you may depend, if he is keeping anything from me, that he is doing so from some excellent motive; more probably because he thinks it will give me pain, and so will not let me endure any unhappiness from it, unless he is quite certain as regards the facts. When he is so, you may depend he will be communicative, and I shall know all that he has to relate. But, Charles, it is evident to me that you, too, are keeping something."

"I!"

"Yes; you acknowledge to having had an interview, and a friendly one, with Varney; and you likewise acknowledge that he had told you things which he has compelled you to keep secret."

"I have promised to keep them secret, and I deeply regret the promise that I have made. There cannot be anything to my mind more essentially disagreeable than to have one's tongue tied in one's interview with friends. I hate to hear anything that I may not repeat to those whom I take into my own confidence."

"I can understand the feeling; but here comes the worthy doctor."

"Show him the memorandum."

"I will."

As Dr. Chillingworth entered the apartments Henry handed him the memorandum that had been found in the old pocket-book, saying as he did so, —

"Look at that, doctor, and give us your candid opinion upon it."

Dr. Chillingworth fitted on his spectacles, and read the paper carefully. At its conclusion, he screwed up his mouth into an extremely small compass, and doubling up the paper, he put it into his capacious waistcoat pocket, saying as he did so, —

"Oh! oh! oh! hum!"

"Well, doctor," said Henry; "we are waiting for your opinion."

"My opinion! Well, then, my dear boy, I must say, my opinion, to the best of my belief is, that I really don't know anything about it."

"Then, perhaps, you'll surrender us the memorandum," said Charles "because, if you don't know anything, we may as well make a little inquiry."

"Ha!" said the worthy doctor; "we can't put old heads upon young shoulders, that's quite clear. Now, my good young men, be patient and quiet; recollect, that what you know you're acquainted with, and that that which is hidden from you, you cannot very well come to any very correct conclusion upon. There's a right side and a wrong one you may depend, to every question; and he who walks heedlessly in the dark, is very apt to run his head against a post. Good evening, my boys — good evening."

Away bustled the doctor.

"Well," said Charles, "what do you think of that, Mr. Henry?"

"I think he knows what he's about."

"That may be; but I'll be hanged if anybody else does. The doctor is by no means favourable to the march of popular information; and I really think he might have given us some food for reflection, instead of leaving us so utterly and entirely at fault as he has; and you know he's taken away your memorandum even."

"Let him have it, Charles — let him have it; it is safe with him. The old man may be, and I believe is, a little whimsical and crotchety; but he means abundantly well, and he's just one of those sort of persons, and always was, who will do good his own way, or not at all; so we must take the good with the bad in those cases, and let Dr. Chillingworth do as he pleases."

"I cannot say it is nothing to me, although those words were rising to my lips, because you know, Henry, that everything which concerns you or yours is something to me; and therefore it is that I feel extremely anxious for the solution of all this mystery. Before I hear the sequel of that which Varney, the vampyre, has so strongly made me a confidant of, I will, at all events, make an effort to procure his permission to communicate it to all those who are in any way beneficially interested in the circumstances. Should he refuse me that permission, I am almost inclined myself to beg him to withhold his confidence."

"Nay, do not do so, Charles — do not do that, I implore you. Recollect, although you cannot make us joint recipients with you in your knowledge, you can make use of it, probably, to our advantage, in saving us, perchance, from the different consequences, so that you can make what you know in some way beneficial to us, although not in every way."



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"There is reason in that, and I give in at once. Be it so, Henry. I will wait on him, and if I cannot induce him to change his determination, and allow me to tell some other as well as Flora, I must give in, and take the thing as a secret, although I shall not abandon a hope, even after he has told me all he has to tell, that I may induce him to permit me to make a general confidence, instead of a partial one he has empowered me to do."

"It may be so; and, at all events, we must not reject a proffered good because it is not quite so complete as might be."

"You are right; I will keep my appointment with him, entertaining the most sanguine hope that our troubles and disasters — I say our, because I consider myself quite associated in thought, interest, and feelings with your family — may soon be over."

"Heaven grant it may be so, for your's and Flora's sake; but I feel that Bannerworth Hall will never again be the place it was to us. I should prefer that we sought for new associations, which I have no doubt we may find, and that among us we get up some other home that would be happier, because not associated with so many sad scenes in our history."

"Be it so; and I am sure that the admiral would gladly give way to such an arrangement. He has often intimated that he thought Bannerworth Hall was a dull place; consequently, although he pretends to have purchased it of you, I think he will be very glad to leave it."

"Be it so, then. If it should really happen that we are upon the eve of any circumstances that will really tend to relieve us from our mystery and embarrassments, we will seek for some pleasanter abode than the Hall, which you may well imagine, since it became the scene of that dreadful tragedy that left us fatherless, has borne but a distasteful appearance to all our eyes."

"I don't wonder at that, and am only surprised that, after such a thing had happened, any of you liked to inhabit the place."

"We did not like, but our poverty forced us. You have no notion of the difficulties through which we have struggled; and the fact that we had a home rent free was one of so much importance to us, that had it been surrounded by a thousand more disagreeables than it was, we must have put up with it; but now that we owe so much to the generosity of your uncle, I suppose we can afford to talk of what we like and of what we don't like."

"You can, Henry, and it shall not be my fault if you do not always afford to do so; and now, as the time is drawing on, I think I will proceed at once to Varney, for it is better to be soon than late, and get from him the remainder of the story." \*\*\*\*

There were active influences at work, to prevent Sir Francis Varney from so quickly as he had arranged to do, carrying out his intention of making Charles Holland acquainted with the history of the eventful period of his life, which had been associated with Marmaduke Bannerworth.

One would have scarcely thought it possible that anything now would have prevented Varney from concluding his strange narrative; but that he was prevented, will appear.

The boy who had been promised such liberal payment by the Hungarian nobleman, for betraying the place of Varney's concealment, we have already stated, felt bitterly the disappointment of not being met, according to promise, at the corner of the lane, by that individual.

It not only deprived him of the half-crowns, which already in imagination he had laid out, but it was a great blow to his own importance, for after his discovery of the residence of the vampyre, he looked upon himself as quite a public character, and expected great applause for his cleverness.

But when the Hungarian nobleman came not, all these dreams began to vanish into thin air, and, like the unsubstantial fabric of a vision, to leave no trace behind them.

He got dreadfully aggravated, and his first thought was to go to Varney, and see what he could get from him, by betraying the fact that some one was actively in search of him.

That seemed, however, a doubtful good, and perhaps there was some personal dread of the vampyre mixed up with the rejection of this proposition. But reject it he did, and then he walked moodily into the town without any fixed resolution of what he should do.

All that he thought of was a general idea that he should like to create some mischief, if possible — what it was he cared not, so long as it made a disturbance.

Now, he knew well that the most troublesome and fidgetty man in the town was Tobias Philpots, a saddler, who was always full of everybody's business but his own, and ever ready to hear any scandal of his neighbours.

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"I have a good mind," said the boy, "to go to old Philpots, and tell him all about it, that I have."

The good mind soon strengthened itself into a fixed resolution, and full of disdain and indignation at the supposed want of faith of the Hungarian nobleman, he paused opposite the saddler's door.

Could he but for a moment have suspected the real reason why the appointment had not been kept with him, all his curiosity would have been doubly aroused, and he would have followed the landlord of the inn and his associate upon the track of the second vampyre that had visited the town.

But of this he knew nothing, for that proceeding had been conducted with amazing quietness; and the fact of the Hungarian nobleman, when he found that he was followed, taking a contrary course to that in which Varney was concealed, prevented the boy from knowing anything of his movements.

Hence the thing looked to him like a piece of sheer neglect and contemptuous indifference, which he felt bound to resent.

He did not pause long at the door of the saddler's, but, after a few moments, he walked boldly in, and said, —  
"Master Philpots, I have got something extraordinary to tell you, and you may give me what you like for telling you."

"Go on, then," said the saddler, "that's just the price I always likes to pay for everything."

"Will you keep it secret?" said the boy.

"Of course I will. When did you ever hear of me telling anything to a single individual?"

"Never to a single individual, but I have heard you tell things to the whole town."

"Confound your impudence. Get out of my shop directly."

"Oh! very good. I can go and tell old Mitchell, the pork-butcher."

"No, I say — stop; don't tell him. If anybody it to know, let it be me, and I'll promise you I'll keep it secret, so that if it gets known, you know it cannot be any fault of mine."

The fact was, the boy was anxious it should be known, only that in case some consequences might arise, he thought he would quiet his own conscience, by getting a promise of secrecy from Tobias Philpots, which he well knew that individual would not think of keeping.

He then related to him the interview he had had with the Hungarian nobleman at the inn, how he had promised a number of half-crowns, but a very small instalment of which he had received.

All this Master Philpots cared very little for, but the information that the much dreaded Varney, the vampyre, was concealed so close to the town was a matter of great and abounding interest, and at that part of the story he suddenly pricked up his ears amazingly.

"Why, you don't mean to say that?" he exclaimed. "Are you sure it was he?"

"Yes, I am quite certain. I have seen him more than once. It was Sir Francis Varney, without any mistake."

"Why, then, you may depend he's only waiting until it's very dark, and then he will walk into somebody, and suck his blood. Here's a horrid discovery! I though we had had enough of Master Varney, and that he would hardly show himself here again, and now you tell me he is not ten minutes' walk off."

"It's a fact," said the boy. "I saw him go in, and he looks thinner and more horrid than ever. I am sure he wants a dollop of blood from somebody."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Now there is Mrs. Philpots, you know, sir; she's rather big, and seems most ready to burst always; I shouldn't wonder if the vampyre came to her to-night."

"Wouldn't you?" said Mrs. Philpots, who had walked into the shop, and overheard the whole conversation; "wouldn't you, really? I'll vampyre you, and teach you to make these remarks about respectable married women. You young wretch, take that, will you!"

She gave the boy such a box on the ears, that the place seemed to spin round with him. As soon as he recovered sufficiently to be enabled to walk, he made his way from the shop with abundance of precipitation, much regretting that he had troubled himself to make a confidant of Master Philpots.

But, however, he could not but tell himself that if the object was to make a general disturbance through the whole place, he had certainly succeeded in doing so.

He slunk home perhaps with a feeling that he might be called upon to take part in something that might ensue, and at all events be compelled to become a guide to the place of Sir Francis Varney's retreat, in which case, for all he knew, the vampyre might, by some more than mortal means, discover what a hand he had had in the matter,

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and punish him accordingly.

The moment he had left the saddler's Mrs. Philpots, after using some bitter reproaches to her husband for not at once sacrificing the boy upon the spot for the disrespectful manner in which he had spoken to her, hastily put on her bonnet and shawl, and the saddler, although it was a full hour before the usual time, began putting up the shutters of his shop.

"Why, my dear," he said to Mrs. Philpots, when she came down stairs equipped for the streets, "why, my dear, where are you going?"

"And pray, sir, what are you shutting up the shop for at this time of the evening?"

"Oh! why, the fact is, I thought I'd just go to the Rose and Crown, and mention that the vampyre was so near at hand."

"Well, Mr. Philpots, and in that case there can be no harm in my calling upon some of my acquaintance and mentioning it likewise."

"Why, I don't suppose there would be much harm; only remember, Mrs. Philpots, remember if you please —"

"Remember what?"

"To tell everyone to keep it a secret."

"Oh, of course I will; and mind you do it likewise."

"Most decidedly."

The shop was closed, Mr. Philpots ran off to the Rose and Crown, and Mrs. Philpots, with as much expedition as she could, purposed making the grand tour of all her female acquaintance in the town, just to tell them, as a great secret, that the vampyre, Sir Francis Varney, as he called himself, had taken refuge at the house that was to let down the lane leading to Higg's farm.

"But by no means," she said, "let it go no further, because it is a very wrong thing to make any disturbance, and you will understand that it's quite a secret."

She was listened to with breathless attention, as may well be supposed, and it was a singular circumstance that at every house she left some other lady put on her bonnet and shawl, and ran out to make the circle of her acquaintance, with precisely the same story, and precisely the same injunctions to secrecy.

And, as Mr. Philpots pursued an extremely similar course, we are not surprised that in the short space of one hour the news should have spread through all the town, and that there was scarcely a child old enough to understand what was being talked about, who was ignorant of the fact, that Sir Francis Varney was to be found at the empty house down the lane.

It was an unlucky time, too, for the night was creeping on, a period at which people's apprehension of the supernatural becomes each moment stronger and more vivid — a period at which a number of idlers are let loose for different employments, and when anything in the shape of a row or a riot presents itself in pleasant colours to those who have nothing to lose, and who expect, under the cover of darkness, to be able to commit outrages they would be afraid to think of in the daytime, when recognition would be more easy.

Thus was it that Sir Francis Varney's position, although he knew it not, became momentarily one of extreme peril, and the danger he was about to run, was certainly greater than any he had as yet experienced. Had Charles Holland but known what was going on, he would undoubtedly have done something to preserve the supposed vampyre from the mischief that threatened him, but the time had not arrived when he had promised to pay him a second visit, so he had no idea of anything serious having occurred.

Perhaps, too, Mr. and Mrs. Philpots scarcely anticipated creating so much confusion, but when they found that the whole place was in an uproar, and that a tumultuous assemblage of persons called aloud for vengeance upon Varney, the vampyre, they made their way home again in no small fright.

And, now, what was the result of all these proceedings will be best known by our introducing the reader to the interior of the house in which Varney had found a temporary refuge, and following in detail his proceedings as he waited for the arrival of Charles Holland.

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## Chapter LXXXVII. THE HUNT FOR VARNEY. -- THE HOUSE-TOPS. -- THE MIRACULOUS ESCAPE. -- THE LAST PLACE OF REFUGE.

On the tree tops the moon shines brightly, and the long shadows are shooting its rays down upon the waters, and the green fields appear clothed in a flood of silver light; the little town was quiet and tranquil -- nature seemed at rest.

The old mansion in which Sir Francis Varney had taken refuge, stood empty and solitary; it seemed as though it were not associated with the others by which it was surrounded. It was gloomy, and in the moonlight it reminded one of things long gone by, existences that had once been, but now no longer of this present time -- a mere memento of the past.

Sir Francis Varney reclined upon the house-top: he gazed upon the sky, and upon the earth; he saw the calm tranquility that reigned around, and could not but admire what he saw; he sighed, he seemed to sigh, from a pleasure he felt in the fact of his security; he could repose there without fear, and breathe the balmy air that fanned his cheek.

"Certainly," he muttered, "things might have been worse, but not much worse; however, they might have been much better; the ignorant are always the most to be feared, because they have no guide and no control, save what can be exerted over them by their fears and their passions."

He paused to look again over the scene, and, as far as the eye could reach, and that, moonlight as it was, was many miles, the country was diversified with hill and dale, meadow and ploughed land; the open fields, and the darker woods, and the silvery stream that ran at no great distance, all presented a scene that was well calculated to warm the imagination, and to give the mind that charm which a cultivated understanding is capable of receiving.

There was but one thing wanted to make such a scene one of pure happiness, and that was all absence of care of fears for the future and the wants of life.

Suddenly there was a slight sound that came from the town. It was very slight, but the ears of Sir Francis Varney were painfully acute of late; the least sound that came across him was heard in a moment, and his whole visage was changed to one of listening interest.

The sound was hushed; but his attention was not lulled, for he had been placed in circumstances that made all his vigilance necessary for his own preservation. Hence it was, what another would have passed over, or not heard at all, he both heard and noticed. He was not sure of the nature of the sound, it was so slight and so indistinct.

There it was again! Some persons were moving about in the town. The sounds that came upon the night air seemed to say that there was an unusual bustle in the town, which was, to Sir Francis Varney, ominous in the extreme.

What could people in such a quiet, retired place require out at such an hour at night? It must be something very unusual -- something that must excite them to a great degree; and Sir Francis began to feel very uneasy.

"They surely," he muttered to himself -- "they surely cannot have found out my hiding place, and intend to hunt me from it, the blood-thirsty hounds! they are never satisfied. The mischief they are permitted to do on one occasion is but the precursor to another. The taste has caused the appetite for more, and nothing short of his blood can satisfy it."

The sounds increased, and the noise came nearer and nearer, and it appeared as though a number of men had collected together, and were coming towards him. Yes, they were coming down the lane towards the deserted mansion where he was.

For once in his life, Sir Francis Varney trembled; he felt sick at heart, though no man was less likely to give up hope and to despair than he; yet this sign of unrelenting hatred and persecution was too unequivocal and too stern not to produce its effect upon even his mind; for he had no doubt but that they were coming with the express purpose of seeking him.

How they could have found him out was a matter he could not imagine. The Bannerworths could not have betrayed him -- he was sure of that; and yet who could have seen him, so cautious and so careful as he had been, and so very sparing had he lived, because he would not give the slightest cause for all that was about to follow. He hoped to have hidden himself; but now he could hear the tramp of men distinctly, and their voices came now

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on the night air, thought it was in a subdued tone, as if they were desirous of approaching unheard and unseen by their victim.

Sir Francis Varney stirred not from his position. He remained silent and motionless. He appeared not to heed what was going on; perhaps he hoped to see them go by -- to be upon some false scent; or, if they saw no signs of life, they might leave the place, and go elsewhere.

Hark! they stop at the house -- they go not by; they seem to pause, and then a thundering knock came at the door, which echoed and re-echoed through the empty and deserted house, on the top of which sat, in silent expectation, the almost motionless Sir Francis Varney, the redoubted vampyre.

The knock which came so loud and so hard upon the door caused Sir Francis to start visibly, for it seemed his own knell. Then, as if the mob were satisfied with their knowledge of his presence, and of their victory, they sent up a loud shout that filled the whole neighborhood with its sound.

It seemed to come from below and around the house; it rose from all sides, and that told Sir Francis Varney that the house was surrounded and all escape was cut off; there was no chance of his being able to rush through such a multitude of men as that which now encircled him.

With the calmest despair, Sir Francis Varney lay still and motionless on the housetop, and listened to the sounds that proceeded from below. Shout after shout arose on the still, calm air of the night; knock after knock came upon the stout old door, which awakened responsive echoes throughout the house that had for many years lain dormant, and which now seemed disturbed, and resounded in hollow murmurs to the voices from without.

Then a loud voice shouted from below, as if to be heard by any one who might be within, --

"Sir Francis Varney, the vampyre, come out and give yourself up at discretion! If we have to search for you, you may depend it will be to punish you; you will suffer by burning. Come out and give yourself up."

There was a pause, and then a loud shout.

Sir Francis Varney paid no attention to this summons, but sat, motionless, on the house-top, where he could hear all that passed below in the crowd.

"He will not come out," said one.

"Ah! he's much too cunning to be caught in such a trap. Why, he knows what you would do with him; he knows you would stake him, and make a bonfire about him."

"So he has no taste for roasting," remarked another; "but still, it's no use hiding; we have too many hands, and know the house too well to be easily baffled."

"That may be; and although he don't like burning, yet we will unearth the old fox, somehow or other; we have discovered his haunt at last, and certainly we'll have him out."

"How shall we get in?"

"Knock in the door -- break open the door! the front door -- that is the best, because it leads to all parts of the house, and we can secure any one who attempts to move from one to the other, as they come down."

"Hurrah!" shouted several men in the crowd.

"Hurrah!" echoed the mob, with one accord, and the shout rent the air, and disturbed the quiet and serenity that scarce five minutes before reigned throughout the place.

Then, as if actuated by one spirit, they all set to work to force the door in. It was strong, and capable of great defence, and employed them, with some labour, for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then, with a loud crash, the door fell in.

"Hurrah!" again shouted the crowd.

These shouts announced the fall of the door, and then, and not until then, did Sir Francis Varney stir.

"They have broken the door," he muttered; "well, if die I must, I will sell my life dearly. However, all is not yet lost, and, in the struggle for life, the loss is not so much felt."

He got up, and crept towards the trap that led into the house, or out of it, as the occasion might require.

"The vampyre! the vampyre!" shouted a man who stood on a garden wall, holding on by the arm of an apple-tree.

"Varney, the vampyre!" shouted a second.

"Hurrah! boys, we are on the right scent; now for a hunt; hurrah! we shall have him now."

They rushed in a tumultuous riot up the stone steps, and into the hall. It was a large, spacious place, with a grand staircase that led up to the upper floor, but it had two ends, and then terminated in a gallery.

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It could not be defended by one man, save at the top, where it could not long be held, because the assailants could unite, and throw their whole weight against the entrance, and thus storm it. This actually happened.

They looked up, and seeing nobody, they rushed up, some by one stair, and some by the other; but it was dark; there were but few of the moon's rays that pierced the gloom of that place, and those who first reached the place which we have named, were seized with astonishment, staggered, and fell.

Sir Francis Varney had met them; he stood there with a staff — something he had found about the house — not quite so long as a broom-handle, but somewhat thicker and heavier, being made of stout ash.

This formidable weapon, Sir Francis Varney wielded with strength and resolution; he was a tall man, and one of no mean activity and personal strength, and such a weapon, in his hands, was one of a most fearful character, and, for the occasion, much better than his sword.

Man after man fell beneath the fearful force of these blows, for though they could not see Sir Francis, yet he could see them, for the hall-lights were behind them at the time, while he stood in the dark, and took advantage of this to deal murderous blows upon his assailants.

This continued for some minutes, till they gave way before such a vigorous defiance, and paused.

"On, neighbours, on," cried one; "will you be beaten off by one man? Rush in at once and you must force him from his position — push him hard, and he must give way."

"Ay," said one fellow who sat upon the ground rubbing his head; "its all very well to say push him hard, but if you felt the weight of that d — — d pole on your head, you wouldn't be in such a blessed hurry."

However true that might be, there was but little attention paid to it, and a determined rush was made at the entrance to the gallery, and they found that it was unoccupied; and that was explained by the slamming of a door, and its being immediately locked upon them; and when the mob came to the door, they found they had to break their way through another door.

This did not take long in effecting; and in less than five minutes they had broken through that door which led into another room; but the first man who entered it fell from a crashing blow on the head from the ashen staff of Sir Francis Varney, who hurried and fled, closely pursued, until he came to another door, through which he dashed.

Here he endeavoured to make a stand and close it, but was immediately struck and grappled with; but he threw his assailant, and turned and fled again.

His object had been to defend each inch of the ground as long as he was able; but he found they came too close upon his steps, and prevented his turning in time to try the strength of his staff upon the foremost.

He dashed up the first staircase with surprising rapidity, leaving his pursuers behind; and when he had gained the first landing, he turned upon those who pursued him, who could hardly follow him two abreast.

"Down with the vampyre!" shouted the first, who rushed up heedless of the staff.

"Down with a fool!" thundered Varney, as he struck the fellow a terrific blow, which covered his face with blood, and he fell back into the arms of his companions.

A bitter groan and execration arose from them below, and again they shouted, and rushed up headlong.

"Down with the vampyre!" was again shouted, and met by a corresponding, but deep guttural sound of —

"Down with a fool!"

And sure enough the first again came to the earth without any preparation, save the application of an ashen stick to his skull, which, by—the—bye, by no means aided the operation of thinking.

Several more shared a similar fate; but they pressed hard, and Sir Francis was compelled to give ground to keep them at the necessary length from him, as they rushed on regardless of his blows, and if he had not he would soon have been engaged in a personal struggle, for they were getting too close for him to use the staff.

"Down with the vampyre!" was the renewed cry, as they drove him from spot to spot until he reached the roof of the house, and then he ran up the steps to the loft, which he had just reached when they came to the bottom.

Varney attempted to draw the ladder up, but four or five stout men held that down; then by a sudden turn, as they were getting up, he turned it over, threw those on it down, and the ladder too, upon the heads of those who were below.

"Down with the vampyre!" shouted the mob, as they, with the most untiring energy, set the ladder, or steps, against the loft, and as many as could held it, while others rushed up to attack Varney with all the ferocity and courage of so many bull dogs.

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It was strange, but the more they were baffled the more enraged and determined they rushed on to a new attack, with greater resolution than ever.

On this occasion, however, they were met with a new kind of missile, for Sir Francis had either collected and placed there for the occasion, or they had been left there for years, a number of old bricks, which lay close at hand. These he took, one by one, and deliberately took aim at them, and flung them with great force, striking down every one they hit.

This caused them to recoil; the bricks caused fearful gashes in their heads, and the wounds were serious, the flesh being, in many places, torn completely off. They however, only paused, for one man said, --

"Be of good heart, comrades, we can do as he does; he has furnished us with weapons, and we can thus attack him in two ways, and he must give way in the end."

"Hurrah! down with the vampyre!" sounded from all sides, and the shout was answered by a corresponding rush.

It was true; Sir Francis had furnished them with weapons to attack himself, for they could throw them back at him, which they did, and struck him a severe blow on the head, and it covered his face with blood in a moment.

"Hurrah!" shouted the assailants; "another such blow, and all will be over with the vampyre."

"He's got -- "

"Press him sharp, now," cried another man, as he aimed another blow with a brick, which struck Varney on the arm, causing him to drop the brick he held in his hand. He staggered back, apparently in great pain.

"Up! up! we have him now; he cannot get away; he's hurt; we have him -- we have him!"

And up they went with all the rapidity they could scramble up the steps; but this had given Varney time to recover himself; and though his right arm was almost useless, yet he contrived, with his left, to pitch the bricks so as to knock over the first three or four, when, seeing that he could not maintain his position to advantage, he rushed to the outside of the house, the last place he had capable of defence.

There was a great shout by those outside, when they saw him come out and stand with his staff, and those who came first got first served, for the blows resounded, while he struck them, and sent them over below.

Then came a great shout from within and without, and then a desperate rush was made at the door, and, in the next instant, Varney was seen flying, followed by his pursuers, one after the other, some tumbling over the tiles, to the imminent hazard of their necks. Sir Francis Varney rushed along with a speed that appeared by far too great to admit of being safely followed, and yet those who followed appeared infected by his example, and appeared heedless of all consequences by which their pursuit might be attended to themselves.

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob below.

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob on the tiles.

Then, over several housetops might be seen the flying figure of Sir Francis Varney, pursued by different men at a pace almost equal to his own.

They, however, could keep up the same speed, and not improve upon it, while he kept the advantage he first obtained in the start.

Then suddenly he disappeared.

It seemed to the spectators below that he had dropped through a house, and they immediately surrounded the house, as well as they could, and then set up another shout.

This took place several times, and as often was the miserable man hunted from his place of refuge only to seek another, from which he was in like manner hunted by those who thirsted for his blood.

On one occasion, they drove into a house which was surrounded, save at one point, which had a long room, or building in it, that ran some distance out, and about twenty feet high.

At the entrance to the roof of this place, or leads, he stood and defended himself for some moments with success; but having received a blow himself, he was compelled to retire, while the mob behind forced those in front forward faster than he could by any exertion wield the staff that had so much befriended him on this occasion.

He was, therefore, on the point of being overwhelmed by numbers, when he fled; but, alas! there was no escape; a bare coping stone and rails ran round the top of that.

There was not much time for hesitation, but he jumped over the rails and looked below. It was a great height, but if he fell and hurt himself, he knew he was at the mercy of the bloodhounds behind him, who would do

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anything but show him any mercy, or spare him a single pang.

He looked round and beheld his pursuers close upon him, and one was so close to him that he seized upon his arm, saying, as he shouted to his companions, —

"Hurrah, boys! I have him."

With an execration, Sir Francis wielded his staff with such force, that he struck the fellow in the head, crushing in his hat as if it had been only so much paper. The man fell, but a blow followed from some one else which caused Varney to relax his hold, and finding himself falling, he, to save himself, sprang away.

The rails, at that moment, were crowded with men who leaned over to ascertain the effect of the leap.

"He'll be killed," said one.

"He's sure to be smashed," said another.

"I'll lay any wager he'll break a limb!" said a third.

Varney came to the earth — for a moment he lay stunned, and not able to move hand or foot.

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob.

Their triumph was short, for just as they shouted Varney arose, and after a moment or two's stagger he set off at full speed, which produced another shout from the mob; and just at that moment, a body of his pursuers were seen scaling the walls after him.

There was now a hunt through all the adjoining fields — from cover after cover they pursued him until he found no rest from the hungry wolves that beset him with cries, resembling beasts of prey rather than any human multitude.

Sir Francis heard them, at the same time, with the despair of a man who is struggling for life, and yet knows he is struggling in vain; he knew his strength was decaying — his immense exertions and the blows he had received, all weakened him, while the number and strength of his foes seemed rather to increase than to diminish.

Once more he sought the houses, and for a moment he believed himself safe, but that was only a momentary deception, for they had traced him.

He arrived at a garden wall, over which he bounded, and then he rushed into the house, the door of which stood open, for the noise and disturbance had awakened most of the inhabitants, who were out in all directions.

He took refuge in a small closet on the stairs, but was seen to do so by a girl, who screamed out with fear and fright,

"Murder! murder! — the wampyre! — the wampyre!" with all her strength, and in the way of screaming that was no little, and then she went off into a fit.

This was signal enough, and the house was at once entered, and beset on all sides by the mob, who came impatient of obtaining their victim who had so often baffled them.

"There he is — there he is," said the girl, who came to as soon as other people came up.

"Where? — where?"

"In that closet," she said, pointing to it with her finger. "I see'd him go in the way above."

Sir Francis, finding himself betrayed, immediately came out of the closet, just as two or three were advancing to open it, and dealt so hard a blow on the head of the first that came near him that he fell without a groan, and a second shared the same fate; and then Sir Francis found himself grappled with, but with a violent effort he relieved himself and rushed up the stairs.

"Oh! murder — the wampyre! what shall I do — fire — fire!"

These exclamations were uttered in consequence of Varney in his haste to get up stairs, having inadvertently stepped into the girl's lap with one foot, while he kicked her in the chin with the other, besides scratching her nose till it bled.

"After him — stick to him," shouted the mob, but the girl kicked and sprawled so much they were impeded, till, regardless of her cries, they ran over her and pursued Varney, who was much distressed with the exertions he had made.

After about a minute's race he turned upon the head of the stairs, not so much taking some breathing time; but seeing his enemies so close, he drew his sword, and stood panting, but prepared.

"Never mind his toasting-fork," said one bulky fellow, and, as he spoke, he rushed on, but the point of the weapon entered his heart and he fell dead.

There was a dreadful execration uttered by those who came up after him, and there was a momentary pause,



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for none liked to rush on to the bloody sword of Sir Francis Varney, who stood so willing and so capable of using it with the most deadly effect. They paused, as well they might, and this pause was the most welcome thing next to life to the unfortunate fugitive, for he was dreadfully distressed and bleeding.

"On to him boys! He can hardly stand. See how he pants. On to him, I say -- push him hard."

"He pushes hard, I tell you," said another. "I felt the point of his sword, as it came through Giles's back."

"I'll try my luck, then," said another, and he rushed up; but he was met by the sword of Sir Francis, who pierced it through his side, and he fell back with a groan.

Sir Francis, fearful of stopping any longer to defend that point, appeared desirous of making good his retreat with some little advantage, and he rushed up stairs before they had recovered from the momentary consternation into which they had been thrown by the sudden disaster they had received.

But they were quickly after him, and before he, wearied as he was, could gain the roof, they were up the ladder after him.

The first man who came through the trap was again set upon by Varney, who made a desperate thrust at him, and it took effect; but the sword snapped by the handle.

With an execration, Sir Francis threw the hilt at the head of the next man he saw; then rushing, with headlong speed, he distanced his pursuers for some house tops.

But the row of houses ended at the one he was then at, and he could go no further. What was to be done? The height was by far too great to be jumped; death was certain. A hideous heap of crushed and mangled bones would be the extent of what would remain of him, and then, perhaps, life not extinct for some hours afterwards.

He turned round; he saw them coming hallooing over the house tops, like a pack of hounds. Sir Francis struck his hands together, and groaned. He looked round, and perceived some ivy peeping over the coping--stone. A thought struck him, and he instantly ran to the spot and leaned over.

"Saved -- saved!" he exclaimed.

Then, placing his hand over, he felt for the ivy; then he got over, and hung by the coping--stone, in a perilous position, till he found a spot on which he could rest his foot, and then he grasped the ivy as low down as he could, and thus he lowered himself a short way, till he came to where the ivy was stronger and more secure to the wall, as the upper part was very dangerous with his weight attached to it.

The mob came on, very sure of having Sir Francis Varney in their power, and they did not hurry on so violently, as their position was dangerous at that hour of the night.

"Easy, boys, easy," was the cry. "The bird is our own; he can't get away, that's very certain."

They, however, came on, and took no time about it hardly; but what was their amazement and rage at finding he had disappeared.

"Where is he?" was the universal inquiry, and "I don't know," an almost universal answer.

There was a long pause, while they searched around; but they saw no vestige of the object of their search.

"There's no trap door open," remarked one; "and I don't think he could have got in any one."

"Perhaps, finding he could not get away, he has taken the desperate expedient of jumping over, and committing suicide, and so escape the doom he ought to be subjected to."

"Probably he has; but then we can run a stake through him and burn him all the same."

They now approached the extreme verge of the houses, and looked over the sides, but they could see nothing. The moon was up, and there was light enough to have seen him if he had fallen to the earth, and they were quite sure that he could not have got up after such a fall as he must have received.

"We are beaten after all, neighbours."

"I am not so sure of that," was the reply. "He may now be hidden about, for he was too far spent to be able to go far; he could not do that, I am sure."

"I think not either."

"Might he not have escaped by means of that ivy, yonder?" said one of the men, pointing to the plant, as it climbed over the coping--stones of the wall.

"Yes; it may be possible," said one; "and yet it is very dangerous, if not certain destruction to get over."

"Oh, yes; there is no possibility of escape that way. Why, it wouldn't bear a cat, for there are no nails driven into the wall at this height."

"Never mind," said another, "we may as well leave no stone unturned, as the saying is, but at once set about

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looking out for him."

The individual who spoke now leant over the coping stone, for some moments, in silence. He could see nothing, but yet he continued to gaze for some moments.

"Do you see him?" inquired one.

"No," was the answer.

"Ay, ay, I thought as much," was the reply. "He might as well have got hold of a corner of the moon, which, I believe, is more likely — a great deal more likely."

"Hold still a moment," said the man, who was looking over the edge of the house.

"What's the matter now? A gnat flew into your eye?"

"No; but I see him — by Jove, I see him!"

"See who — see who?"

"Varney, the vampyre!" shouted the man. "I see him about half-way down, clinging, like a fly to the wall. Odd zounds! I never saw the like afore!"

"Hurrah! after him then, boys!"

"Not the same way, if you please. Go yourself, and welcome; but I won't go that way."

"Just as you please," said the man; "but what's good for the goose is good for the gander is an old saying, and so is Jack as good as his master."

"So it may be; but cuss me if you ain't a fool if you attempt that!"

The man made no reply, but did as Varney had done before, got over the coping stone, and then laid hold of the ivy; but, whether his weight was heavier than Varney's, or whether it was that the latter had loosened the hold of the ivy or not, but he had no sooner left go of the coping stone than the ivy gave way, and he was precipitated from the height of about fifty feet to the earth — a dreadful fall!

There was a pause — no one spoke. The man lay motionless and dead — he had dislocated his neck!

The fall had not, however, been without its effect upon Varney, for the man's heels struck him so forcibly on his head as he fell, that he was stunned, and let go his hold, and he, too, fell to the earth, but not many feet.

He soon recovered himself, and was staggering away, when he was assailed by those above with groans, and curses of all kinds, and then by stones, and tiles, and whatever the mob could lay their hands upon.

Some of these struck him, and he was cut about in various places, so that he could hardly stand.

The hoots and shouts of the mob above had now attracted those below to the spot where Sir Francis Varney was trying to escape, but he had not gone far before the loud yells of those behind him told him that he was again pursued.

Half dead, and almost wholly spent, unarmed, and defenceless, he scarce knew what to do; whether to fly, or to turn round and die as a refuge from the greater evil of endeavouring to prolong a struggle which seemed hopeless. Instinct, however, urged him on, at all risks, and though he could not go very far, or fast, yet on he went, with the crowd after him.

"Down with the vampyre! — seize him — hold him — burn him! he must be down presently, he can't stand!"

This gave them new hopes, and rendered Varney's fate almost certain. They renewed their exertions to overtake him, while he exerted himself anew, and with surprising agility, considering how he had been employed for more than two hours.

There were some trees and hedges now that opposed the progress of both parties. The height of Sir Francis Varney gave him a great advantage, and, had he been fresh, he might have shown it to advantage in vaulting over the hedges and ditches, which he jumped when obliged, and walked through when he could.

Every now and then, the party in pursuit, who had been behind him some distance, now they gained on him; however, they kept, every now and then, losing sight of him among the trees and shrubs, and he made direct for a small wood, hoping that when there, he should be able to conceal himself for some time, so as to throw his pursuers off the track.

They were well aware of this, for they increased their speed, and one or two swifter of foot than the others, got a-head of them, and cried out aloud as they ran, —

"Keep up! keep up! he's making for the wood."

"He can't stop there long; there are too many of us to beat that cover without finding our game. Push, lads, he's our own now, as sure as we know he's on a-head."

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They did push on, and came in full sight as they saw Sir Francis enter the wood, with what speed he could make; but he was almost spent. This was a cheering sight to them, and they were pretty certain he would not leave the wood in the state he was then -- he must seek concealment.

However, they were mistaken, for Sir Francis Varney, as soon as he got into the wood, plunged into the thickest of it, and then paused to gain breath.

"So far safe," he muttered; "but I have had a narrow escape; they are not yet done, though, and it will not be safe here long. I must away, and seek shelter and safety elsewhere, if I can; -- curses on the hounds that run yelping over the fields!"

He heard the shouts of his pursuers, and prepared to quit the wood when he thought the first had entered it.

"They will remain there some time in beating about," he muttered; "that is the only chance I have had since the pursuit; curse them! I say again. I may now get free; this delay must save my life, but nothing else will."

He moved away, and, at a slow and lazy pace, left the wood, and then made his way across some fields, towards some cottages that lay on the left.

The moon yet shone on the fields; he could hear the shouts of the mob, as various parties went through the wood from one covert to another, and yet unable to find him.

Then came a great shout upon his ears, as though they had found out he had left the wood. This caused him to redouble his speed, and, fearful lest he should be seen in the moonlight, he leaped over the first fence that he came to, with almost the last effort that he could make, and then staggered in at an open door -- through a passage -- into a front parlour, and there fell, faint, and utterly spent and speechless, at the feet of Flora Bannerworth.

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## Chapter LXXXVIII. THE RECEPTION OF THE VAMPYRE BY FLORA. -- VARNEY SUBDUED.

We must say that the irruption into the house of the Bannerworths by Sir Francis Varney, was certainly unpremeditated by him, for he knew not into whose house he had thus suddenly rushed for refuge from the numerous foes who were pursuing him with such vengeful ire. It was a strange and singular incident, and one well calculated to cause the mind to pause before it passed it by, and consider the means to an end which are sometimes as wide of the mark, as it is in nature possible to be.

But truth is stronger than fiction by far, and the end of it was, that, pressed on all sides by danger, bleeding, faint, and exhausted, he rushed into the first house he came to, and thus placed himself in the very house of those whom he had brought to such a state of misfortune.

Flora Bannerworth was seated at some embroidery, to pass away an hour or so, and thus get over the tedium of time; she was not thinking, either, upon the unhappy past; some trifling object or other engaged her attention. But what was her anguish when she saw a man staggering into the room bleeding, and bearing the marks of a bloody contest, and sinking at her feet.

He astonishment was far greater yet, when she recognized that man to be Sir Francis Varney.

"Save me! -- save me! Miss Bannerworth, save me! -- only you can save me from the ruthless multitude which follows, crying aloud for my blood."

As he spoke, he sank down speechless. Flora was so much amazed, not to say terrified, that she knew not what to do. She saw Sir Francis a suppliant at her feet, a fugitive from his enemies, who would show him no mercy -- she saw all this at a moment's glance; and yet she had not recovered her speech and presence of mind enough to enable her to make any reply to him.

"Save me! Miss Flora Bannerworth, save me!" he again said, raising himself on his hands. "I am beset, hunted like a wild beast -- they seek to destroy my life -- they have pursued me from one spot to another, and I have unwittingly intruded upon you. You will save me; I am sure your kindness and goodness of heart will never permit me to be turned out among such a crew of blood-thirsty butchers as those who pursue me are."

"Rise, Sir Francis Varney," said Flora, after a moment's hesitation; "in such an extremity as that which you are in, it would be inhuman indeed to thrust you out among your enemies."

"Oh! it would," said Varney. "I had thought, until now, I could have faced such a mob, until I was in this extremity; and then, disarmed and thrown down, bruised, beaten, and incapable of stemming such a torrent, I fled from one place to another, till hunted from each, and then instinct alone urged me to greater exertion than before, and here I am -- this is now my last and only hope."

"Rise, Sir Francis."

"You will not let me be torn out and slaughtered like an ox. I am sure you will not."

"Sir Francis, we are incapable of such conduct; you have sought refuge here, and shall find it as far as we are able to afford it to you."

"And your brother -- and -- "

"Yes -- yes -- all who are here will do the same; but here they come to speak for themselves."

As she spoke, Mrs. Bannerworth entered, also Charles Holland, who both started on seeing the vampyre present, Sir Francis Varney, who was too weak to rise without assistance.

"Sir Francis Varney," said Flora, speaking to them as they entered, "has sought refuge here; his life is in peril, and he has no other hope left; you will, I am sure, do what can be done for him."

"Mr. Holland," said Sir Francis, "I am, as you may see by my condition, a fugitive, and have been beaten almost to death; instinct alone urged me on to save my life, and I, unknowingly, came in here."

"Rise, Sir Francis," said Charles Holland; "I am not one who would feel any pleasure in seeing you become the victim of any brutal mob. I am sure there are none amongst us who would willingly do so. You have trusted to those who will not betray you."

"Thank you," said Sir Francis, faintly. "I thank you; your conduct is noble, and Miss Bannerworth's especially so."

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"Are you much hurt, Sir Francis?" inquired Charles.

"I am much hurt, but not seriously or dangerously; but I am weak and exhausted."

"Let me assist you to rise," said Charles Holland.

"Thank you," said Sir Francis, as he accepted of the assistance, and when he stood up, he found how incapable he really was, for a child might have grappled with him.

"I have been sore beset, Mrs. Bannerworth," he said, endeavouring to bow to that lady; "and I have suffered much ill-usage. I am not in such a plight as I could wish to be seen in by ladies; but my reasons for coming will be an excuse for my appearance in such disorder."

"We will not say anything about that," said Charles Holland; "under the circumstances, it could not be otherwise."

"It could not," said Sir Francis, as he took the chair Miss Flora Bannerworth placed for him.

"I will not ask you for any explanation as to how this came about; but you need some restorative and rest."

"I think I suffer more from exhaustion than anything else. The bruises I have, of course, are not dangerous."

"Can you step aside a few moments?" said Mrs. Bannerworth. "I will show you where you can remove some of those stains and make yourself more comfortable."

"Thank you, madam — thank you. It will be most welcome to me, I assure you."

Sir Francis rose up, and, with the aid of Charles Holland, he walked to the next room, where he washed himself, and arranged his dress as well as it would admit of its being done.

"Mr. Holland," he said, "I cannot tell you how grateful I feel for this. I have been hunted from the house where you saw me. From what source they learned my abode — my place of concealment — I know not; but they found me out."

"I need hardly say, Sir Francis, that it could not have occurred through me," said Charles Holland.

"My young friend," said Sir Francis, "I am quite sure you were not; and, moreover, I never, for one moment, suspected you. No, no; some accidental circumstance alone has been the cause. I have been very cautious — I may say extremely so — but at the same time, living, as I have, surrounded by enemies on all sides, it is not to be wondered at that I should be seen by some one, and thus traced to my lair, whither they followed me at their leisure."

"They have been but too troublesome in this matter. When they become a little reasonable, it will be a great miracle; for, when their passions and fears are excited, there is no end to the extremes they will perpetrate."

"It is so," said Varney, "as the history of these last few days amply testifies to me. I could never have credited the extent to which popular excitement could be carried, and the results it was likely to produce."

"It is an engine of very difficult control," pursued Charles Holland; "but what will raise it will not allay it, but add fuel to the fire that burns so fiercely already."

"True enough," said Sir Francis.

"If you have done, will you again step this way?"

Sir Francis Varney followed Charles Holland into the sitting-room, and sat down with them, and before him was spread a light supper, with some good wine.

"Eat, Sir Francis," said Mrs. Bannerworth. "Such a state as that in which you are, must, of necessity, produce great exhaustion, and you must require food and drink."

Sir Francis bowed as well as he was able, and even then, sore and bruised as he was, fugitive as he had been, he could not forget his courtesy; but it was not without an effort. His equanimity was, however, much disturbed, by finding himself in the midst of the Bannerworths.

"I owe you a relation," he said, "of what occurred to drive me from my place of concealment."

"We should like to hear it, if you are not too far fatigued to relate it," said Charles.

"I will. I was sitting at the top of that house in which I sought to hide myself, when I heard sounds come that were of a very suspicious nature; but did not believe that it could happen that they had discovered my lurking-place; far from it; though, of late, I had been habitually cautious and suspicious, yet I thought I was safe, till I heard the noise of a multitude coming towards me. I could not be mistaken in it, for the sounds are so peculiar that they are like nothing else. I heard them coming.

"I moved not; and when they surrounded the house as far as was practicable, they gave an immense shout, and made the welkin ring with the sound."

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"I heard a confused noise at a distance," remarked Flora; "but I had no idea that anything serious was contemplated. I imagined it was some festival among some trade, or portion of the townspeople, who were shouting from joy."

"Oh, dear, no," said Sir Francis; "but I am not surprised at the mistake, because there are such occurrences occasionally; but whenever the mob gained any advantage upon me they shouted, and when I was able to oppose them with effect, they groaned at me most horribly."

"The deuce," said Charles; "the sound, I suppose, serves to express their feelings, and to encourage each other."

"Something of the sort, I dare say," said Varney; "but at length, after defending the house with all the desperation that despair imparted to me, I was compelled to fly from floor to floor, until I had reached the roof; there they followed me, and I was compelled again to fly. House after house they followed me to, until I could go no farther," said Varney.

"How did you escape?"

"Fortunately I saw some ivy growing and creeping over the coping—stones, and by grasping that I got over the side, and so let myself down by degrees, as well as I was able."

"Good heavens! what a dreadful situation," exclaimed Flora; "it is really horrible!"

"I could not do it again, under, I think, any circumstances."

"Not the same?" said Mrs. Bannerworth.

"I really doubt if I could," said Varney. "The truth is, the excitement of the moment was great, and I at that moment thought of nothing but getting away."

"The same circumstances, the same fear of death, could hardly be produced in me again, and I am unable to account for the phenomenon on this occasion."

"Your escape was very narrow indeed," said Flora; "it makes me shudder to think of the dangers you have gone through; it is really terrible to think of it."

"You," said Sir Francis, "are young and susceptible, and generous in your disposition. You can feel for me, and do; but how little I could have expected it, it is impossible to say; but your sympathy sinks into my mind, and causes such emotions as never can be erased from my soul."

"But to proceed. You may guess how dreadful was my position, by the fact that the first man who attempted to get over tore the ivy away and fell, striking me in his fall; he was killed, and I thrown down and stunned, I then made for the wood, closely pursued, and got into it; then I baffled them: they searched the wood, and I went through it. I then ran across the country to these houses here; I got over the fence, and in at the back door."

"Did they see you come?" inquired Charles Holland.

"I cannot say, but I think that they did not; I heard them give a loud shout more than once when on this side of the wood."

"You did? How far from here were you when you heard the shouts?" inquired Mrs. Bannerworth.

"I was close here; and, as I jumped over the fence, I heard them shout again; but I think they cannot see so far; the night was moonlight, to be sure, but that is all; the shadow of the hedge, and the distance together, would make it, if not impossible, at least very improbable."

"That is very likely," said Mrs. Bannerworth.

"In that case," said Charles Holland, "you are safe here; for none will suspect your being concealed here."

"It is the last place I should myself have thought of," said Varney; "and I may say the last place I would knowingly have come to; but had I before known enough of you, I should have been well assured of your generosity, and have freely come to claim your aid and shelter, which accident has so strangely brought me to be a candidate for, and which you have so kindly awarded me."

"The night is wearing away," said Flora, "and Sir Francis is doubtless fatigued to an excess; sleep, I dare say, will be most welcome to him."

"It will indeed, Miss Bannerworth," said Varney; "but I can do that under any circumstances; do not let me put you to any inconvenience; a chair, and at any hour, will serve me for sleep."

"We cannot do for you what we would wish," said Flora, looking at her mother; "but something better than that, at all events, we can and will provide for you."

"I know not how to thank you," said Sir Francis Varney; "I assure you, of late I have not been luxuriously

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lodged, and the less trouble I give you the greater I shall esteem the favour."

The hour was late, and Sir Francis Varney, before another hour had elapsed, was consigned to his own reflections, in a small but neat room, there to repose his bruised and battered carcass, and court the refreshing influence of sleep.

His reflections were, for nearly an hour, of the most contradictory character; some one passion was trying to overcome the other; but he seemed quite subdued.

"I could not have expected this," he muttered; "Flora Bannerworth has the soul of a heroine. I deserved not such a reception from them; and yet, in my hour of utmost need, they have received me like a favoured friend; and yet all their misfortunes have taken their origin from me; I am the cause of all."

Filled with these thoughts, he fell asleep; he slept undisturbed; it seemed as though the influence of sleep was sweeter far there, in the cottage of the Bannerworths, than ever he had before received.

It was late on that morning before Sir Francis rose, and then only through hearing the family about, and, having performed his toilet, so far as circumstances permitted, he descended, and entered the front-parlour, the room he had been in the night before.

Flora Bannerworth was already there; indeed, breakfast was waiting the appearance of Sir Francis Varney.

"Good morning, Sir Francis," said Flora, rising to receive him; and she could not avoid looking at him as he entered the room. "I hope you have had a pleasant night."

"It has been the best night's rest I have had for some time, Miss Bannerworth. I assure you I have to express my gratitude to you for so much kindness. I have slept well, and soundly."

"I am glad to hear it."

"I think yet I shall escape the search of these people who have hunted me from so many places."

"I hope you may, indeed, Sir Francis."

"You, Miss Bannerworth! and do you hope that I may escape the vengeance of these people — the populace?"

"I do, Sir Francis, most sincerely hope so. Why should I wish evil to you, especially at their hands?"

Sir Francis did not speak for a minute or two, and then he said, turning full upon Flora —

"I don't know why, Miss Bannerworth, that I should think so, but perhaps it is because there are peculiar circumstances connected with myself, that have made me feel conscious that I have not deserved so much goodness at your hands."

"You have not deserved any evil. Sir Francis, we could not do that if it were in our power; we would do you a service at any time."

"You have done so, Miss Bannerworth — the greatest that can be performed. You have saved my life."

At that moment Charles Holland entered, and Sir Francis bowed, as he said, —

"I hope you, Mr. Holland, have slept as well, and passed as good a night as I have passed?"

"I am glad you, at least, have passed a quiet one," said Charles Holland; "you, I dare say, feel all the better for it? How do you feel yourself? Are you much hurt?"

"Not at all, not at all," said Sir Francis Varney. "Only a few bruises, and so forth, some of which, as you may perceive, do not add to one's personal appearance. A week or two's quiet would rid me of them. At all events, I would it may do the same with my enemies."

"I wish they were as easily gotten rid of myself," said Charles; "but as that cannot be, we must endeavour to baffle them in the best way we may."

"I owe a debt to your I shall never be able to repay; but where there is a will, they say there is a way; and if the old saying be good for anything, I need not despair, though the way is by no means apparent at present."

"Time is the magician," said Flora, "whose wand changes all things — the young to the aged, and the aged to nothing."

"Certainly, that is true," said Varney, "and many such changes have I seen. My mind is stored with such events; but this is sadness, and I have cause to rejoice."

The breakfast was passed off in pleasing conversation, and Varney found himself much at home with the Bannerworths, whose calm and even tenour was quite new to him.

He could not but admit the charms of such a life as that led by the Bannerworths; but what it must have been when they were supplied with ample means, with nothing to prey upon their minds, and no fearful mystery to hang on and weigh down their spirits, he could scarcely imagine.

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They were amiable, accomplished; they were in the same mind at all times, and nothing seemed to ruffle them; and when night came, he could not but acknowledge to himself that he had never formed half the opinion of them they were deserving of.

Of course during that day he was compelled to lie close, so as not to be seen by any one, save the family. He sat in a small room, which was overlooked by no other in the neighbourhood, and he remained quiet, sometimes conversing, and sometimes reading, but at the same time ever attentive to the least sound that appeared at all of a character to indicate the approach of persons for any purpose whatever.

At supper time he spoke to Flora, and to Charles Holland, saying, —

"There are certain matters connected with myself — I may say with you now — sure all that has happened will make it so — of which you would be glad to hear something."

"You mean upon the same subject upon which I had some conversation with you a day or two back?"

"Yes, the same. Allow me one week, and you shall know all. I will then relate to you that which you so much desire to know — one week, and all shall be told."

"Well," said Charles Holland, "this has not been exacted from you as the price of your safety, but you can choose your own time, of course; what you promise is most desired, for it will render those happy who now are much worse than they were before these occurrences took place."

"I am aware of all that; grant me but one week, and then you shall be made acquainted with all."

"I am satisfied, Sir Francis," said Flora; "but while here under our roof, we should never have asked you a question."

"Of this, Miss Bannerworth, the little I have seen of you assures me you would not do so; however, I am the more inclined to make it — I am under so deep an obligation to you all, that I can never repay it."

Sir Francis Varney retired to rest that night — his promise to the Bannerworths filled his mind with many reflections — the insecurity of his own position, and the frail tenure which even he held in the hands of those whom he had most injured.

This produced a series of reflections of a grave and melancholy nature, and he sat by his window, watching the progress of the clouds, as they appeared to chase each other over the face of the scene — now casting a shade over the earth, and then banishing the shadows, and throwing a gentle light over the earth's surface, which was again chased away, and shadows again fell upon the scene below.

How long he had sat there in melancholy musing he knew not; but suddenly he was aroused from his dreams by a voice that shook the skies, and caused him to start to his feet.

"Hurrah! — hurrah! — hurrah!" shouted the mob, which had silently collected around the cottage of the Bannerworths.

"Curses!" muttered Sir Francis, as he again sank in his chair, and struck his head with his hand. "I am hunted to death — they will not leave me until my body has graced a cross-road."

"Hurrah! — down with the vampyre — pull him out!"

Then came an instant knocking at the doors, and the people on the outside made a great din, that it seemed as though they contemplated knocking the house down at once, without warning the inmates that they waited there.

There was a cessation for about a minute, when one of the family hastened to the door, and inquired what was wanted.

"Varney, the vampyre," was the reply.

"You must seek him elsewhere."

"We will search this place before we go further," replied a man.

"But he is not here."

"We have reason to believe otherwise. Open the door, and let us in — no one shall be hurt, or one single object in the house, but we must come in, and search for the vampyre."

"Come to-morrow, then."

"That will not do," said the voice; "open, or we force our way in without more notice."

At the same a tremendous blow was bestowed upon the door, and then much force was used to thrust it in. A consultation was suddenly held among the inmates as to what was to be done, but no one could advise, and each was well aware of the utter impossibility of keeping the mob out.

"I do not see what is to become of me," said Sir Francis Varney, suddenly appearing before them. "You must



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let them in; there is no chance of keeping them out, neither can you conceal me. You will have no place, save one, that will be sacred from their profanation."

"And what is that?"

"Flora's own room."

All started at the thought that Flora's chamber could in any way be profaned by any such presence as Sir Francis Varney's.

However, the doors below were suddenly burst open, amid loud cries from the populace, who rushed in in great numbers, and began to search the lower rooms, immediately.

"All is lost!" said Sir Francis Varney, as he dashed away and rushed to the chamber of Flora, who, alarmed at the sounds that were now filling the house, stood listening to them.

"Miss Bannerworth ——" began Varney.

"Sir Francis!"

"Yes, it is I, Miss Bannerworth. Hear me, for one moment."

"What is the matter?"

"I am again in peril — in more imminent peril than before; my life is not worth a minute's purchase, unless you save me. You, and alone, can now save me. Oh! Miss Bannerworth, if ever pity touched your heart, save me from those only whom I now fear. I could meet death in any shape but that in which they will inflict it upon me. Hear their execrations below!"

"Death to the vampyre! death to Varney! burn him! run a stake through his body!"

"What can I do, Sir Francis?"

"Admit me to your chamber."

"Sir Francis, are you aware of what you are saying?"

"I am well. It is a request which you would justly scorn to reply to; but now my life — recollect you have saved me once — my life; — do now now throw away the boon you have so kindly bestowed. Save me, Miss Bannerworth."

"It is not possible. I ——" "

"Nay, Miss Bannerworth, do you imagine this is a time for ceremony, or the observances of polished life? On my honour, you run no risk of censure."

"Where is Varney? Where is the vampyre? He ain't far off."

"Hear — hear them, Miss Bannerworth. They are now at the foot of the stairs. Not a moment to lose. One minute more, and I am in the hands of a crew that has no mercy."

"Hurrah! upstairs. He's not below. Upstairs, neighbours; we shall have him yet."

These words sounded on the stairs; half-a-dozen more steps, and Varney would be seen. It was a miracle he was not heard begging for his life.

Varney cast a look of despair at the stairhead and felt for his sword, but it was not there; he had lost it. He struck his head with his clenched hand, and was about to rush upon his foes, when he heard the lock turn; he looked, and saw the door opened gently, and Flora stood there; he passed in, and sank cowering into a chair, at the other end of the room, behind some curtains.

The door was scarcely shut ere some tried to force it, and then a loud knocking came at the door.

"Open! open! we want Varney, the vampyre. Open! or we will burst it open."

Flora did open it, but stood resolutely in the opening, and held up her hand to impose silence.

"Are you men, that you can come thus to force yourselves upon the privacy of a female? Is there nothing in the town or house, that you must intrude in numbers into a private apartment? Is no place sacred from you?"

"But, ma'am — miss — we only want Varney, the vampyre."

"And can you find him nowhere but in a female's bedroom? Shame on you! shame on you! Have you no sisters, wives, or mothers, that you act thus?"

"He's not in there, you may be sure of that, Jack," said a gruff voice. "Let the lady be in quiet; she's had quite enough trouble with him to sicken her of a vampyre. You may be sure that's the last place to find him in."

With this they all turned away, and Flora shut the door and locked it upon them, and Varney was safe.

"You have saved me," said Varney.

"Hush!" said Flora. "Speak not; there may be some one listening."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

Sir Francis Varney stood in the attitude of one listening most anxiously to catch some sounds; the moon fell across his face, and gave it a ghastly hue, that, added to his natural paleness and wounds, gave him an almost unearthly aspect.

The sounds grew more and more distant; the shouts and noise of men traversing the apartments subsided, and gradually the place became restored to its original silence. The mob, after having searched every other part of the house, and not finding the object of their search, they concluded that he was not there, but must have made his escape before.

We must say that the irruption into the house of the Bannerworths by Sir Francis Varney, was certainly unpremeditated by him, for he knew not into whose house he had thus suddenly rushed for refuge from the numerous foes who were pursuing him with such vengeful ire. It was a strange and singular incident, and one well calculated to cause the mind to pause before it passed it by, and consider the means to an end which are sometimes as wide of the mark, as it is in nature possible to be.

But truth is stronger than fiction by far, and the end of it was, that, pressed on all sides by danger, bleeding, faint, and exhausted, he rushed into the first house he came to, and thus placed himself in the very house of those whom he had brought to such a state of misfortune.

Flora Bannerworth was seated at some embroidery, to pass away an hour or so, and thus get over the tedium of time; she was not thinking, either, upon the unhappy past; some trifling object or other engaged her attention. But what was her anguish when she saw a man staggering into the room bleeding, and bearing the marks of a bloody contest, and sinking at her feet.

He astonishment was far greater yet, when she recognized that man to be Sir Francis Varney.

"Save me! — save me! Miss Bannerworth, save me! — only you can save me from the ruthless multitude which follows, crying aloud for my blood."

As he spoke, he sank down speechless. Flora was so much amazed, not to say terrified, that she knew not what to do. She saw Sir Francis a suppliant at her feet, a fugitive from his enemies, who would show him no mercy — she saw all this at a moment's glance; and yet she had not recovered her speech and presence of mind enough to enable her to make any reply to him.

"Save me! Miss Flora Bannerworth, save me!" he again said, raising himself on his hands. "I am beset, hunted like a wild beast — they seek to destroy my life — they have pursued me from one spot to another, and I have unwittingly intruded upon you. You will save me; I am sure your kindness and goodness of heart will never permit me to be turned out among such a crew of blood-thirsty butchers as those who pursue me are."

"Rise, Sir Francis Varney," said Flora, after a moment's hesitation; "in such an extremity as that which you are in, it would be inhuman indeed to thrust you out among your enemies."

"Oh! it would," said Varney. "I had thought, until now, I could have faced such a mob, until I was in this extremity; and then, disarmed and thrown down, bruised, beaten, and incapable of stemming such a torrent, I fled from one place to another, till hunted from each, and then instinct alone urged me to greater exertion than before, and here I am — this is now my last and only hope."

"Rise, Sir Francis."

"You will not let me be torn out and slaughtered like an ox. I am sure you will not."

"Sir Francis, we are incapable of such conduct; you have sought refuge here, and shall find it as far as we are able to afford it to you."

"And your brother — and — "

"Yes — yes — all who are here will do the same; but here they come to speak for themselves."

As she spoke, Mrs. Bannerworth entered, also Charles Holland, who both started on seeing the vampyre present, Sir Francis Varney, who was too weak to rise without assistance.

"Sir Francis Varney," said Flora, speaking to them as they entered, "has sought refuge here; his life is in peril, and he has no other hope left; you will, I am sure, do what can be done for him."

"Mr. Holland," said Sir Francis, "I am, as you may see by my condition, a fugitive, and have been beaten almost to death; instinct alone urged me on to save my life, and I, unknowingly, came in here."

"Rise, Sir Francis," said Charles Holland; "I am not one who would feel any pleasure in seeing you become the victim of any brutal mob. I am sure there are none amongst us who would willingly do so. You have trusted to those who will not betray you."

"Thank you," said Sir Francis, faintly. "I thank you; your conduct is noble, and Miss Bannerworth's especially so."

"Are you much hurt, Sir Francis?" inquired Charles.

"I am much hurt, but not seriously or dangerously; but I am weak and exhausted."

"Let me assist you to rise," said Charles Holland.

"Thank you," said Sir Francis, as he accepted of the assistance, and when he stood up, he found how incapable he really was, for a child might have grappled with him.

"I have been sore beset, Mrs. Bannerworth," he said, endeavouring to bow to that lady; "and I have suffered much ill-usage. I am not in such a plight as I could wish to be seen in by ladies; but my reasons for coming will be an excuse for my appearance in such disorder."

"We will not say anything about that," said Charles Holland; "under the circumstances, it could not be otherwise."

"It could not," said Sir Francis, as he took the chair Miss Flora Bannerworth placed for him.

"I will not ask you for any explanation as to how this came about; but you need some restorative and rest."

"I think I suffer more from exhaustion than anything else. The bruises I have, of course, are not dangerous."

"Can you step aside a few moments?" said Mrs. Bannerworth. "I will show you where you can remove some of those stains and make yourself more comfortable."

"Thank you, madam — thank you. It will be most welcome to me, I assure you."

Sir Francis rose up, and, with the aid of Charles Holland, he walked to the next room, where he washed himself, and arranged his dress as well as it would admit of its being done.

"Mr. Holland," he said, "I cannot tell you how grateful I feel for this. I have been hunted from the house where you saw me. From what source they learned my abode — my place of concealment — I know not; but they found me out."

"I need hardly say, Sir Francis, that it could not have occurred through me," said Charles Holland.

"My young friend," said Sir Francis, "I am quite sure you were not; and, moreover, I never, for one moment, suspected you. No, no; some accidental circumstance alone has been the cause. I have been very cautious — I may say extremely so — but at the same time, living, as I have, surrounded by enemies on all sides, it is not to be wondered at that I should be seen by some one, and thus traced to my lair, whither they followed me at their leisure."

"They have been but too troublesome in this matter. When they become a little reasonable, it will be a great miracle; for, when their passions and fears are excited, there is no end to the extremes they will perpetrate."

"It is so," said Varney, "as the history of these last few days amply testifies to me. I could never have credited the extent to which popular excitement could be carried, and the results it was likely to produce."

"It is an engine of very difficult control," pursued Charles Holland; "but what will raise it will not allay it, but add fuel to the fire that burns so fiercely already."

"True enough," said Sir Francis.

"If you have done, will you again step this way?"

Sir Francis Varney followed Charles Holland into the sitting-room, and sat down with them, and before him was spread a light supper, with some good wine.

"Eat, Sir Francis," said Mrs. Bannerworth. "Such a state as that in which you are, must, of necessity, produce great exhaustion, and you must require food and drink."

Sir Francis bowed as well as he was able, and even then, sore and bruised as he was, fugitive as he had been, he could not forget his courtesy; but it was not without an effort. His equanimity was, however, much disturbed, by finding himself in the midst of the Bannerworths.

"I owe you a relation," he said, "of what occurred to drive me from my place of concealment."

"We should like to hear it, if you are not too far fatigued to relate it," said Charles.

"I will. I was sitting at the top of that house in which I sought to hide myself, when I heard sounds come that were of a very suspicious nature; but did not believe that it could happen that they had discovered my lurking-place; far from it; though, of late, I had been habitually cautious and suspicious, yet I thought I was safe, till I heard the noise of a multitude coming towards me. I could not be mistaken in it, for the sounds are so peculiar that they are like nothing else. I heard them coming.

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"I moved not; and when they surrounded the house as far as was practicable, they gave an immense shout, and made the welkin ring with the sound."

"I heard a confused noise at a distance," remarked Flora; "but I had no idea that anything serious was contemplated. I imagined it was some festival among some trade, or portion of the townspeople, who were shouting from joy."

"Oh, dear, no," said Sir Francis; "but I am not surprised at the mistake, because there are such occurrences occasionally; but whenever the mob gained any advantage upon me they shouted, and when I was able to oppose them with effect, they groaned at me most horribly."

"The deuce," said Charles; "the sound, I suppose, serves to express their feelings, and to encourage each other."

"Something of the sort, I dare say," said Varney; "but at length, after defending the house with all the desperation that despair imparted to me, I was compelled to fly from floor to floor, until I had reached the roof; there they followed me, and I was compelled again to fly. House after house they followed me to, until I could go no farther," said Varney.

"How did you escape?"

"Fortunately I saw some ivy growing and creeping over the coping—stones, and by grasping that I got over the side, and so let myself down by degrees, as well as I was able."

"Good heavens! what a dreadful situation," exclaimed Flora; "it is really horrible!"

"I could not do it again, under, I think, any circumstances."

"Not the same?" said Mrs. Bannerworth.

"I really doubt if I could," said Varney. "The truth is, the excitement of the moment was great, and I at that moment thought of nothing but getting away."

"The same circumstances, the same fear of death, could hardly be produced in me again, and I am unable to account for the phenomenon on this occasion."

"Your escape was very narrow indeed," said Flora; "it makes me shudder to think of the dangers you have gone through; it is really terrible to think of it."

"You," said Sir Francis, "are young and susceptible, and generous in your disposition. You can feel for me, and do; but how little I could have expected it, it is impossible to say; but your sympathy sinks into my mind, and causes such emotions as never can be erased from my soul."

"But to proceed. You may guess how dreadful was my position, by the fact that the first man who attempted to get over tore the ivy away and fell, striking me in his fall; he was killed, and I thrown down and stunned, I then made for the wood, closely pursued, and got into it; then I baffled them: they searched the wood, and I went through it. I then ran across the country to these houses here; I got over the fence, and in at the back door."

"Did they see you come?" inquired Charles Holland.

"I cannot say, but I think that they did not; I heard them give a loud shout more than once when on this side of the wood."

"You did? How far from here were you when you heard the shouts?" inquired Mrs. Bannerworth.

"I was close here; and, as I jumped over the fence, I heard them shout again; but I think they cannot see so far; the night was moonlight, to be sure, but that is all; the shadow of the hedge, and the distance together, would make it, if not impossible, at least very improbable."

"That is very likely," said Mrs. Bannerworth.

"In that case," said Charles Holland, "you are safe here; for none will suspect your being concealed here."

"It is the last place I should myself have thought of," said Varney; "and I may say the last place I would knowingly have come to; but had I before known enough of you, I should have been well assured of your generosity, and have freely come to claim your aid and shelter, which accident has so strangely brought me to be a candidate for, and which you have so kindly awarded me."

"The night is wearing away," said Flora, "and Sir Francis is doubtless fatigued to an excess; sleep, I dare say, will be most welcome to him."

"It will indeed, Miss Bannerworth," said Varney; "but I can do that under any circumstances; do not let me put you to any inconvenience; a chair, and at any hour, will serve me for sleep."

"We cannot do for you what we would wish," said Flora, looking at her mother; "but something better than

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that, at all events, we can and will provide for you."

"I know not how to thank you," said Sir Francis Varney; "I assure you, of late I have not been luxuriously lodged, and the less trouble I give you the greater I shall esteem the favour."

The hour was late, and Sir Francis Varney, before another hour had elapsed, was consigned to his own reflections, in a small but neat room, there to repose his bruised and battered carcass, and court the refreshing influence of sleep.

His reflections were, for nearly an hour, of the most contradictory character; some one passion was trying to overcome the other; but he seemed quite subdued.

"I could not have expected this," he muttered; "Flora Bannerworth has the soul of a heroine. I deserved not such a reception from them; and yet, in my hour of utmost need, they have received me like a favoured friend; and yet all their misfortunes have taken their origin from me; I am the cause of all."

Filled with these thoughts, he fell asleep; he slept undisturbed; it seemed as though the influence of sleep was sweeter far there, in the cottage of the Bannerworths, than ever he had before received.

It was late on that morning before Sir Francis rose, and then only through hearing the family about, and, having performed his toilet, so far as circumstances permitted, he descended, and entered the front-parlour, the room he had been in the night before.

Flora Bannerworth was already there; indeed, breakfast was waiting the appearance of Sir Francis Varney.

"Good morning, Sir Francis," said Flora, rising to receive him; and she could not avoid looking at him as he entered the room. "I hope you have had a pleasant night."

"It has been the best night's rest I have had for some time, Miss Bannerworth. I assure you I have to express my gratitude to you for so much kindness. I have slept well, and soundly."

"I am glad to hear it."

"I think yet I shall escape the search of these people who have hunted me from so many places."

"I hope you may, indeed, Sir Francis."

"You, Miss Bannerworth! and do you hope that I may escape the vengeance of these people --- the populace?"

"I do, Sir Francis, most sincerely hope so. Why should I wish evil to you, especially at their hands?"

Sir Francis did not speak for a minute or two, and then he said, turning full upon Flora ---

"I don't know why, Miss Bannerworth, that I should think so, but perhaps it is because there are peculiar circumstances connected with myself, that have made me feel conscious that I have not deserved so much goodness at your hands."

"You have not deserved any evil. Sir Francis, we could not do that if it were in our power; we would do you a service at any time."

"You have done so, Miss Bannerworth --- the greatest that can be performed. You have saved my life."

At that moment Charles Holland entered, and Sir Francis bowed, as he said, ---

"I hope you, Mr. Holland, have slept as well, and passed as good a night as I have passed?"

"I am glad you, at least, have passed a quiet one," said Charles Holland; "you, I dare say, feel all the better for it? How do you feel yourself? Are you much hurt?"

"Not at all, not at all," said Sir Francis Varney. "Only a few bruises, and so forth, some of which, as you may perceive, do not add to one's personal appearance. A week or two's quiet would rid me of them. At all events, I would it may do the same with my enemies."

"I wish they were as easily gotten rid of myself," said Charles; "but as that cannot be, we must endeavour to baffle them in the best way we may."

"I owe a debt to you I shall never be able to repay; but where there is a will, they say there is a way; and if the old saying be good for anything, I need not despair, though the way is by no means apparent at present."

"Time is the magician," said Flora, "whose wand changes all things --- the young to the aged, and the aged to nothing."

"Certainly, that is true," said Varney, "and many such changes have I seen. My mind is stored with such events; but this is sadness, and I have cause to rejoice."

The breakfast was passed off in pleasing conversation, and Varney found himself much at home with the Bannerworths, whose calm and even tenour was quite new to him.

He could not but admit the charms of such a life as that led by the Bannerworths; but what it must have been

when they were supplied with ample means, with nothing to prey upon their minds, and no fearful mystery to hang on and weigh down their spirits, he could scarcely imagine.

They were amiable, accomplished; they were in the same mind at all times, and nothing seemed to ruffle them; and when night came, he could not but acknowledge to himself that he had never formed half the opinion of them they were deserving of.

Of course during that day he was compelled to lie close, so as not to be seen by any one, save the family. He sat in a small room, which was overlooked by no other in the neighbourhood, and he remained quiet, sometimes conversing, and sometimes reading, but at the same time ever attentive to the least sound that appeared at all of a character to indicate the approach of persons for any purpose whatever.

At supper time he spoke to Flora, and to Charles Holland, saying, —

"There are certain matters connected with myself — I may say with you now — sure all that has happened will make it so — of which you would be glad to hear something."

"You mean upon the same subject upon which I had some conversation with you a day or two back?"

"Yes, the same. Allow me one week, and you shall know all. I will then relate to you that which you so much desire to know — one week, and all shall be told."

"Well," said Charles Holland, "this has not been exacted from you as the price of your safety, but you can choose your own time, of course; what you promise is most desired, for it will render those happy who now are much worse than they were before these occurrences took place."

"I am aware of all that; grant me but one week, and then you shall be made acquainted with all."

"I am satisfied, Sir Francis," said Flora; "but while here under our roof, we should never have asked you a question."

"Of this, Miss Bannerworth, the little I have seen of you assures me you would not do so; however, I am the more inclined to make it — I am under so deep an obligation to you all, that I can never repay it." \* \* \* \*

The most desperate peril of Sir Francis Varney seemed to have more effect upon him than anything that had occurred during his most strange and most eventful career.

When he was assured that the riotous mod that had been so intent upon his destruction was gone, and that he might emerge from his place of concealment, he did so with an appearance of such utter exhaustion that the Bannerworth family could not but look upon him as a being who was near his end.

At any time his countenance, as we long have had occasion to remark, was a strange and unearthly looking one; but when we come to superadd to the strangeness of his ordinary appearance the traces of deep mental emotion, we may well say that Varney's appearance was positively of the most alarming character.

When he was seated in the ordinary sitting apartment of the Bannerworths, he drew a long sighing breath, and placing his hand upon his heart, he said, in a faint tone of voice, —

"It beats now laboriously, but it will soon cease its pulsations for ever."

These words sounded absolutely prophetic, there was about them such a solemn aspect, and he looked at the same time that he uttered them so much like one whose mortal race was run, and who was now a candidate for the grave.

"Do not speak so despairingly," said Charles Holland; "remember, that if your life has been one of errors hitherto, how short a space of time may suffice to redeem some of them at least, and the communication to me which you have not yet completed may to some extent have such an effect."

"No, no. It may contribute to an act of justice, but it can do no good to me. And yet do not suppose that because such is my impression that I mean to hesitate in finishing to you that communication."

"I rejoice to hear you say so, and if you would, now that you must be aware of what good feelings towards you we are all animated with, remove the bar of secrecy from the communication, I should esteem it a great favour."

Varney appeared to be considering for a few moments, and then he said, —

"Well, well. Let the secrecy no longer exist. Have it removed at once. I will no longer seek to maintain it. Tell all, Charles Holland — tell all."

Thus empowered by the mysterious being, Charles Holland related briefly what Varney had already told him, and then concluded by saying, —

"That is all that I have myself as yet been made aware of, and I now call upon Sir Francis Varney to finish his

narration."

"I am weak," said Varney, "and scarcely equal to the task; but yet I will not shrink from the promise that I have made. You have been the preservers of my life, and more particularly to you, Flora Bannerworth, am I indebted for a continued existence, which otherwise must have been sacrificed upon the altar or superstition."

"But you will recollect, Master Varney," said the admiral, who had sat looking on for some time in silent wonder, "you must recollect, Master Varney, that the people are, after all, not so much to blame for their superstition, because, whether you are a vampyre or not, and I don't pretend to come to a positive opinion now, you took good care to persuade them you were."

"I did," said Varney, with a shudder; "but why did I?"

"Well, you know best."

"It was, then, because I did believe, and do believe, that there is something more than natural about my strangely protracted existence; but we will waive that point, and, before my failing strength, for it appears to me to be failing, completely prevents me from doing so, let me relate to you the continued particulars of the circumstances that made me what I am."

Flora Bannerworth, although she had heard before from the lips of Charles Holland the to her dreadful fact, that her father, in addition to having laid violent hands upon his own life, was a murderer, now that that fearful circumstance was related more publicly, felt a greater pang than she had done when it was whispered to her in the accents of pure affection, and softened down by a gentleness of tone, which Charles Holland's natural delicacy would not allow him to use even to her whom he loved so well in the presence of others.

She let her beautiful face be hidden by her hands, and she wept as she listened to the sad detail.

Varney looked inquiringly in the countenance of Charles Holland, because, having given him leave to make Flora acquainted with the circumstance, he was rather surprised at the amount of emotion which it produced in her.

Charles Holland answered the appealing look by saying, --

"Flora is already aware of the facts, but it naturally affects her much to hear them now repeated in the presence of others, and those too, towards whom she cannot feel -- "

What Charles Holland was going to say was abruptly stopped short by the admiral, who interposed, exclaiming, --

"Why, what do you mean, you son of a sea cook? The presence of who do you mean? Do you mean to say that I don't feel for Miss Flora, bless her heart! quite as much as a white-faced looking swab like you? Why I shall begin to think you are only fit for a marine."

"Nay, uncle, now do not put yourself out of temper. You must be well aware that I could not mean anything disrespectful to you. You should not suppose such a state of things possible; and although, perhaps, I did not express myself so felicitously as I might, yet what I intended to say, was, -- --"

"Oh, bother what you intended to say. You go on, Mr. Vampyre, with your story. I want to know what became of it all; just you get on as quick as you can, and let us know what you did after the man was murdered."

"When the dreadful deed was committed," said Varney, "and our victim lay weltering in his blood, and had breathed his last, we stood like men who for the first time were awakened to the frightful consequences of what they had done.

"I saw by the dim light that hovered round us a great change come over the countenance of Marmaduke Bannerworth, and he shook in every limb.

"This soon passed away, however, and the powerful and urgent necessity which arose of avoiding the consequences of the deed that we had done, restored us to ourselves. We stooped and took from the body the ill-gotten gains of the gambler. They amounted to an immense sum, and I said to Marmaduke Bannerworth, --

"Take you the whole of this money and proceed to your own home with it, where you will be least suspected. Hide it in some place of great secrecy, and to-morrow I will call upon you, when we will divide it, and will consider of some means of safely exchanging the notes for gold."

"He agreed to this, and placed the money in his pocket, after which it became necessary that we should dispose of the body, which, if we did not quickly remove, must in a few hours be discovered, and so, perchance, accompanied by other criminating circumstances, become a frightful evidence against us, and entail upon us all those consequences of the deed which we were so truly anxious to escape from.

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"It is ever the worst part of the murderer's task, that after he has struck the blow that has deprived his victim of existence, it becomes his frightful duty to secrete the corpse, which, with its dead eyes, ever seems to be glaring upon him such a world of reproach.

"That it is which should make people pause ere they dipped their hands in the blood of others, and that it is which becomes the first retribution that the murderer has to endure for the deep crime that he has committed.

"We tore two stakes from a hedge, and with their assistance we contrived to dig a very superficial hole, such a hole as was only sufficient, by placing a thin coating of earth over it, to conceal the body of the murdered man.

"And then came the loathsome task of dragging him into it -- a task full of horror, and from which we shrunk aghast; but it had to be done, and, therefore, we stooped, and grasping the clothes as best we might, we dragged the body into the chasm we had prepared for its reception. Glad were we then to be enabled to throw earth upon it and to stamp upon it with such vehemence as might well be supposed to actuate men deeply anxious to put out of sight some dangerous and loathsome object.

"When we had completed this, and likewise gathered handsfull of dust from the road, and dry leaves, and such other matter, to sprinkle upon the grave, so as to give the earth an appearance of not having been disturbed, we looked at each other and breathed from our toil.

"Then, and not till then, was it that we remembered that among other things which the gambler had won of Marmaduke were the deeds belonging to the Dearbrook property."

"The Dearbrook property!" exclaimed Henry Bannerworth; "I know that there was a small estate going by that name, which belonged to our family, but I always understood that long ago my father had parted with it."

"Yes; it was mortgaged for a small sum -- a sum not a fourth part of its value -- and it had been redeemed by Marmaduke Bannerworth, not for the purpose of keeping it, but in order that he might sell it outright, and so partially remedy his exhausted finances."

"I was not aware of that," returned Henry.

"Doubtless you were not, for of late -- I mean for the twelve months or so preceding your father's death -- you know he was must estranged from all the family, so that you none of you knew much of what he was doing, except that he was carrying on a very wild and reckless career, such as was sure to end in dishonour and poverty; but I tell you he had the title deeds of the Dearbrook property, and that they were only got from him, along with everything else of value that he possessed, at the gaming table, by the man who paid such a fearful penalty for his success.

"It was not until after the body was completely buried, and we had completed all our precautions for more effectually hiding it from observation, that we recollected the fact of those important papers being in his possession. It was Marmaduke Bannerworth who first remembered it, and he exclaimed, --

"By Heaven, we have buried the title deeds of the property, and we shall have again to exhume the corpse for the purpose of procuring them.'

"Now those deeds were nothing to me, and repugnant as I had felt from the first to having anything whatever to do with the dead body, it was not likely that I would again drag it from the earth for such an object.

"Marmaduke Bannerworth,' I said, 'you can do what you please, and take the consequences of what you do, but I will not again, if I can help it, look upon the face of that corpse. It is too fearful a sight to contemplate again. You have a large sum of money, and what need you care now for the title deeds of a property comparatively insignificant?'

"Well, well,' he said, 'I will not, at the present time, disturb the remains; I will wait to see if anything should arise from the fact of the murder; if it should turn out that no suspicion of any kind is excited, but that all is still and quiet, I can then take measures to exhume the corpse, and recover those papers, which certainly are important.'

"By this time the morning was creeping on apace, and we thought it prudent to leave the spot. We stood at the end of the lane for a few moments conversing, and those moments were the last in which I ever saw Marmaduke Bannerworth."

"Answer me a question," said Henry.

"I will; ask me what you please, I will answer it."

"Was it you that called at Bannerworth Hall, after my father's melancholy death, and inquired for him?"

"I did; and when I heard of the deed that he had done, I at once left, in order to hold counsel with myself as to



what I should do to obtain at least a portion of the property, one-half of which, it was understood, was to have been mine. I heard what had been the last words used by Marmaduke Bannerworth on the occasion of his death, and they were amply sufficient to let me know what had been done with the money -- at all events, so far as regards the bestowal of it in some secret place; and from that moment the idea of, by some means or another, getting the exclusive possession of it, never forsook my mind.

"I thought over the matter by day and by night; and with the exception of having a knowledge of the actual hiding-place of the money, I could see, in the clearest possible manner, how the whole affair had been transacted. There can be no doubt but that Marmaduke Bannerworth had reached home safely with the large sum of which he had become possessed, and that he had hidden it securely, which was but an ordinary measure of precaution, when we come to consider how the property had been obtained.

"Then I suspect that, being alone, and left to the gloom of his own miserable thoughts, they reverted so painfully to the past that he was compelled to drink deeply for the purpose of drowning reflection.

"The natural consequence of this, in his state, was, that partial insanity supervened, and at a moment when frenzy rose far above reflection, he must have committed the dreadful act which hurried him instantaneously to eternity."

"Yes," said Henry; "it must have been so; you have guessed truly. He did on that occasion drink an immense quantity of wine; but instead of stilling the pangs of remorse it must have increased them, and placed him in such a frenzied condition of intellect, that he found it impossible to withstand the impulse of it, unless by the terrific act which ended his existence."

"Yes, and which at once crushed all my expectations of the large fortune which was to have been mine; for even the one-half of the sum which had been taken from the gamester's pocket would have been sufficient to have enabled me to live for the future in affluence.

"I became perfectly maddened at the idea that so large a sum had passed out of my hands. I constantly hovered about Bannerworth Hall, hoping and expecting that something might arise which would enable me to get admittance to it, and make an active search through its recesses for the hidden treasure.

"All my exertions were in vain. I could hit upon no scheme whatever; and at length, wearied and exhausted, I was compelled to proceed to London for the sake of a subsistence. It is only in that great metropolis that such persons as myself, destitute of real resources, but infinitely reckless as regards the means by which they acquire a subsistence, can hope to do so. Once again, therefore, I plunged into the vortex of London life, and proceeded, heedless of the criminality of what I was about, to cater for myself by robbery, or, indeed, in any manner which presented a prospect of success. It was during this career of mine, that I became associated with some of the most desperate characters of the time; and the offences we committed were of that daring character that it could not be wondered at eventually so formidable a gang of desperadoes must be by force broken up.

"It so occurred, but unknown to us, that the police resolved upon making one of the most vigorous efforts to put an end to the affair, and in consequence a watch was set upon every one of our movements.

"The result of this was, as might have been expected, our complete dispersion, and the arrest of some of our members, and among them myself.

"I knew my fate almost from the first. Our depredations had created such a sensation, that the legislature, even, had made it a matter of importance that we should be suppressed, and it was an understood thing among the judges, that the severest penalties of the law should be inflicted upon any one of the gang who might be apprehended and convicted.

"My trial scarcely occupied an hour, and then I was convicted and sentenced to execution, with an intimation from the judge that it would be perfectly absurd of me to dream, for one moment, of a remission of that sentence.

"In this state of affairs, and seeing nothing but death before me, I gave myself up to despair, and narrowly missed cheating the hangman of his victim.

"More dead than alive, I was, however, dragged out to be judicially murdered, and I shall never forget the crowd of frightful sensations that came across my mind upon that terrific occasion.

"It seemed as if my fate had then reached its climax, and I have really but a dim recollection of the terrible scene.

"I remember something of the confused murmur arising from an immense throng of persons. I remember looking about me, and seeing nothing but what appeared to me an immense sea of human heads, and then

suddenly I heard a loud roar of execration burst from the multitude.

"I shrunk back terrified, and it did, indeed, seem to me a brutal thing thus to roar and shout at a man who was brought out to die. I soon, however, found that the mob who came to see such a spectacle was not so debased as I imagined, but that it was at the hangman, who had suddenly made his appearance on the scaffold, at whom they raised that fearful yell.

"Some one — I think it was one of the sheriffs — must have noticed that I was labouring under the impression that the cry from the mob was levelled at me, for he spoke, saying, —

"'It is at the hangman they shout,' and he indicated with his finger that public functionary. In my mind's eye I think I see him now, and I am certain that I shall never forget the expression of his face. It was perfectly fearful; and afterwards, when I learned who and what he was, I was not surprised that he should feel so acutely the painfully degrading office which he had to perform.

"The fatal rope was in a few minutes adjusted to my neck. I felt its pressure, and I heard the confused sounds of the monotonous voice of the clergyman, as he muttered some prayers, that I must confess sounded to me at the time like a mockery of human suffering.

"Then suddenly there was a loud shout — I felt the platform give way beneath my feet — I tried to utter a yell of agony, but could not — it seemed to me as if I was encompassed by fire, and then sensation left me, and I knew no more. \* \* \* \*

"The next feelings of existence that came over me consisted in a frightful tingling sensation throughout my veins, and I felt myself making vain efforts to scream. All the sensations of a person suffering from a severe attack of night-mare came across me, and I was in such an agony, that I inwardly prayed for death to release me from such a cruel state of suffering. Then suddenly the power to utter a sound came to me, and I made use of it well, for the piercing shriek I uttered, must have struck terror into the hearts of all who heard it, since it appalled even myself.

"Then I suppose I must have fainted, but when I recovered consciousness again, I found myself upon a couch, and a man presenting some stimulus to me in a cup. I could not distinguish objects distinctly, but I heard him say, 'Drink, and you will be better.'

"I did drink, for a raging thirst consumed me, and then I fell into a sound sleep, which, I was afterwards told, lasted nearly twenty-four hours, and when I recovered from that, I heard again the same voice that had before spoken to me, asking me how I was.

"I turned in the direction of the sound, and, as my vision was now clearer, I could see that it was the hangman, whose face had made upon the scaffold such an impression upon me — an impression which I then considered my last in this world, but which turned out not to be such by many a mingled one of pain and pleasure since.

"It was some time before I could speak, and when I did, it was only in a few muttered words, to ask what had happened, and where I was.

"'Do you not remember,' he said, 'that you were hanged?'

"'I do — I do,' was my reply. Is this the region of damned souls?'

"'No; you are still in this world, however strange you may think it. Listen to me, and I will briefly tell you how it is that you have come back again, as it were, from the very grave, to live and walk about among the living.'

"I listened to him with a strange and rapt attention, and then he told how a young and enthusiastic medical man had been anxious to try some experiments with regard to the restoration of persons apparently dead, and he proceeded to relate how it was that he had given ear to the solicitations of the man, and had consented to bring my body after it was hung for him to experiment upon. He related how the doctor had been successful, but how he was so terrified at his own success, that he hastily fled, and had left London, no one knowing whither he had gone.

"I listened to this with the most profound attention, and then he concluded, by saying to me, —

"'There can be no doubt but my duty requires of me to give you up again to the offended laws of your country. I will not, however, do that, if you will consent to an arrangement that I shall propose to you.'

"I asked him what the arrangement was, and he said that if I would solemnly bind myself to pay to him a certain sum per annum, he would keep my secret, and forsaking his calling as hangman, endeavour to do something that should bring with it pleasanter results. I did so solemnly promise him, and I have kept my word. By one means or another I have succeeded in procuring the required amount, and now he is no more."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"I believe," cried Henry, "that he has fallen a victim to the blind fury of the populace."

"You are right, he has so, and accordingly I am relieved from the burden of those payments; but it matters little, for now I am so near the tomb myself, that, together with all my obligations, I shall soon be beyond the reach of mortal cavilling."

"You need not think so, Varney; you must remember that you are at present suffering from circumstances, the pressure of which will soon pass away, and then you will resume your wonted habits."

"What did you do next?" said the admiral. "Let's know all while you are about it."

"I remained at the hangman's house for some time, until all fear of discovery was over, and then he removed me to a place of greater security, providing me from his own resources with the means of existence, until I had fully recovered my health, and then he told me to shift for myself."

"During my confinement though, I had not been idle mentally, for I concocted a plan, by which I should be enabled not only to live well myself, but to pay to the hangman, whose name was Mortimore, the annual sum I had agreed upon. I need not go into the details of this plan. Of course it was neither an honest nor respectable one, but it succeeded, and I soon found myself in a position to enable me thereby to keep my engagement, as well as to supply me with means of plotting and planning for my future fortunes."

"I had never for a moment forgotten that so large a sum of money was somewhere concealed about Bannerworth Hall, and I still looked forward to obtaining it by some means or another."

"It was in this juncture of affairs, that one night I was riding on horseback through a desolate part of England. The moon was shining sweetly, as I came to a broad stream of water, across which, about a mile further on, I saw that there was a bridge, but being unwilling to waste time by riding up to it, and fancying, by the lazy ripple of the waters, that the river was not shallow, I plunged my horse boldly into the stream."

"When we reached its centre, some sudden indisposition must have seized the horse, for instead of swimming on well and gallantly as it had done before, it paused for a moment, and then plunged headlong into the torrent."

"I could not swim, and so, for a second time, death, with all its terrors, appeared to be taking possession of me. The waters rolled over my head, gurgling and hissing in my ears, and then all was past. I know no more, until I found myself lying upon a bright green meadow, and the full beams of the moon shining upon me."

"I was giddy and sick, but I rose, and walked slowly away, each moment gathering fresh strength, and from that time to this, I never discovered how I came to be rescued from the water, and lying upon that green bank. It has ever been a mystery to me, and I expect it ever will."

"Then from that moment the idea that I had a sort of charmed life came across me, and I walked about with an impression that such was the case, until I came across a man who said that he was a Hungarian, and who was full of strange stories of vampyres. Among other things, he told me that a vampyre could not be drowned, for that the waters would cast him upon its banks, and, if the moonbeams fell upon him, he would be restored to life."

"This was precisely my story, and from that moment I believed myself to be one of those horrible, but charmed beings, doomed to such a protracted existence. The notion grew upon me day by day, and hour by hour, until it became quite a fixed and strong belief, and I was deceiving no one when I played the horrible part that has been attributed to me."

"But you don't mean to say that you believe you are a vampyre now?" said the admiral.

"I say nothing, and know not what to think. I am a desperate man, and what there is at all human in me, strange to say, all of you whom I sought to injure, have awakened."

"Heed not that," said Henry, "but continue your narrative. We have forgiven everything, and that ought to suffice to quiet your mind upon such a subject."

"I will continue; and, believe me, I will conceal nothing from you. I look upon the words I am now uttering as full, candid, and free confession; and, therefore, it shall be complete."

"The idea struck me that if, by taking advantage of my supposed preternatural gifts, I could drive you from Bannerworth Hall, I should have it to myself to hunt through at my leisure, and possibly find the treasure. I had heard from Marmaduke Bannerworth some slight allusion to concealing the money behind a picture that was in a bed-room called the panelled chamber. By inquiry, I ascertained that in that bed-room slept Flora Bannerworth."

"I had resolved, however, at first to try pacific measures, and accordingly, as you are well aware, I made various proposals to you to purchase or to rent Bannerworth Hall, the whole of which you rejected; so that I found myself compelled to adopt the original means that had suggested themselves to me, and endeavour to terrify you

from the house.

"By prowling about, I made myself familiar with the grounds, and with all the plan of the residence, and then one night made my appearance in Flora's chamber by the window."

"But how do you account," said Charles Holland, "for your extraordinary likeness to the portrait?"

"It is partly natural, for I belong to a collateral branch of the family; and it was previously arranged. I had seen the portrait in Marmaduke Bannerworth's time, and I knew some of its peculiarities and dress sufficiently well to imitate them. I calculated upon producing a much greater effect by such an imitation; and it appears that I was not wrong, for I did produce it to the full."

"You did, indeed," said Henry; "and if you did not bring conviction to our minds that you were what you represented yourself to be, you at least staggered our judgments upon the occasion, and left us in a position of great doubt and difficulty."

"I did; I did all that, I know I did; and, by pursuing that line of conduct, I, at last, I presume, entirely forced you from the house."

"That you did."

"Flora fainted when I entered her chamber; and the moment I looked upon her sweet countenance my heart smote me for what I was about; but I solemnly aver, that my lips never touched her, and that, beyond the fright, she suffered nothing from Varney, the vampyre."

"And you have succeeded," said Henry, "in your object now?"

"No; the treasure has yet to be found. Mortimore, the hangman, followed me into the house, guessing my intention, and indulging a hope that he would succeed in sharing with me its proceeds. But he, as well as myself, was foiled, and nothing came of the toilsome and anxious search but disappointment and bitterness."

"Then it is supposed that the money is still concealed?"

"I hope so; I hope, as well, that it will be discovered by you and yours; for surely none can have a better right to it than you, who have suffered so much on its account."

"And yet," remarked Henry, "I cannot help thinking it is too securely hidden from us. The picture has been repeatedly removed from its place, and produced no results; so that I fear we have little to expect from any further or more protracted research."

"I think," said Varney, "that you have everything to expect. The words of the dying Marmaduke Bannerworth, you may depend, were not spoken in vain; and I have every reason to believe that, sooner or later, you must, without question, become the possessors of that sum."

"But ought we rightly to hold it?"

"Who ought more rightly to hold it?" said Varney; "answer me that."

"That's a sensible enough idea of your's," said the admiral; "and if you were twice over a vampyre, I would tell you so. It's a very sensible idea; I should like to know who has more right to it than those who have had such a world of trouble about it."

"Well, well," said Henry, "we must not dispute, as yet, about a sum of money that may really never come to hand. For my own part, I have little to hope for in the matter; but, certainly, nothing shall be spared, on my part, to effect such a thorough search of the Hall as shall certainly bring it to light, if it be in existence."

"I presume, Sir Francis Varney," said Charles Holland, "that you have now completed your narrative?"

"I have. After events are well known to you. And, now, I have but to lie down and die, with the hope of finding that rest and consolation in the tomb which has been denied me hitherto in this world. My life has been a stormy one, and full of the results of angry passions. I do hope now, that, for the short time I have to live, I shall know something like serenity, and die in peace."

"You may depend, Varney, that, as long as you have an asylum with us," said the admiral — "and that you may have as long as you like, — you may be at peace. I consider that you have surrendered at discretion, and, under such circumstances, an enemy always deserves honourable treatment, and always gets it on board such a ship as this."

"There you go again," said Jack, "calling the house a ship."

"What's that to you, if I were to call it a bowsprit? Ain't I your captain, you lubber, and so, sure to be right, while you are wrong, in the natural order of things? But you go and lay down, Master Varney, and rest yourself, for you seem completely done up."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

Varney did look fearfully exhausted; and, with the assistance of Henry and Charles, he went into another apartment, and laid down upon a couch, showing great symptoms of debility and want of power.

And now it was a calm; Varney's stay at the cottage of the Bannerworths was productive of a different mood of mind than ever he had possessed before. He looked upon them in a very different manner to what he had been used to. He had, moreover, considerably altered prospects; there could not be the same hopes and expectations that he once had. He was an altered man. He saw in the Bannerworths those who had saved his life, and who, without doubt, had possessed an opinion, not merely obnoxious to him, but must have had some fearful misgivings concerning his character, and that, too, of a nature that usually shuts out all hope of being received into any family.

But, in the hour of his need, when his life was in danger, no one else would have done what they had done for him, especially when so relatively placed.

Moreover, he had been concealed, when to do so was both dangerous and difficult; and then it was done by Flora Bannerworth herself.

Time flew by. The mode of passing time at the cottage was calm and serene. Varney had seldom witnessed anything like it; but, at the same time, he felt more at ease than ever he had; he was charmed with the society of Flora — in fact, with the whole of the little knot of individuals who there collected together; from what he saw he was gratified in their society; and it seemed to alleviate his mental disquiet, and the sense he must feel of his own peculiar position.

But Varney became ill. The state of mind and body he had been in for some time past might be the cause of it. He had been much harassed, and hunted from place to place. There was not a moment in which his life was not in danger, and he had, moreover, in more than one case, received some bodily injuries, bruises, and contusions of a desperate character; and yet he would take no notice of them, but allow them to get well again, as best they could.

His escapes and injuries had made a deep impression upon his mind, and had no doubt a corresponding effect upon his body, and Varney became very ill.

Flora Bannerworth did all that could be done for one in his painful position, and this greatly added to the depth of thought that occasionally beset him, and he could scarcely draw one limb after the other.

He walked from room to room in the twilight, at which time he had more liberty permitted him than at any other, because there was not the same danger in his doing so; for, if once seen, there could be no matter of doubt but he would have been pursued until he was destroyed, when no other means of escape were at hand; and Varney himself felt that there could be no chance of his again escaping from them, for his physical powers were fast decaying; he was not, in fact, the same man.

He came out into the parlour from the room in which he had been seated during the day. Flora and her mother were there, while Charles Holland and Henry Bannerworth had both at that moment entered the apartment.

"Good evening, Miss Bannerworth," said Sir Francis, bowing to her, and then to her mother, Mrs. Bannerworth; "and you, Mr. Holland, I see, have been out enjoying the free breeze that plays over the hot fields. It must be refreshing."

"It is so, sir," said Charles. "I wish we could make you a partaker in our walks."

"I wish you could with all my heart," said Varney.

"Sir Francis," said Flora, "must be a prisoner for some short time longer yet."

"I ought not to consider it in any such light. It is not imprisonment. I have taken sanctuary. It is the well spring of life to me," said Varney.

"I hope it may prove so; but how do you find yourself this evening, Sir Francis Varney?"

"Really, it is difficult to say — I fluctuate. At times, I feel as though I should drop insensible on the earth, and then I feel better than I have done for some time previously."

"Doctor Chillingworth will be here by—and—bye, no doubt; and he must see what he can do for you to relieve you of these symptoms," said Flora.

"I am much beholden to you — much beholden to you; but I hope to be able to do without the good doctor's aid in this instance, though I must admit I may appear ungrateful."

"Not at all — not at all."

"Have you heard any news abroad today?" inquired Varney.

"None, Sir Francis — none; there is nothing apparently stirring; and now, go out when you would, you would

find nothing but what was old, quiet, and familiar."

"We cannot wish to look upon anything with more charms for a mind at ease, than we can see under such circumstances; but I fear there are some few old and familiar features that I should find sad havoc in."

"You would, certainly, for the burnings and razings to the ground of some places, have made some dismal appearances; but time may efface that, and then the evil may die away, and the future will become the present, should we be able to allay popular feeling."

"Yes," said Sir Francis; "but popular prejudices, or justice, or feeling, are things not easily assuaged. The people when once aroused go on to commit all kinds of excess, and there is no one point at which they will stop short of the complete extirpation of some one object or other that they have taken a fancy to hunt."

"The hubbub and excitement must subside."

"The greater the ignorance the more persevering and the more brutal they are," said Sir Francis; "but I must not complain of what is the necessary consequence of their state."

"It might be otherwise."

"So it might, and no mischief arise either; but as we cannot divert the stream, we may as well bend to the force of a current too strong to resist."

"The moon is up," said Flora, who wished to turn the conversation from that to another topic. "I see it yonder through the trees; it rises red and large — it is very beautiful — and yet there is not a cloud about to give it the colour and appearance it now wears."

"Exactly so," said Sir Francis Varney; "but the reason is the air is filled with a light, invisible vapour, that has the effect you perceive. There has been much evaporation going on, and now it shows itself in giving the moon that peculiar large appearance and deep colour."

"Ay, I see; it peeps through the trees, the branches of which cut it up into various portions. It is singular, and yet beautiful, and yet the earth below seems dark."

"It is dark; you would be surprised to find it so if you walked about. It will soon be lighter than it is at this present moment."

"What sounds are those?" inquired Sir Francis Varney, as he listened attentively.

"Sounds! What sounds?" returned Henry.

"The sounds of wheels and horses' feet," said Varney.

"I cannot even hear them, much less can I tell what they are," said Henry.

"Then listen. Now they come along the road. Cannot you hear them now?" said Varney.

"Yes, I can," said Charles Holland; "but I really don't know what they are, or what it can matter to us; we don't expect any visitors."

"Certainly, certainly, said Varney. "I am somewhat apprehensive of the approach of strange sounds."

"You are not likely to be disturbed here," said Charles.

"Indeed; I thought so when I had succeeded in getting into the house near the town, and so far from believing it was likely I should be discovered, that I sat on the house—top while the mob surrounded it."

"Did you not hear them coming?"

"I did."

"And yet you did not attempt to escape from them?"

"No, I could not persuade them I was not there save by my utter silence. I allowed them to come too close to leave myself time to escape — besides, I could hardly persuade myself there could be any necessity for so doing."

"It was fortunate it was as it happened afterwards, that you were able to reach the wood, and get out of it unperceived by the mob."

"I should have been in an unfortunate condition had I been in their hands long. A man made of iron would be able to resist the brutality of those people."

As they were speaking, a gig, with two men, drove up, followed by one on horseback. They stopped at the garden—gate, and then tarried to consult with each other, as they looked at the house.

"What can they want, I wonder?" inquired Henry; "I never saw them before."

"Nor I," said Charles Holland.

"Do you not know them at all?" inquired Varney.

"No," replied Flora; "I never saw them, neither can I imagine what is their object in coming here."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"Did you ever see them before?" inquired Henry of his mother, who held up her hand to look more carefully at the strangers; then, shaking her head, she declared she had never seen such persons as those.

"I dare say not," said Charles Holland. "They certainly are not gentlemen; but here they come; there is some mistake, I daresay -- they don't want to come here."

As they spoke, the two strangers got down; after picking up a top coat they had let fall, they turned round, and deliberately put it into the chaise again; they walked up the path to the door, at which they knocked.

The door was opened by the old woman, when the two men entered.

"Does Francis Beauchamp live here?"

"Eh?" said the old woman, who was a little deaf, and she put her hand behind her ear to catch the sounds more distinctly -- "eh? -- who did you say?"

Sir Francis Varney started as the sounds came upon his ear, but he sat still an attentive listener.

"Are there any strangers in the house?" inquired the other officer, impatiently. "Who is here?"

"Strangers!" said the old woman; "you are the only strangers that I have seen here."

"Come," said the officer to his companion, "come this way; there are people in this parlour. Our business must be an apology for any rudeness we may commit."

As he spoke he stepped by the old woman, and laying his hand upon the handle of the door, entered the apartment, at the same time looking carefully around the room as if he expected some one.

"Ladies," said the stranger, with an offhand politeness that had something repulsive in it, though it was meant to convey a notion that civility was intended; "ladies, I beg pardon for intruding, but I am looking for a gentleman."

"You shall hear from me again soon," said Sir Francis, in an almost imperceptible whisper.

"What is the object of this intrusion?" demanded Henry Bannerworth, rising and confronting the stranger. "This is a strange introduction."

"Yes, but not an unusual one," said the stranger, "in these cases -- being unavoidable, at the least."

"Sir," said Charles Holland, "if you cannot explain quickly your business here, we will proceed to take those measures which will, at least rid ourselves of your company."

"Softly, sir. I mean no offence -- not the least; but I tell you I do not come for any purpose that is at all consonant to my wishes. I am a Bow-street officer in the execution of my duty -- excuse me, therefore."

"Whom do you want?"

"Francis Beauchamp; and, from the peculiarity of the appearance of this individual here, I think I may safely request the pleasure of his company."

Varney now rose, and the officer made a rush at him, when he saw him do so, saying, --

"Surrender in the king's name."

Varney, however, paid no attention to that, but rushed past, throwing his chair down to impede the officer, who could not stay himself, but fell over it, while Varney made a rush towards the window, which he cleared at one bound, and crossing the road, was lost to sight in a few seconds in the trees and hedges on the other side.

"Accidents will happen," said the officer, as he rose to his feet; "I did not think the fellow would have taken the window in that manner; but we have him in view, and that will be enough."

"In heaven's name," said Henry, "explain all about this; we cannot understand one word of it -- I am at a loss to understand one word of it."

"We will return and do so presently," said the officer as he dashed out of the house after the fugitive at a rapid and reckless speed, followed by his companion.

The man who had been left with the chaise, however, was the first in the chase; seeing an escape from the window, he immediately guessed that he was the man wanted, and, but for an accident, he would have met Varney at the gate, for, as he was getting out in a hurry, his foot became entangled with the reins, and he fell to the ground, and Varney at the same moment stepped over him.

"Curse his infernal impudence, and d -- n these reins!" muttered the man in a fury at the accident, and the aggravating circumstance of the fugitive walking over him in such a manner, and so coolly too -- it was vexing.

The man, however, quickly released himself, and rushed after Varney across the road, and kept on his track for some time. The moon was still rising, and shed but a gloomy light around. Everything was almost invisible until you came close to it. This was the reason why Varney and his pursuer met with several severe accidents --

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tumbles and hard knocks against impediments which the light and the rapid flight they were taking did not admit of their avoiding very well.

They went on for some time, but it was evident that Varney knew the place best, and could avoid what the man could not, and that was the trees and the natural impediments of the ground, which Varney was acquainted with.

For instance, at full speed across a meadow, a hollow would suddenly present itself, and to an accustomed eye the moonlight might enable it to be distinguished at a glance what it was, while to one wholly unaccustomed to it, the hollow would often look like a hillock by such a light. This Varney would clear at a bound, which a less agile and heavier person would step into, lifting up his leg to meet an impediment, when he would find it come down suddenly some six or eight inches lower than he anticipated, almost dislocating his leg and neck, and producing a corresponding loss of breath, which was not regained by the muttered curse upon such a country where the places were so uneven.

Having come to one of these places, which was little more perceptible than the others, he made a desperate jump, but he jumped into the middle of the hole with such force that he sprained his ankle, besides sinking into a small pond that was almost dry, being overgrown with rushes and aquatic plants.

"Well?" said the other officer coming up — "well?"

"Well, indeed!" said the one who came first; "it's anything but well. D — n all country excursions say I."

"Why, Bob, you don't mean to say as how you are caught in a rat-trap?"

"Oh, you be d — d! I am, ain't I?"

"Yes; but are you going to stop there, or coming out, eh? You'll catch cold."

"I have sprained my ankle."

"Well?"

"It ain't well, I tell you; here have I a sprained foot, and my wind broken for a month at least. Why were you not quicker? If you had been sharper we should have had the gentleman, I'll swear!"

"I tumbled down over the chair, and he got out of the window, and I come out of the door."

"Well, I got entangled in the reins; but I got off after him, only his long legs carried him over everything. I tell you what, Wilkinson, if I were to be born again, and intended to be a runner, I would bespeak a pair of long legs."

"Why?"

"Because I should be able to get along better. You have no idea of how he skimmed along the ground; it was quite beautiful, only it wasn't good to follow it."

"A regular sky scraper!"

"Yes, or something of that sort; he looked like a patent flying shadow."

"Well, get up and lead the way; we'll follow you."

"I dare say you will — when I lead the way back there; for as to going out yonder, it is quite out of the question. I want supper to-night and breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Well, what has that to do with it?"

"Just this much: if you follow any farther, you'll get into the woods, and there you'll be, going round and round, like a squirrel in a cage, without being able to get out, and you will there get none of the good things included under the head of those meals."

"I think so too," said the third,

"Well, then, let's go back; we needn't run, though it might be as well to do so."

"It would be anything but well. I don't gallop back, depend upon it."

The three men now slowly returned from their useless chase, and re-trod the way they had passed once in such a hurry that they could hardly recognize it.

"What a dreadful bump I came against that pole standing there," said one.

"Yes, and I came against a hedge-stake, that was placed so as the moon didn't show any light on it. It came into the pit of my stomach. I never recollect such a pain in my life; for all the world like a hot coal being suddenly and forcibly intruded into your stomach."

"Well, here's the road. I must go up to the house where I started from. I promised them some explanation. I may as well go and give it to them a once."

"Do as you will. I will wait with the horse, else, perhaps, that Beauchamp will again return and steal him."



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The officer who had first entered the house now returned to the Bannerworths, saying,

"I promised you I would give you some explanation as to what you have witnessed."

"Yes," said Henry; "we have been awaiting your return with some anxiety and curiosity. What is the meaning of all this? I am, as we are all, in perfect ignorance of the meaning of what took place."

"I will tell you. The person whom you have had here, and goes by the name of Varney, is named Francis Beauchamp."

"Indeed! Are you assured of this?"

"Yes, perfectly assured of it; I have it in my warrant to apprehend him by either name."

"What crime had he been guilty of?"

"I will tell you: he has been hanged."

"Hanged!" exclaimed all present.

"What do you mean by that?" added Henry; "I am at a loss to understand what you can mean by saying he was hanged."

"What I say is literally true."

"Pray tell us all about it. We are much interested in the fact; go on, sir."

"Well, sir, then I believe it was for murder that Francis Beauchamp was hanged — yes, hanged; a common execution, before a multitude of people, collected to witness such an exhibition."

"Good God!" exclaimed Henry Bannerworth. "And was — but that is impossible. A dead man come to life again! You must be amusing yourself at our expense."

"Not I," replied the officer. "Here is my warrant; they don't make these out in a joke."

And, as he spoke, he produced the warrant, when it was evident the officer spoke the truth.

"How was this?"

"I will tell you, sir. You see that this Varney was a regular scamp, gamester, rogue, and murderer. He was hanged, and hung about the usual time; he was cut down and the body was given to some one for dissection, when a surgeon, with the hangman, one Montgomery, succeeded in restoring the criminal to life."

"But I always thought they broke the neck when they were hanged; the weight of the body would alone do that."

"Oh, dear, no, sir," said the officer; "that is one of the common every day mistakes; they don't break the neck once in twenty times."

"Indeed!"

"No; they die of suffocation only; this man, Beauchamp, was hanged thus, but they contrived to restore him, and then he assumed a new name, and left London."

"But how came you to know all this?"

"Oh! it came to us, as many things usually do, in a very extraordinary manner, and in a manner that appears most singular and out of the way; but such it was."

"The executioner who was the means of his being restored, or one of them, wished to turn him to account, and used to draw a yearly sum of money from him, as hush money, to induce them to keep the secret; else, the fact of his having escaped punishment would subject him to a repetition of the same punishment; when, of course, a little more care would be taken that he did not escape a second time."

"I dare say not."

"Well, you see, Varney, or rather Beauchamp, was to pay a heavy sum to this man to keep him quiet, and to permit him to enjoy the life he had so strangely become possessed of."

"I see," said Holland.

"Well, this man, Montgomery; had always some kind of suspicion that Varney would murder him."

"Murder him! and he the means of saving his life; surely he could not be so bad as that."

"Why, you see, sir, this hangman drew a heavy sum yearly from him; thus making him only a mine of wealth to himself; this, no doubt, would rankle in the other's heart, to think he should be so beset, and hold his life upon such terms."

"I see, now."

"Yes; and then came the consideration that he did not do it from any good motive, merely a selfish one, and he was consequently under no obligation to him for what he had done; besides, self-preservation might urge him on,

and tell him to do the deed.

"However that may be, Montgomery dreaded it, and was resolved to punish the deed if he could not prevent it. He, therefore, left general orders with his wife, whenever he went on a journey to Varney, if he should be gone beyond a certain time, she was to open a certain drawer, and take out a sealed packet to the magistrate at the chief office, who would attend to it.

"He has been missing, and his wife did as she was desired and now we have found what he there mentioned to be true; but, now, sir, I have satisfied you and explained to you why we intruded upon you, we must now leave and seek for him elsewhere."

"It is most extraordinary, and that is the reason why his complexion is so singular."

"Very likely."

They poured out some wine, which was handed to the officers, who drank and then quitted the house, leaving the inmates in a state of stupefaction, from surprise and amazement at what they had heard from the officers.

There was a strange feeling came over them when they recollected the many occurrences they had witnessed, and even the explanation of the officers; it seemed as if some mist had enveloped objects and rendered them indistinct, but which was fast rising, and they were becoming plainer and more distinct every moment in which they were regarded.

There was a long pause, and Flora was about to speak, when suddenly there came the sound of a footstep across the garden. It was slow but unsteady, and paused between whiles until it came close beneath the windows. They remained silent, and then some one was heard to climb up the rails of the veranda, and then the curtains were thrust aside, but not till after the person outside had paused to ascertain who was there.

Then the curtains were opened, and the visage of Sir Francis Varney appeared, much altered; in fact, completely worn and exhausted.

It was useless to deny it, but he looked ghastly -- terrific; his singular visage was as pallid as death; his eyes almost protruding, his mouth opened, and his breathing short, and laboured in the extreme.

He climbed over with much difficulty, and staggered into the room, and would have spoken, but he could not; he fell senseless upon the floor, utterly exhausted and motionless.

There was a long pause, and each one present looked at each other, and then they gazed upon the inanimate body of Sir Francis Varney, which lay supine and senseless in the middle of the floor. \* \* \* \* \*

The importance of the document, said to be on the dead body, was such that it would admit of no delay before it was obtained, and the party determined that it should be commenced instantly. Lost time would be an object to them; too much haste could hardly be made; and now came the question of, "should it be to-night, or not?"

"Certainly," said Henry Bannerworth; "the sooner we can get it, the sooner all doubt and distress will be at an end; and, considering the run of events, that will be desirable for all our sakes; besides, we know not what unlucky accident may happen to deprive us of what is so necessary."

"There can be none," said Mr. Chillingworth; "but there is this to be said, this has been such an eventful history, that I cannot say what might or what might not happen."

"We may as well go this very night," said Charles Holland. "I give my vote for an immediate exhumation of the body. The night is somewhat stormy, but nothing more; the moon is up, and there will be plenty of light."

"And rain," said the doctor.

"Little or none," said Charles Holland. "A few gusts of wind now and then drive a few heavy plashes of rain against the windows, and that gives a fearful sound, which is, in fact, nothing, when you have to encounter it; but you will go, doctor?"

"Yes, most certainly. We must have some tools."

"Those may be had from the garden," said Henry. "Tools for the exhumation, you mean?"

"Yes; pick-axe, mattocks, and a crowbar; a lantern, and so forth," said the doctor. "You see I am at home in this; the fact is, I have had more than one affair of this kind on my hands before now, and whilst a student I have had more than one adventure of a strange character."

"I dare say, doctor," said Charles Holland, "you have some sad pranks to answer for; you don't think of it then, only when you find them accumulated in a heap, so that you shall not be able to escape from them; because they come over your senses when you sleep at night."

"No, no," said Chillingworth; "you are mistaken in that. I have long since settled all my accounts of that

nature; besides, I never took a dead body out of a grave but in the name of science, and never for my own profit, seeing I never sold one in my life, or got anything by it."

"That is not the fact," said Henry; "you know, doctor, you improved your own talents and knowledge."

"Yes, yes; I did."

"Well, but you profited by such improvements?"

"Well, granted, I did. How much more did the public not benefit then," said the doctor, with a smile.

"Ah, well, we won't argue the question," said Charles; "only it strikes me that the doctor could never have been a doctor if he had not determined upon following a profession."

"There may be a little truth in that," said Chillingworth; "but now we had better quit the house, and make the best of our way to the spot where the unfortunate man lies buried in his unhallowed grave."

"Come with me into the garden," said Henry Bannerworth; "we shall there be able to suit ourselves to what is required. I have a couple of lanterns."

"One is enough," said Chillingworth; "we had better not burden ourselves more than we are obliged to do; and we shall find enough to do with the tools."

"Yes, they are not light; and the distance is by far too great to make walking agreeable and easy; the wind blows strong, and the rain appears to be coming up afresh, and, by the time we have done, we shall find the ground will become slippy, and bad for walking."

"Can we have a conveyance?"

"No, no," said the doctor; "we could, but we must trouble the turnpike man; besides, there is a shorter way across some fields, which will be better and safer."

"Well, well," said Charles Holland; "I do not mind which way it is, as long as you are satisfied yourselves. The horse and cart would have settled it all better, and done it quicker, besides carrying the tools."

"Very true, very true," said the doctor; "all that is not without its weight, and you shall choose which way you would have it done; for my part, I am persuaded the expedition on foot is to be preferred for two reasons."

"And what are they?"

"The first is, we cannot obtain a horse and cart without giving some detail as to what you want it for, which is awkward, on account of the hour. Moreover, you could not get one at this moment in time."

"That ought to settle the argument," said Henry Bannerworth; "an impossibility, under the circumstances, at once is a clincher, and one that may be allowed to have some weight."

"You may say that," said Charles.

"Besides which, you must go a greater distance, and that, too, along the main road, which is objectionable."

"Then we are agreed," said Charles Holland, and the sooner we are off the better; the night grows more and more gloomy every hour, and more inclement."

"It will serve our purpose the better," said Chillingworth. "What we do, we may as well do now."

"Come with me to the garden," said Henry, "and we will take the tools. We can go out the back way; that will preclude any observation being made."

They all now left the apartment, wrapped up in great overcoats, to secure themselves against the weather, and also for the purpose of concealing themselves from any chance passenger.

In the garden they found the tools they required, and having chosen them, they took a lantern, with the means of getting a light when they got to their journey's end, which they would do in less than an hour.

After having duly inspected the state of their efficiency, they started away on their expedition.

The night had turned gloomy and windy; heavy driving masses of clouds obscured the moon, which only now and then was to be seen, when the clouds permitted her to peep out. At the same time, there were many drifting showers, which lasted but a few minutes, and then the clouds were carried forwards by some sudden gust of wind so that, altogether, it was a most uncomfortable night as well could be imagined.

However, there was no time to lose, and, under all circumstances, they could not have chosen a better night for their purpose than the one they had; indeed, they could not desire another night to be out on such a purpose.

They spoke not while they were within sight of the houses, though at the distance of many yards, and, at the same time, there was a noise through the trees that would have carried their voices past every object, however close; but they would make assurance doubly sure.

"I think we are fairly away now," said Henry, "from all fear of being recognized."

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"To be sure you are. Who would recognize us now, if we were met?"

"No one."

"I should think not; and, moreover, there would be but small chance of any evil coming from it, even if it were to happen that we were to be seen and known. Nobody knows what we are going to do, and, if they did, there is no illegality in the question."

"Certainly not; but we wish the matter to be quite secret, therefore, we don't wish to be seen by any one while upon this adventure."

"Exactly," said Chillingworth; "and, if you'll follow my guidance, you shall meet nobody."

"We will trust you, most worthy doctor. What have you to say for our confidence?"

"That you will find it is not misplaced."

Just as the doctor had uttered the last sound, there came a hearty laugh upon the air, which, indeed, sounded but a few paces in advance of them. The wind blew towards them, and would, therefore, cause the sounds to come to them, but not to go away in the direction they were going.

The whole party came to a sudden stand still; there was something so strange in hearing a laugh at that moment, especially as Chillingworth was, at that moment, boasting of his knowledge of the ground and the certainty of their meeting no one.

"What is that?" inquired Henry.

"Some one laughing, I think," said Chillingworth.

"Of that there can be little or no doubt," said Charles Holland; "and, as people do not usually laugh by themselves so heartily, it may be presumed there are, at least, two."

"No doubt of it."

"And, moreover, their purpose cannot be a very good one, at this hour of the night, and of such a night, too. I think we had better be cautious."

"Hush! Follow me silently," said Henry.

As he spoke, he moved cautiously from the spot where he stood, and, at the same time, he was followed by the whole party, until they came to the hedge which skirted a lane, in which were seated three men.

They had a sort of tent erected, and that was hung upon a part of the hedge which was to windward of them, so that it sheltered them from wind and rain.

Henry and Chillingworth both peeped over the bank, and saw them seated beneath this kind of canopy. They were shabby, gipsy-looking men, who might be something else -- sheep-stealers, or horse-stealers, in fact, anything, even to beggars.

"I say, Jack," said one; "it's no bottle to-night."

"No; there's nobody about these parts to-night. We are safe, and so are they."

"Exactly."

"Besides, you see, those who do happen to be out are not worth talking to."

"No cash."

"None, not enough to pay turnpike for a walking-stick, at the most."

"Besides, it does us no good to take a few shillings from a poor wretch, who has more in family than he has shillings in pocket."

"Ay, you are right, quite right. I don't like it myself, I don't; besides that, there's fresh risk in every man you stop, and these poor fellows will fight hard for a few shillings, and there is no knowing what an unlucky blow may do for a man."

"That is very true. Has anything been done to-night?"

"Nothing," said one.

"Only three half crowns," said the other; "that is the extent of the common purse to-night."

"And I," said the third, "I have got a bottle of bad gin from the Cat and Cabbagestump."

"How did you manage it?"

"Why, this way. I went in, and had some beer, and you know I can give a long yarn when I want; but it wants only a little care to deceive these knowing countrymen, so I talked and talked, until they got quite chatty, and then I put the gin in my pocket."

"Good."

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"Well, then, the loaf and beef I took out of the safe as I came by, and I dare say they know they have lost it by this time."

"Yes, and so do we. I expect the gin will help to digest the beef, so we mustn't complain of the goods."

"No; give us another glass, Jim."

Jim held the glass towards him, when the doctor, animated by the spirit of mischief, took a good sized pebble, and threw it into the glass, smashing it, and spilling the contents.

In a moment there was a change of scene; the men were all terrified, and started to their feet, while a sudden gust of wind caused their light to go out; at the same time their tent-cloth was thrown down by the wind, and fell across their heads.

"Come along," said the doctor.

There was no need of saying so, for in a moment the three were as if animated by one spirit, and away they scudded across the fields, with the speed of a race-horse.

In a few minutes they were better than half a mile away from the spot.

"In absence of all authentic information," said the doctor, speaking as well as he could, and blowing prodigiously between each word, as though he were fetching breath all the way from his heels, "I think we may conclude we are safe from them. We ought to thank our stars we came across them in the way we did."

"But, doctor, what in the name of Heaven induced you to make such a noise, to frighten them, in fact, and to tell them some one was about?"

"They were too much terrified to tell whether it was one, or fifty. By this time they are out of the county; they knew what they were talking about."

"And perhaps we may meet them on the road where we are going, thinking it a rare lonely spot where they can hide, and no chance of their being found out."

"No," said the doctor; "they will not go to such a place; it has by far too bad a name for even such men as those to go near, much less stop in."

"I can hardly think that," said Charles Holland, "for these fellows are too terrified for their personal safety, to think of the superstitious fears with which a place may be regarded; and these men, in such a place as the one you speak of, they will be at home."

"Well, well, rather than be done, we must fight for it; and when you come to consider we have one pick and two shovels, we shall be in full force."

"Well said, doctor; how far have we to go?"

"Not more than a quarter of a mile."

They pursued their way through the fields, and under the hedgerows, until they came to a gate, where they stopped awhile, and began to consult and to listen.

"A few yards up here, on the left," said the doctor; "I know the spot; besides, there is a particular mark. Now, then, are you all ready?"

"Yes, all."

"Here," said the doctor, pointing out the marks by which the spot might be recognized; "here is the spot, and I think we shall not be half a foot out of our reckoning."

"Then let us begin instanter," said Henry, as he seized hold of the pickaxe, and began to loosen the earth by means of the sharp end.

"That will do for the present," said Chillingworth; "now let me and Charles take a turn with our shovels, and you will get on again presently. Throw the earth up on the bank in one heap, so that we can put it on again without attracting any attention to the spot by its being left in clods and uneven."

"Exactly," said Henry, "else the body will be discovered."

They began to shovel away, and continued to do so, after it had been picked up, working alternately, until at length Charles stuck his pick-axe into something soft, and upon pulling it up, he found it was the body.

A dreadful odour now arose from the spot, and they were at no loss to tell where the body lay. The pick-axe had stuck into the deceased's rib and clothing, and thus lifted it out of its place.

"Here it is," said the doctor; "but I needn't tell you that; the charnel-house smell is enough to convince you of the fact of where it is."

"I think so; just show a light upon the subject, doctor, and then we can see what we are about — do you mind,

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doctor — you have the management of the lantern, you know?"

"Yes, yes," said Chillingworth; "I see you have it — don't be in a hurry, but do things deliberately and coolly whatever you do — you will not be so liable to make mistakes, or to leave anything undone."

"There will be nothing of any use to you here, doctor, in the way of dissection, for the flesh is one mass of decay. What a horrible sight, to be sure!"

"It is; but hasten the search."

"Well, I must; though, to confess the truth, I'd sooner handle anything than this."

"It is not the most pleasant thing in the world, for there is no knowing what may be the result — what creeping thing has made a home of it."

"Don't mention anything about it."

Henry and Charles Holland now began to search the pockets of the clothes of the dead body, in one of which was something hard, that felt like a parcel.

"What have you got there?" said Chillingworth, as he held his lantern up so that the light fell upon the ghastly object that they were handling.

"I think it is the prize," said Charles Holland; "but we have not got it out yet, though I dare say it won't be long first, if this wind will but hold good for about five minutes, and keep the stench down."

They now tore open the packet and pulled out the papers, which appeared to have been secreted upon his person.

"Be sure there are none on any other part of the body," said Chillingworth; "because what you do now, you had better do well, and leave nothing to after thought, because it is frequently impracticable."

"The advice is good," said Henry, who made a second search, but found nothing.

"We had better re-bury him," said the doctor; "it had better be done cleanly. Well, it is a sad hole for a last resting-place, and yet I do not know that it matters — it is all a matter of taste — the fashion of the class, or the particular custom of the country."

There was but little to be said against such an argument, though the custom of the age had caused them to look upon it more as a matter of feeling than in such a philosophical sense as that in which the doctor had put it.

"Well, there he is now — shovel the earth in, Charles," said Henry Bannerworth, as he himself set the example, which was speedily and vigorously followed by Charles Holland, when they were not long before the earth was thrown in and covered up with care, and trodden down so that it should not appear to be moved.

"This will do, I think," said Henry.

"Yes; it is not quite the same, but I dare say no one will try to make any discoveries in this place; besides, if the rain continues to come down very heavy, why, it will wash much of it away, and it will make it look all alike."

There was little inducement to hover about the spot, but Henry could not forbear holding up the papers to the light of the lantern to ascertain what they were.

"Are they all right?" inquired the doctor.

"Yes," replied Henry, "yes. The Deerbrook estate. Oh! yes; they are the papers I am in want of."

"It is singularly fortunate, at least, to be so successful in securing them. I am very glad a living person has possession of them, else it would have been very difficult to have obtained it from them."

"So it would; but now homeward is the word, doctor; and on my word there is reason to be glad, for the rain is coming on very fast now, and there is no moon at all — we had better step out."

They did, for the three walked as fast as the nature of the soil would permit them, and the darkness of the night.

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## Chapter LXXXIX. TELLS WHAT BECAME OF THE SECOND VAMPYRE WHO SOUGHT VARNEY.

We left the Hungarian nobleman swimming down the stream; he swam slowly, and used but little exertion in doing so. He appeared to use his hands only as a means of assistance. The stream carried him onwards, and he sided himself so far that he kept the middle of the stream, and floated along.

Where the stream was broad and shallow, it sometimes left him a moment or two, without being strong enough to carry him onwards; then he would pause, as if gaining strength, and finally he would, when he had rested, and the water came a little faster, and lifted him, make a desperate plunge, and swim forward, until he again came in deep water, and then he went slowly along with the stream, as he supported himself.

It was strange thus to see a man going down slowly, and without any effort whatever, passing through shade and through moonlight — now lost in shadow of the tall trees, and now emerging into that part of the stream which ran through meadows and cornfields, until the stream widened, and then, at length, a ferry-house was to be seen in the distance.

Then came the ferryman out of his hut, to look upon the beautiful moonlight scene. It was cold, but pure, and brilliantly light. The chaste moon was sailing through the heavens, and the stars diminished in their lustre by the power of the luminous goddess of night.

There was a small cottage — true; it was somewhat larger than was generally supposed by any casual observer who might look at it. The place was rambling, and built chiefly of wood; but in it there lived the ferryman, his wife, and family; among these was a young girl of about seventeen years of age, but, at the same time, very beautiful.

They had been preparing their supper, and the ferryman himself walked out to look at the river and the shadows of the tall trees that stood on the hill opposite.

While thus employed, he heard a plashing in the water, and on turning towards the quarter whence the sound proceeded for a few yards, he came to the spot where he saw the stranger struggling in the stream.

"Good God!" he muttered to himself, as he saw the struggle continued; "good God! he will sink and drown."

As he spoke, he jumped into his boat and pushed it off, for the purpose of stopping the descent of the body down the stream, and in a moment or two it came near to him. He muttered, —

"Come, come — he tries to swim; life is not gone yet — he will do now, if I can catch hold of him.

Swimming with one's face under the stream doesn't say much for his skill, though it may account for the fact that he don't cry out."

As the drowning man neared, the ferryman held on by the boat-hook, and stooping down, he seized the drowning man by the hair of the head, and then paused.

After a time, he lifted him up, and placed him across the edge of the boat, and then, with some struggling of his own, he was rolled over into the boat.

"You are safe now," muttered the ferryman.

The stranger spoke not, but sat or leaned against the boat's head, sobbing and catching at his breath, and spitting off his stomach the water it might be presumed he had swallowed.

The ferryman put back to the shore, when he paused, and secured his boat, and then pulled the stranger out, saying, —

"Do you feel any better now?"

"Yes," said the stranger; "I feel I am living — thanks to you, my good friend; I owe you my life."

"You are welcome to that," replied the ferryman; "it costs me nothing; and, as for my little trouble, I should be sorry to think of that, when a fellow-being's life was in danger."

"You have behaved very well — very well, and I can do little more now than thank you, for I have been robbed of all I possessed about me at the moment."

"Oh! you have been robbed?"

"Aye, truly, I have, and have been thrown into the water, and thus I have been nearly murdered."

"It is lucky you escaped from them without further injury," said the ferryman; "but come in doors, you must

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be unfit to stand here in the cold."

"Thank you; your hospitality is great, and, at this moment, of the greatest importance to me."

"Such as we have," said the honest ferryman, "you shall be welcome to. Come in -- come in."

He turned round and led the way to the house, which he entered, saying -- as he opened the small door that led into the main apartment, where all the family were assembled, waiting for the almost only meal they had had that day; for the ferryman had not the means, before the sun had set, of sending for food, and then it was a long way before it could be found, and then it was late before they could get it, --

"Wife, we have a stranger to sleep with us to-night, and for whom we must prepare a bed."

"A stranger!" echoed the wife -- "a stranger, and we so poor!"

"Yes; one whose life I have saved, and who was nearly drowned. We cannot refuse hospitality upon such an occasion as that, you know, wife."

The wife looked at the stranger as he entered the room, and sat down by the fire.

"I am sorry," he said, "to intrude upon you; but I will make you amends for the interruption and inconvenience I may cause you; but it is too late to apply elsewhere, and yet I am doubtful, if there were, whether I could go any further."

"No, no," said the ferryman; "I am sure a man who has been beaten and robbed, and thrown into a rapid and, in some parts, deep stream, is not fit to travel at this time of night."

"You are lonely about here," said the stranger, as he shivered by the fire.

"Yes, rather; but we are used to it."

"You have a family, too; that must help to lighten the hours away, and help you over the long evenings."

"So you may think, stranger, and, at times, so it is; but when food runs short, it is a long while to daylight, before any more money can be had. To be sure, we have fish in the river, and we have what we can grow in the garden; but these are not all the wants that we feel, and those others are sometimes pinching. However, we are thankful for what we have, and complain but little when we can get no more; but sometimes we do repine -- though I cannot say we ought -- but I am merely relating the fact, whether it be right or wrong."

"Exactly. How old is your daughter?"

"She is seventeen come Allhallow's eve."

"That is not far hence," said the stranger. "I hope I may be in this part of the country -- and I think I shall -- I will on that eve pay you a visit; not one on which I shall be a burden to you, but one more useful to you, and more consonant to my character."

"The future will tell us all about that," said the ferryman; "at present we will see what we can do, without complaining, or taxing anybody."

The stranger and the ferryman sat conversing for some time before the fire, and then the latter pointed out to him which was his bed -- one made up near the fire, for the sake of its warmth; and then the ferryman retired to the next room, a place which was merely divided by an imperfect partition.

However, they all fell soundly asleep. The hours on that day had been longer than usual; there was not that buoyancy of spirit; when they retire, they fell off into a heavy, deep slumber.

From this they were suddenly aroused by loud cries and piercing screams from one of the family.

So loud and shrill were the cries, that they all started up, terrified and bewildered beyond measure, unable to apply their faculties to any one object.

"Help -- help, father! -- help!" shrieked the voice of the young girl whom we have before noticed.

The ferryman jumped up, and rushed to the spot where his daughter lay.

"Fanny," he said -- "Fanny, what ails thee -- what ails thee? Tell me, my dear child."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, almost choked -- "oh, father! are we all alone? I am terrified."

"What ails thee -- what ails thee? Tell me what caused you to scream out in such a manner?"

"I -- I -- that is, father, thought -- but no, I am sure it was reality. Where is the stranger?"

"A light -- a light!" shouted the fisherman.

In another moment a light was brought him, and he discovered the stranger reclining in his bed, but awake, and looking around him, as if in the utmost amazement.

"What has happened?" he said -- "what has happened?"

"That is more than I know as yet," the man replied. "Come, Fanny," he added, "tell me what it is you fear."



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What caused you to scream out in that dreadful manner?"

"Oh, father — the vampyre!"

"Great God! what do you mean, Fanny, by that?"

"I hardly know, father. I was fast asleep, when I thought I felt something at my throat; but being very sound asleep, I did not immediately awake. Presently I felt the sharp pang of teeth being driven into the flesh of my neck — I awoke, and found the vampyre at his repast. Oh, God! oh God! what shall I do?"

"Stay, my child, let us examine the wound," said the fisherman, and he held the candle to the spot where the vampyre's teeth had been applied. There, sure enough, were teeth marks, such as a human being's would make were they applied, but no blood had been drawn therefrom."

"Come, come, Fanny, so far, by divine Providence, you are not injured; another moment, and the mischief would have been done entire and complete, and you would have been his victim."

Then, turning to the stranger, he said, —

"You have had some hand in this. No human being but you could come into this place. The cottage door is secured. You must be the vampyre."

"I!"

"Yes; who else could?"

"I! — As Heaven's my judge — but there, it's useless to speak of it; I have not been out of my bed. In this place, dark as it is, and less used to darkness than you, I could not even find my way about. — It is impossible."

"Get out of your bed, and let me feel," said the ferryman, peremptorily — "get out, and I will soon tell."

The stranger arose, and began to dress himself, and the ferryman immediately felt the bed on which he had been lying; but it was ice cold — so cold that he started upon his legs in an instant, exclaiming with vehemence,

"It is you, vile wretch! that has attempted to steal into the cottage of the poor man, and then to rob him of his only child, and that child of her heart's blood, base ingrate!"

"My friend, you are wrong, entirely wrong. I am not the creature you believe me. I have slept, and slept soundly, and awoke not until your daughter screamed."

"Scoundrel! — liar! — base wretch! you shall not remain alive to injure those who have but one life to lose."

As he spoke, the ferryman made a desperate rush at the vampyre, and seized him by the throat, and a violent struggle ensued, in which the superior strength of the ferryman prevailed, and he brought his antagonist to the earth, at the same time bestowing upon him some desperate blows.

"Thou shalt go to the same element from which I took thee," said the ferryman, "and there swim or sink as thou wilt until some one shall drag thee ashore, and when they do, may they have a better return than I."

As he spoke, he dragged along the stranger by main force until they came to the bank of the river, and then pausing, to observe the deepest part, he said, —

"Here, then, you shall go."

The vampyre struggled, and endeavoured to speak, but he could not; the grasp at this throat prevented all attempts at speech; and then, with a sudden exertion of his strength, the ferryman lifted the stranger up, and heaved him some distance into the river.

Then in deep water sank the body.

The ferryman watched for some moments, and farther down the stream he saw the body again rise upon the current and struggling slightly, as for life — now whirled around and around, and then carried forward with the utmost velocity.

This continued as far as the moonlight enabled the ferryman to see, and then, with a slow step and clouded brow, he returned to his cottage, which he entered, and closed the door.

## Chapter XC. DR. CHILLINGWORTH AT THE HALL. -- THE ENCOUNTER OF MYSTERY. -- THE CONFLICT. -- THE RESCUE, AND THE PICTURE.

There have been many events that have passed rapidly in this our narrative; but more have yet to come before we can arrive at that point which will clear up much that appears to be most mysterious and unaccountable.

Doctor Chillingworth, but ill satisfied with the events that had yet taken place, determined once more upon visiting the Hall, and there to attempt a discovery of something respecting the mysterious apartment in which so much has already taken place.

He communicated his design to no one; he resolved to prosecute the inquiry alone. He determined to go there and await whatever might turn up in the shape of events. He would not for once take any companion; such adventures were often best prosecuted alone -- they were most easily brought to something like an explanatory position; one person can often consider matters more coolly than more. At all events, there is more secrecy than under any other circumstances.

Perhaps this often is of greater consequence than many others; and, moreover, when there is more than one, something is usually overdone. Where one adventurous individual will rather draw back in a pursuit, more than one would induce them to urge each other on.

In fact, one in such a case could act the part of a spy -- a secret observer; and in that case can catch people at times when they could not under any other circumstances be caught or observed at all.

"I will go," he muttered; "and should I be compelled to run away again, why, nobody knows anything about it and nobody will laugh at me."

This was all very well; but Mr. Chillingworth was not the man to run away without sufficient cause. But there was so much mystery in all this that he felt much interested in the issue of the affair. But this issue he could not command; at the same time he was determined to sit and watch, and thus become certain that either something or nothing was to take place.

Even the knowledge of that much -- that some inexplicable action was still going on -- was far preferable to the uncertainty of not knowing whether what had once been going on was still so or not, because, if it had ceased, it was probable that nothing more would ever be known concerning it, and the mystery would still be a mystery to the end of time.

"It shall be fathomed if there be any possibility of its being discovered," muttered Chillingworth. "Who would have thought that so quiet and orderly a spot as this, our quiet village, would have suffered so much commotion and disturbance? Far from every cause of noise and strife, it is quite as great a matter of mystery as the vampyre business itself.

"I have been so mixed up in this business that I must go through with it. By the way, of the mysteries, the greatest that I have met with is the fact of the vampyre having anything to do with so quiet a family as the Bannerworths."

Mr. Chillingworth pondered over the thought; but yet he could make nothing of it. It in no way tended to elucidate anything connected with the affair, and it was much too strange and singular in all its parts to be submitted to any process of thought, with any hope of coming to anything like a conclusion upon the subject -- that must remain until some facts were ascertained, and to obtain them Mr. Chillingworth now determined to try.

This was precisely what was most desirable in the present state of affairs; while things remained in the present state of uncertainty, there would be much more of mystery than could ever be brought to light.

One or two circumstances cleared up, the minor ones would follow in the same train, and they would be explained by the others; and if ever that happy state of things were to come about, why, then there would be a perfect calm in the town.

As Mr. Chillingworth was going along, he thought he observed two men sitting inside a hedge, close to a hay-rick, and thinking neither of them had any business there, he determined to listen to their conversation, and ascertain if it had any evil tendency, or whether it concerned the late event.

Having approached near the gate, and they being on the other side, he got over without any noise, and, unperceived by either of them, crept close up to them.

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"So you haven't long come from sea?"

"No; I have just landed."

"How is it you have thrown aside your seaman's clothes and taken to these?"

"Just to escape being found out."

"Found out! what do you mean by that? Have you been up to anything?"

"Yes, I have, Jack. I have been up to something, worse luck to me; but I'm not to be blamed either."

"What is it all about?" inquired his companion. "I always thought you were such a steady-going old fellow that there was no going out of the even path with you."

"Nor would there have been, but for one simple circumstance."

"What was that?"

"I will tell you Jack — I will tell you; you will never betray me, I am sure."

"Never, by heavens!"

"Well, then, listen — it was this. I had been some time aboard our vessel. I had sailed before, but the captain never showed any signs of being a bad man, and I was willing enough to sail with him again.

"He knew I was engaged to a young woman in this country, and that I was willing to work hard to save money to make up a comfortable home for us both, and that I would not sail again, but that I intended to remain ashore, and make up my mind to a shore life."

"Well, you would have a house then?"

"Exactly; and that's what I wished to do. Well I made a small venture in the cargo, and thought, by so doing, that I should have a chance of realizing a sum of money that would put us both in a comfortable line of business.

"Well, we went on very smoothly until we were coming back. We had disposed of the cargo, and I had received some money, and this seemed to cause our captain to hate me, because I had been successful; but I thought there was something else in it than that, but I could not tell what it was that made him so intolerably cross and tyrannous.

"Well, I found out, at length, he knew my intended wife. He knew her very well, and at the same time he made every effort he could to induce me to commit some act of disobedience and insubordination; but I would not, for it seemed to me he was trying all he could to prevent my doing my duty with anything like comfort.

"However, I learned the cause of all this afterwards. It was told me by one of the crew.

"'Bill,' said my mate, 'look out for yourself.'

"'What's in the wind?' said I.

"'Only the captain has made a dead set at you, and you'll be a lucky man if you escape.'

"'What's it all about?' said I. 'I cannot understand what he means. I have done nothing wrong. I don't see why I should suddenly be treated in this way.'

"'It's all about your girl, Bill.'

"'Indeed!' said I. 'What can that have to do with the captain? he knows nothing of her.'

"'Oh, yes, he does,' he said. 'If it were not for you he would have the girl himself.'

"'I see now,' said I.

"'Ay, and so can a blind man if you open his eyes; but he wants to make you do wrong — to goad you on to do something that will give him the power of disgracing you, and, perhaps, of punishing you.'

"'He won't do that,' said I.

"'I am glad to hear you say so, Bill; for, to my mind, he has made up his mind go the whole length against you. I can't make it out, unless he wishes you were dead.'

"'I dare say he does,' said I; 'but I will take care I will live to exact a reckoning when he comes ashore.'

"'That is the best; and when we are paid off, Bill, if you will take it out of him, and pay him off, why, I don't care if I lend you a hand.'

"'We'll say more about that, Dick,' said I, 'when we get ashore and are paid off. If we are overheard now, it will be said that we are conspiring, or committing mutiny, or something of that sort.'

"'You are right, Bill,' he said — 'you are right. We'll say no more about this now, but you may reckon upon me when we are no longer under his orders.'

"'Then there's no danger, you know.'

"'Well, we said nothing about this, but I thought of it, and I had cause enough, too, to think of it; for each day

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the captain grew more and more tyrannous and brutal. I knew not what to do, but kept my resolution of doing my duty in spite of all he could do, though I don't mind admitting I had more than one mind to kill him and myself afterwards.

"However, I contrived to hold out for another week or two, and then we came into port, and were released from his tyranny. I got paid off, and then I met my messmate, and we had some talk about the matter.

"The worst of it is,' said I, 'we shall have some difficulty to catch him; and, if we can, I'll be sworn we shall give him enough to last him for at least a voyage or two.'

"He ought to have it smart,' said my messmate; 'and I know where he is to be found.'

"Do you? — at what hour?"

"Late at night, when he may be met with as he comes from a house where he spends his evenings.'

"That will be the best time in the world, when we shall have less interference than at any other time in the day. But we'll have a turn to-night if you will be with me, as he will be able to make too good a defence to one. It will be a fight, and not a chastisement.'

"It will. I will be with you; you know where to meet me. I shall be at the old spot at the usual time, and then we will go.'

"We parted; and, in the evening, we both went together, and sought the place where we should find him out, and set upon him to advantage.

"He was nearly two hours before he came; but when he did come, we saluted him with a rap on the head, that made him hold his tongue; and then we set to, and gave him such a tremendous drubbing, that we left him insensible; but he was soon taken away by some watchmen, and we heard that he was doing well; but he was dreadfully beaten; indeed, it would take him some weeks before he could be about in his duties.

"He was fearfully enraged, and offered fifty pounds reward to any one who could give him information as to who it was that assaulted him.

"I believe he had a pretty good notion of who it was; but he could not swear to me; but still, seeing he was busying himself too much about me, I at once walked away, and went on my way to another part of the country."

"To get married?"

"Ay, and to get into business."

"Then, things are not quite so bad as I thought for at first."

"No — no, not so bad but what they might have been worse a great deal; only I cannot go to sea any more, that's quite certain."

"You needn't regret that."

"I don't know."

"Why not know? Are you not going to be married? — ain't that much better?"

"I can't say," replied the sailor; "there's no knowing how my bargain may turn out; if she does well, why, then the cruising is over; but nothing short of that will satisfy me; for if my wife is at all not what I wish her to be, why, I shall be off to sea."

"I don't blame you, either; I would do so too, if it were possible; but you see, we can't do so well on land as you do at sea; we can be followed about from pillar to post, and no bounds set to our persecution."

"That's true enough," said the other; "we can cut and run when we have had enough of it. However, I must get to the village, as I shall sleep there to-night, if I find my quarters comfortable enough."

"Come on, then, at once," said his companion; "it's getting dark now; and you have no time to lose."

These two now got up, and walked away towards the village; and Chillingworth arose also, and pursued his way towards the Hall, while he remarked to himself, —

"Well — well, they have nothing to do with that affair at all events. By-the-bye, I wonder what amount of females are deserted in the navy; they certainly have an advantage over landsmen, in the respect of being tied to tiresome partners; they can, at least, for a season, get a release from their troubles, and be free at sea."

However, Mr. Chillingworth got to the Hall, and unobserved, for he had been especially careful not to be seen; he had watched on all sides, and no signs of a solitary human being had he seen, that could in any way make the slightest observation upon him.

Indeed, he had sheltered himself from observation at every point of his road, especially so when near Bannerworth Hall, where there were plenty of corners to enable him to do so; and when he arrived there, he

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entered at the usual spot, and then sat down a few moments in the bower.

"I will not sit here," he muttered. "I will go and have a watch at that mysterious picture; there is the centre of attraction, be it what it may."

As he spoke, he arose and walked into the house, and entered the same apartment which has been so often mentioned to the reader.

Here he took a chair, and sat down full before the picture, and began to contemplate it.

"Well, for a good likeness, I cannot say I ever saw anything more unprepossessing. I am sure such a countenance as that could never have won a female heart. Surely, it is more calculated to terrify the imagination, than to soothe the affections of the timid and shrinking female.

"However, I will have an inspection of the picture, and see if I can make anything of it."

As he spoke, he put his hand upon the picture with the intention of removing it, when it suddenly was thrust open, and a man stepped down.

The doctor was for a moment completely staggered, it was so utterly unexpected, and he stepped back a pace or two in the first emotion of his surprise; but this soon passed by, and he prepared to close with his antagonist, which he did without speaking a word.

There was a fair struggle for more than two or three minutes, during which the doctor struggled and fought most manfully; but it was evident that Mr. Chillingworth had met with a man who was his superior in point of strength, for he not only withstood the utmost force that Chillingworth could bring against him, but maintained himself, and turned his strength against the doctor.

Chillingworth panted with exertion, and found himself gradually losing ground, and was upon the point of being thrown down at the mercy of his adversary, who appeared to be inclined to take all advantages of him, when an occurrence happened that altered the state of affairs altogether.

While they were struggling, the doctor borne partially to the earth -- but yet struggling, suddenly his antagonist released his hold, and staggered back a few paces.

"There, you swab -- take that; I am yard-arm and yard-arm with you, you piratical-looking craft -- you lubberly, buccaneering son of a fish-fag."

Before, however, Jack Pringle, for it was he who came so opportunely to the rescue of Doctor Chillingworth, could find time to finish the sentence, he found himself assailed by the very man who, but a minute before, he had, as he thought, placed hors de combat.

A desperate fight ensued, and the stranger made the greatest efforts to escape with the picture, but found he could not get off without a desperate struggle. He was, at length, compelled to relinquish the hope of carrying that off, for both Mr. Chillingworth and Jack Pringle were engaged hand to hand; but the stranger struck Jack so heavy a blow on the head, that made him reel a few yards, and then he escaped through the window, leaving Jack and Mr. Chillingworth masters of the field, but by no means unscathed by the conflict in which they had been engaged.

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## Chapter XCI. THE GRAND CONSULTATION BROKEN UP BY MRS CHILLINGWORTH, AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF VARNEY.

Remarkable was the change that had taken place in the circumstances of the Bannerworth family. From a state of great dispendency, and, indeed, absolute poverty, they had suddenly risen to comfort and independence.

It seemed as if the clouds that had obscured their destiny, had now, with one accord, dissipated, and that a brighter day was dawning. Not only had the circumstances of mental terror which had surrounded them given way in a great measure to the light of truth and reflection, but those pecuniary distresses which had pressed upon them for a time, were likewise passing away, and it seemed probable that they would be a prosperous condition.

The acquisition of the title deeds of the estate, which they thought had passed away from the family for ever, became to them, in their present circumstances, an immense acquisition, and brought to their minds a feeling of great contentment.

Many persons in their situation would have been extremely satisfied at having secured so strong an interest in the mind of the old admiral, who was very wealthy, and who, from what he had already said and done, no doubt fully intended to provide handsomely for the Bannerworth family.

And not only had they this to look forward to, if they had chosen to regard it as an advantage, but they knew that by the marriage of Flora with Charles Holland she would have a fortune at her disposal, while he (Charles) would be the last man in the world to demur at any reasonable amount of it being lavished upon her mother and her brothers.

But all this did not suit the high and independent spirit of Henry Bannerworth. He was one who would rather have eaten the crust that he procured for himself by some meritorious exertion, than have feasted on the most delicate viands placed before him from the resources of another.

But now that he knew this small estate, the title deeds of which had been so singularly obtained, had once really belonged to the family, but had been risked and lost at the gaming-table, he had no earthly scruple in calling such property again his own,

As to the large sum of money which Sir Francis Varney in his confessions had declared to have found its way into the possession of Marmaduke Bannerworth, Henry did not expect, and scarcely wished to become possessed of wealth through so tainted a source.

"No," he said to himself frequently; "no — I care not if that wealth be never forthcoming, which was so badly got possession of. Let it sink into the earth, if, indeed, it be buried there; or let it rot in some unknown corner of the old mansion. I care not for it."

In this view of the case he was not alone, for a family more unselfish, or who cared so little for money, could scarcely have been found; but Admiral Bell and Charles Holland argued now that they had a right to the amount of money which Marmaduke Bannerworth had hidden somewhere, and the old admiral reasoned upon it rather ingeniously, for he said, —

"I suppose you don't mean to dispute that the money belongs to somebody, and in that case I should like to know who else it belonged to, if not to you? How do you get over that, master Henry?"

"I don't attempt to get over it at all," said Henry; "all I say is, that I do dislike the whole circumstances connected with it, and the manner in which it was come by; and, now that we have a small independence, I hope it will not be found. But, admiral, we are going to hold a family consultation as to what we shall do, and what is to become of Varney. He has convinced me of his relationship to our family, and, although his conduct has certainly been extremely equivocal, he has made all the amends in his power; and now, as he is getting old, I do not like to throw him upon the wide world for a subsistence."

"You don't contemplate," said the admiral, "letting him remain with you, do you?"

"No; that would be objectionable for a variety of reasons; and I could not think of it for a moment."

"I should think not. The idea of sitting down to breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper with a vampyre, and taking your grog with a fellow that sucks other people's blood!"

"Really, admiral, you do not really still cling to the idea that Sir Francis Varney is a vampyre."

"I really don't know; he clings to it himself, that's all I can say; and I think, under those circumstances, I might

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as well give him the benefit of his own proposition, and suppose that he is a vampyre."

"Really, uncle," said Charles Holland, "I did think that you had discarded the notion."

"Did you? I have been thinking of it, and it ain't so desirable to be a vampyre, I am sure, that any one should pretend to it who is not; therefore, I take the fellow upon his own showing. He is a vampyre in his own opinion, and so I don't see, for the life of me, why he should not be so in ours."

"Well," said Henry, "waving all that, what are we to do with him? Circumstances seem to have thrown him completely at our mercy. What are we to do with him, and what is to become of him for the future?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the admiral. "If he were ten times a vampyre, there is some good in the fellow; and I will give him enough to live upon if he will go to America and spend it. They will take good care there that he sucks no blood out of them; for, although an American would always rather lose a drop of blood than a dollar, they keep a pretty sharp look out upon both."

"The proposal can be made to him," said Henry, "at all events. It is one which I don't dislike, and probably one that he would embrace at once; because he seems, to me, to have completely done with ambition, and to have abandoned those projects concerning which, at one time, he took such a world of trouble."

"Don't you trust to that," said the admiral. "What's bred in the bone don't so easily get out of the flesh; and once or twice, when Master Varney has been talking, I have sen those odd looking eyes of his flash up for a moment, as if he were quite ready to begin his old capers again, and alarm the whole country side."

"I must confess," said Charles Holland, "that I myself have had the impression once or twice that Varney was only subdued for a time, and that, with a proper amount of provocation, he would become again a very serious fellow, and to the full as troublesome as he has been."

"Do you doubt his sincerity?" said Henry.

"No, I do not do that, Henry. I think Varney fully means what he says; but I think, at the same time, that he has for so long lead a strange, wild, and reckless life, that he will find it very far from easy, if indeed possible, to shake off his old habits and settle down quietly, if not to say comfortably."

"I regret," said Henry, "that you have such an impression, but, while I do so, I cannot help admitting that it is, to a considerable extent, no more than a reasonable one; and perhaps, after all, my expectation that Varney will give us no more trouble, only amounts to a hope that he will not do so, and nothing more. But let us consider; there seems to be some slight difference of opinion among us, as to whether we should take up our residence at this new house of ours, which we did not know we owned, at Dearbrook, or proceed to London, and there establish ourselves, or again return to Bannerworth Hall, and, by a judicious expenditure of some money, make that a more habitable place than it has been for the last twenty years."

"Now, I'll tell you what," said the admiral, "I would do. It's quite out of the question for any body to live long unless they see a ship; don't you think so, Miss Flora?"

"Why, how can you ask Flora such a question, uncle," said Charles Holland, "when you know she don't care a straw about ships, and only looks upon admirals as natural curiosities?"

"Excepting one," said Flora, "and he is an admiral who is natural but no curiosity, unless it be that you can call him such because he is so just and generous; and, as for ships, who can help admiring them; and if Admiral Bell proposes that we live in some pleasant, marine villa by the sea-coast, he shall have my vote and interest for the proceeding."

"Bravo! Huzza!" cried the admiral. "I tell you what it is, Master Charley -- you horse marine, -- I have a great mind to cut you out, and have Miss Flora myself."

"Don't, uncle," said Charles; "that would be so very cruel, after she has promised me so faithfully. How do you suppose I should like it; come now, be merciful."

At this moment, and before any one could make another remark, there came rather a sharp ring at the garden-gate bell, and Henry exclaimed, --

"That's Mr. Chillingworth, and I am glad he has come in time to join our conference. His advice is always valuable; and, moreover, I rather think he will bring us some news worth the hearing."

The one servant who they had to wait upon them looked into the room, and said, --

"If you please, here is Mrs. Chillingworth."

"Mistress? you mean Mr."

"No; it is Mrs. Chillingworth and her baby."

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"The devil!" said the admiral; "what can she want?"

"I'll come and let you know," said Mrs. Chillingworth, "what I want;" and she darted into the room past the servant. "I'll soon let you know, you great sea crab. I want my husband; and what with your vampyre, and one thing and another, I haven't had him at home an hour for the last three weeks. What am I to do? There is all his patients getting well as fast as they can without him; and, when they find that out, do you think they will take any more filthy physic? No, to be sure not; people ain't such fools as to do anything of the sort."

"I'll tell you what we will do, ma'am," said the admiral; "we'll all get ill at once, on purpose to oblige ye; and I'll begin by having the measles."

"You are an old porpoise, and I believe it all owing to you that my husband neglects his wife and family. What's vampyres to him, I should like to know, that he should go troubling about them? I never heard of vampyres taking draughts and pills."

"No, nor any body else that had the sense of a goose," said the admiral; "but if it's your husband you want, ma'am, it's no use your looking for him here, for here he is not."

"Then where is he? He is running after some of your beastly vampyres somewhere, I'll be bound, and you know where to send for him."

"Then you are mistaken; for, indeed, we don't. We want him ourselves, ma'am, and can't find him — that's the fact."

"It's all very well talking, sir, but if you were a married woman, with a family about you, and the last at the breast, you'd feel very different from what you do now."

"I'm d — — d if I don't suppose I should," said the admiral; "but as for the last, ma'am, I'd soon settle that. I'd wring its neck, and shove it overboard."

"You would, you brute? It's quite clear to me you never had a child of your own."

"Mrs. Chillingworth," said Henry, "I think you have no right to complain to us of your domestic affairs. Where your husband goes, and what he does, is at his own will and pleasure, and, really, I don't see that we are to be made answerable as to whether he is at home or abroad; to say nothing of the bad taste — and bad taste it most certainly is, of talking of your private affairs to other people."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Chillingworth; "that's your idea, is it, you no-whiskered puppy?"

"Really, madam, I cannot see what my being destitute of whiskers has to do with the affair; and I am inclined to think my opinion is quite as good without them as with them."

"I will speak," said Flora, "to the doctor, when I see him."

"Will you, Miss Doll's-eyes? Oh, dear me! you'll speak to the doctor, will you?"

"What on earth do you want?" said Henry. "For your husband's sake, whom we all respect, we wish to treat you with every imaginable civility; but we tell you, candidly, that he is not here, and, therefore, we cannot conceive what more you can require of us."

"Oh, it's a row," said the admiral; "that's what she wants — woman like. D — — d a bit do they care what it's about as long as there's a disturbance. And now, ma'am, will you sit down and have a glass of grog?"

"No, I will not sit down; and all I can say is, that I look upon this place as a den full of snakes and reptiles. That's my opinion; so I'll not stay any longer; but, wishing that great judgments may some day come home to you all, and that you may know what it is to be a mother, with five babies, and one at the breast, I despise you all and leave you."

So saying, Mrs. Chillingworth walked from the place, feeling herself highly hurt and offended at what had ensued; and they were compelled to let her go just as she was, without giving her any information, for they had a vivid recollection of the serious disturbance she had created on a former occasion, when she had actually headed a mob, for the purpose of hunting out Varney, the vampyre, from Bannerworth Hall, and putting an end consequently, as she considered, to that set of circumstances which kept the doctor so much from his house, to the great detriment of a not very extensive practice.

"After all," said Flora, "Mrs. Chillingworth, although she is not the most refined person in the world, is to be pitied."

"What!" cried the admiral; "Miss Doll's-eyes, are you taking her part?"

"Oh, that's nothing. She may call me what she likes."

"I believe she is a good wife to the doctor," said Henry, "notwithstanding her little eccentricities; but suppose



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we now at once make the proposal we were thinking of to Sir Francis Varney, and so get him to leave England as quickly as possible and put an end to the possibility of his being any more trouble to anybody."

"Agreed -- agreed. It's the best thing that can be done, and it will be something gained to get his consent at once."

"I'll run up stairs to him," said Charles, "and call him down at once. I scarcely doubt for a moment his acquiescence in the proposal."

Charles Holland rose, and ran up the little staircase of the cottage to the room which, by the kindness of the Bannerworth family, had been devoted to the use of Varney. He had not been gone above two minutes, when he returned, hastily, with a small scrap of paper in his hand, which he laid before Henry, saying, --

"There, what think you of that?"

Henry, upon taking up the paper, saw written upon it the words, --

"The Farewell of Varney the Vampyre."

"He is gone," said Charles Holland. "The room is vacant. I saw at a glance that he had removed his hat, and cloak, and all that belonged to him. He's off, and at so short a warning, and in so abrupt a manner, that I fear the worst."

"What can you fear?"

"I scarcely know what; but we have a right to fear everything and anything from this most inexplicable being, whose whole conduct has been of that mysterious nature, as to put him past all calculation as regards his motives, his objects, or his actions. I must confess that I would have hailed his departure from England with feelings of satisfaction; but what he means now, by this strange manoeuvre, Heaven, and his own singular intellect, can alone divine."

"I must confess," said Flora, "I should not at all have thought this of Varney. It seems to me as if something new must have occurred to him. Altogether, I do not feel any alarm concerning his actions as regards us. I am convinced of his sincerity, and, therefore, do not view with sensations of uneasiness this new circumstance, which appears at present so inexplicable, but for which we may yet get some explanation that will be satisfactory to us all."

"I cannot conceive," said Henry, "what new circumstances could have occurred to produce this effect upon Varney. Things remain just as they were; and, after all, situated as he is, if any change had taken place in matters out of doors, I do not see how he could become acquainted with them, so that his leaving must have been a matter of mere calculation, or of impulse at the moment -- Heaven knows which -- but can have nothing to do with actual information, because it is quite evident he could not get it."

"It is rather strange," said Charles Holland, "that just as we were speculating upon the probability of his doing something of this sort, he should suddenly do it, and in this singular manner too."

"Oh," said the old admiral, "I told you I saw his eye, that was enough for me. I knew he would do something, as well as I know a mainmast from a chain cable. He can't help it; it's in the nature of the beast, and that's all you can say about it."

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## Chapter XCII. THE MISADVENTURE OF THE DOCTOR WITH THE PICTURE.

The situation of Dr. Chillingworth and Jack Pringle was not of that character that permitted much conversation or even congratulation. They were victors it was true, and yet they had but little to boast of besides the victory.

Victory is a great thing; it is like a gilded coat, it bewilders and dazzles. Nobody can say much when you are victorious. What a sound! and yet how much misery is there not hidden beneath it.

This victory of the worthy doctor and his aid amounted to this, they were as they were before, without being any better, but much the worse, seeing they were so much buffeted that they could hardly speak, but sat for some moments opposite to each other, gasping for breath, and staring each other in the face without speaking.

The moonlight came in through the window and fell upon the floor, and there were no sounds that came to disturb the stillness of the scene, nor any object that moved to cast a shadow upon the floor. All was still and motionless, save the two victors, who were much distressed and bruised.

"Well!" said Jack Pringle, with a hearty execration, as he wiped his face with the back of his hand; "saving your presence, doctor, we are masters of the field, doctor; but it's plaguey like capturing an empty bandbox after a hard fight."

"But we have got the picture, Jack — we have got the picture, you see, and that is something. I am sure we saved that."

"Well, that may be; and a pretty d — d looking picture it is after all. Why, it's enough to frighten a lady into the sulks. I think it would be a very good thing if it were burned."

"Well," said the doctor, "I would sooner see it burned than in the hands of that —"

"What?" exclaimed Jack.

"I don't know," said Mr. Chillingworth; "but thief I should say, for it was somewhat thief-like to break into another man's house and carry off the furniture."

"A pirate — a regular land shark."

"Something that is not the same as an honest man, Jack; but, at all events, we have beaten him back this time."

"Yes," said Jack, "the ship's cleared; no company is better than bad company, doctor."

"So it is, and yet it don't seem clear in terms. But, Jack, if you hadn't come in time, I should have been but scurvily treated. He was too powerful for me; I was as nigh being killed as ever I have been; but you were just in time to save me."

"Well, he was a large, ugly fellow, sure enough, and looked like an old tree."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes, to be sure I did."

"Well, I could not catch a glimpse of his features. In fact, I was too much employed to see anything, and it was much too dark to notice anything particular, even if I had had leisure."

"Why, you had as much to do as you could well manage, I must say that, at all events. I didn't see much of him myself; only he was a tall, out-of-the-way sort of chap — a long-legged shark. He gave me such a dig or two as I haven't had for a long while, nor don't want to get again; though I don't care if I face the devil himself. A man can't do more than do his best, doctor."

"No, Jack; but there are very few who do do their best, and that's the truth. You have, and have done it to some purpose too. But I have had enough for one day; he was almost strong enough to contend against us both."

"Yes, so he was."

"And, besides that, he almost carried away the picture — that was a great hindrance to him. Don't you think we could have held him if we had not been fighting over the picture?"

"Yes, to be sure we could; we could have gone at him boldly, and held him. He would not have been able to use his hands. We could have hung on him, and I am sure if I came to grapple yard-arm and yard-arm, he would have told a different tale; however, that is neither here nor there. How long had you been here?"

"Not very long," replied the doctor, whose head was a little confused by the blows which he had received. "I can't now tell how long, but only a short time, I think."

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"Where did he come from?" inquired Jack.

"Come from, Jack?"

"Yes, doctor, where did he come from? — the window, I suppose — the same way he went out, I dare say — it's most likely."

"Oh, no, no; he come down from behind the picture. There's some mystery in that picture, I'll swear to it; it's very strange he should make such a desperate attempt to carry it away."

"Yes; one would think," said Jack, there was more in it than we can see — that it is worth more than we can believe; perhaps somebody sets particular store by it."

"I don't know," said Mr. Chillingworth, shaking his head, "I don't know how that may be; but certain it is, the picture was the object of his visit here — that is very certain."

"It was; he was endeavouring to carry it off," said Jack; "it would be a very good ornament to the black hole at Calcutta."

"The utility of putting it where it cannot be seen," remarked Mr. Chillingworth, "I cannot very well see; though I dare say it might be all very well."

"Yes — its ugly features would be no longer seen; so far, it would be a good job. But are you going to remain here all night, and so make a long watch of it, doctor?"

"Why, Jack," said the doctor, "I did intend watching here; but now the game is disturbed, it is of no use remaining here. We have secured the picture, and now there will be no need of remaining in the house; in fact, there is no fear of robbery now."

"Not so long as we are here," said Jack Pringle; "the smugglers won't show a head while the revenue cutter is on the look out."

"Certainly not, Jack," said Mr. Chillingworth; "I think we have scared them away — the picture is safe."

"Yes — so long as we are here."

"And longer, too, I hope."

Jack shook his head, as much as to intimate that he had many doubts upon such a point, and couldn't be hurried into any concession of opinion of the safety of such a picture as that — much as he disliked it, and as poor an opinion as he had of it.

"Don't you think it will be safe?"

"No," said Jack.

"And why not?" said Mr. Chillingworth, willing to hear what Jack could advance against the opinion he had expressed, especially as he had disturbed the marauder in the very act of robbery.

"Why, you'll be watched by this very man; and when you are gone, he will return in safety, and take this plaguey picture away with him."

"Well, he might do so," said Mr. Chillingworth, after some thought; "he even endangered his own escape for the purpose of carrying it off."

"He wants it," said Jack.

"What, the picture?"

"Aye, to be sure; do you think anybody would have tried so hard to get away with it? He wants it; and the long and the short of it is, he will have it, despite all that can be done to prevent it; that's my opinion."

"Well, there is much truth in that; but what to do I don't know."

"Take it to the cottage," suggested Jack. "The picture must be more than we think for; suppose we carry it along."

"That is no bad plan of yours, Jack," said Mr. Chillingworth; "and, though a little awkward, yet it is not the worst I have heard; but — but — what will they say, when they see this frightful face in that quiet, yet contented house?"

"Why, they'll say you brought it," said Jack; "I don't see what else they can say, but that you have done well; besides, when you come to explain, you will make the matter all right to 'em."

"Yes, yes," said Chillingworth; "and, as the picture now seems to be the incomprehensible object of attack, I will secure that, at all events."

"I'll help you."

"Thank you, Jack; your aid will be welcome; at least, it was so just now."

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"All right, doctor," said Jack. "I may be under your hands some day."

"I'll physic you for nothing," said Mr. Chillingworth. "You saved my life. One good turn deserves another; I'll not forget."

"Thank you," said Jack, as he made a wry face. "I hope you won't have occasion. I'd sooner have a can of grog than any bottle of medicine you can give me; I ain't ungrateful, neither."

"You needn't name it; I am getting my breath again. I suppose we had better leave this place, as soon as we conveniently can."

"Exactly. The sooner the better; we can take it the more leisurely as we go."

The moon was up; there were no clouds now, but there was not a very strong light, because the moon was on the wane. It was one of those nights during which an imperceptible vapour arises, and renders the moon somewhat obscure, or, at least, it robs the earth of her rays; and then there were shadows cast by the moon, yet they grew fainter, and those cast upon the floor of the apartment were less distinct than at first.

There seemed scarce a breath of air stirring; everything was quiet and still; no motion — no sound, save that of the breathing of the two who sat in that mysterious apartment, who gazed alternately round the place, and then in each other's countenances. Suddenly, the silence of the night was disturbed by a very slight, but distinct noise, which struck upon them with peculiar distinctness; it was a gentle tap, tap, at the window, as if some one was doing it with their fingernail.

They gazed on each other, for some moments, in amazement, and then at the window, but they saw nothing; and yet, had there been anything, they must have seen it, but there was not even a shadow.

"Well," said Mr. Chillingworth, after he had listened to the tap, tap, several times, without being able to find out or imagine what it could arise from, "what on earth can it be?"

"Don't know," said Jack, very composedly, squinting up at the window. "Can't see anything."

"Well, but it must be something," persisted Mr. Chillingworth; "it must be something."

"I dare say it is; but I don't see anything. I can't think what it can be, unless —"

"Unless what? Speak out," said the doctor, impatiently.

"Why, unless it is Davy Jones himself, tapping with his long finger-nails, a-telling us how we've been too long already here."

"Then, I presume, we may as well go; and yet I am more disposed to deem it some device of the enemy to dislodge us from this place, for the purpose of enabling them to effect some nefarious scheme or other they have afloat."

"It may be, and is, I dare say, a do of some sort or other," said Jack; "but what can it be?"

"There it is again," said the doctor; "don't you hear it? I can, as plain as I can hear myself."

"Yes, said Jack; "I can hear it plain enough, and can see it, too; and that is more." Yes, yes, I can tell all about it plain enough."

"You can? Well, then, shew me," said the doctor, as he strode up to the window, before which Jack was standing gazing upon one particular spot of the shattered window with much earnestness.

"Where is it?"

"Look there," said Jack, pointing with his finger to a particular spot, to which the doctor directed his attention, expecting to see a long, skinny hand tapping against the glass; but he saw nothing.

"Where is it?"

"Do you see that twig of ivy, or something of the sort?" inquired Jack.

"Yes, I do."

"Very well, watch that; and when the wind catches it — and there is but very little — it lifts it up, and then, falling down again, it taps the glass."

Just as he spoke, there came a slight gust of wind; and it gave a practical illustration to his words; for the tapping was heard as often as the plant was moved by the wind.

"Well," said Mr. Chillingworth, "however simple and unimportant the matter may be, yet I cannot but say I am always well pleased to find a practical explanation of it, so that there will be no part left in doubt."

"There is none about that," said Jack.

"None. Well, we are not beset, then. We may as well consider of the manner of our getting clear of this place. What sort of burthen this picture may be I know not; but I will make the attempt to carry it."

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"Avast, there," said Jack; "I will carry it; at all events, I'll take the first spell, and, if I can't go on, we'll turn and turn about."

"We can divide the weight from the first, and then neither of us will be tired at all."

"Just as you please, sir," said Jack Pringle. "I am willing to obey orders; and, if we are to get in to-night before they are all a-bed, we had better go at once; and then we shall not disturb them."

"Good, Jack," said Mr. Chillingworth; "very good: let us begin to beat our retreat at once."

"Very good," said Jack.

They both rose and approached the picture, which stood up in one corner, half reclining against the wall; the light, at least so much as there was, fell upon it, and gave it a ghastly and deathly hue, which made Mr. Chillingworth feel an emotion he could not at all understand; but, as soon as he could, he withdrew his eyes from off the picture, and they proceeded to secure it with some cord, so that they might carry it between them the easier — with less trouble and more safety.

These preparations did not take long in making, and, when completed, they gave another inquiring look round the chamber, and Mr. Chillingworth again approached the window, and gazed out upon the garden below, but saw nothing to attract his attention.

Turning away, he came to the picture, with which Jack Pringle had been standing. They proceeded towards the stairs, adopting every precaution they could take to prevent any surprise and any attempt upon the object of their solicitude.

Then they came to the great hall, and, having opened the door, they carried it out; then shutting the door, they both stood outside of Bannerworth Hall; and, before taking the picture up in their hands, they once more looked suspiciously around them.

There was nothing to be seen, and so, shouldering the ominous portrait, they proceeded along the garden till they conveyed it into the roadway.

"Now," said Jack, "we are off; we can scud along under press of sail, you know."

"I would rather not," said the doctor, "for two reasons; one of which is, I can't do it myself, and the other is, we should run the risk of injuring the picture; besides this, there is no reason for so doing."

"Very well," said Jack, "make it agreeable to yourself, doctor. See you, Jack's alive, and I am willing to do all I can to help you."

"I am very glad of your aid," said Mr. Chillingworth; "so we will proceed slowly. I shall be glad when we are there; for there are few things more awkward than this picture to carry."

"It is not heavy," said Jack, giving it a hitch up, that first pulled the doctor back, and then pushed him forward again.

"No; but stop, don't do that often, Jack, or else I shall be obliged to let go, to save myself from falling," said the doctor.

"Very sorry," said Jack; "hope it didn't inconvenience you; but I could carry this by myself."

"And so could I," returned Mr. Chillingworth; "but the probability is there would be some mischief done to it, and then we should be doing more harm than good."

"So we should," said Jack.

They proceeded along with much care and caution. It was growing late now, and no one was about — at least, they met none. People did not roam about much after dark, especially since the reports of the vampyre became current, for, notwithstanding all their bravery and violence while in a body, yet to meet and contend with him singly, and unseen, was not at all a popular notion among them; indeed, they would sooner go a mile out of their way, or remain in doors, which they usually did.

The evening was not precisely dark; there was moonlight enough to save it from that, but there was a mist hanging about, that rendered objects, at a short distance, very indistinct.

There walk was uninterrupted by any one, and they had got through half the distance without any disturbance of interruption whatever.

When they arrived at the precincts of the village, Jack Pringle said to Dr. Chillingworth.

"Do you intend going through the village, doctor?"

"Why, not? there will be nobody about, and if there should be, we shall be safe enough from any molestation, seeing there are none here who would dare to harm us; it is the shortest way, too."

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"Very good," said Jack; "I am ageeable, and as for any one harming me, they know better; but, at all events, there's company, and there's less danger, you know, doctor; though I'm always company to myself, but haven't any objection to a messmate, now and then."

They pursued their way in silence, for some distance, the doctor not caring about continuing the talk of Jack, which amounted to nothing; besides; he had too much to do, for, notwithstanding the lightness of the picture, which Jack had endeavoured to persuade the doctor of, he found it was heavy and ungainly; indeed, had he been by himself he would have had some trouble to have got it away.

"We are nearly there," said Jack, putting down his end of the picture, which brought Doctor Chillingworth to a stand still.

"Yes, we are; but what made you stop?"

"Why, you see," said Jack, giving his trowsers a hitch, "as I said before, we are nearly there."

"Well, what of that? we intended to go there, did we not?" inquired Chillingworth.

"Yes, exactly; that is, you intended to do so, I know, but I didn't."

"What do you mean by that?" inquired Chillingworth; "you are a complete riddle to-night, Jack; what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing; only, you see, I don't want to go into the cottage, 'cause, you see, the admiral and I have had what you may call a bit of a growl, and I am in disgrace there a little, though I don't know why, or wherefore; I always did my duty by him, as I did by my country. The ould man, however, takes fits into his head; at the same time I shall take some too; Jack's as good as his master, ashore, at all events."

"Well, then, you object to go in?" said Chillingworth.

"That is the state of the case; not that I'm afraid, or have any cause to be ashamed of myself; but I don't want to make anybody else uncomfortable, by causing black looks."

"Very well, Jack," said the doctor. "I am much obliged to you, and, if you don't like to come, I won't press you against your inclination."

"I understand, doctor. I will leave you here, if you can manage the rest of the way by yourself; there are not two hundred yards now to go, so you are all safe; so good bye."

"Good bye, Jack," said Doctor Chillingworth, who stood wiping his forehead, whilst the picture was standing up against the pales.

"Do you want a hand up first?"

"No, thank you; I can get it up very well without any trouble — it's not so heavy."

"Good bye, then," said Jack; and, in a few moments more, Jack Pringle was out of sight, and the doctor was alone with the ominous picture. He had not far to go, and was within hail of the cottage; but it was late, and yet he believed he should find them up, for the quietude and calmness of the evening hour was that which most chimed with their feelings. At such a time they could look out upon the face of nature, and the freedom of thought appeared the greater, because there was no human being to clash with the silence and stillness of the scene.

"Well," muttered Chillingworth, "I'll go at once to the cottage with my burthen. How they will look at me, and wonder what could induce me to bring this away. I can hardly help smiling at the thought of how they will look at the apparition I shall make."

Thus filled with notions that appeared to please him, the doctor shouldered the picture, and walked slowly along until he reached the dead wall that ran up to the entrance, or nearly so, of the gardens.

There was a plantation of young trees that overhung the path, and cast a deep shadow below — a pleasant spot in hot weather.

The doctor had been carrying the picture, resting the side of it on the small of his arm, and against his shoulder; but this was an inconvenient posture, because the weight of the picture cut his arm so much, that he was compelled to pause, and shift it more on his shoulder.

"There," he muttered, "that will do for the present, and last until I reach the cottage garden."

He was proceeding along at a slow and steady pace, bestowing all his care and attention to the manner of holding the picture, when he was suddenly paralysed by the sound of a great shout of such a peculiar character, that he involuntarily stopped, and the next moment, something heavy came against him with great force, just as if a man had jumped from the wall on to him.

This was the truth, for, in another moment, and before he could recover himself, he found that there was an

attempt to deprive him of the picture.

This at once aroused him, and he made an instant and a vigorous defence; but he was compelled to let go his hold of the picture, and turn to resist the infuriated attack that was now commenced upon himself.

For some moments it was doubtful who would be the victor; but the wind and strength of the doctor were not enough to resist the powerful adversary against whom he had to contend, and the heavy blows that were showered down upon him.

At first he was enabled to bear up against this attack; and then he returned many of the blows with interest; but the stunning effect of the blows he received himself, was such that he could not help himself, and felt his senses gradually failing, his strength becoming less and less.

In a short time, he received such a blow, that he was laid senseless on the earth in an instant.

How long he remained thus he could not say; but it could not have been long, for all around him seemed just as it was before he was attacked.

The moon had scarcely moved, and the shadows, such as they were, were falling in the same direction as before.

"I have not been long here," he muttered, after a few moments' reflection; "but — but — "

He stopped short; for, on looking around him, he saw the object of his solicitude was gone. The picture was nowhere to be seen. It had been carried off the instant he had been vanquished.

"Gone!" he said, in a low, disconsolate tone; "and after all I have done!"

He wiped his hand across his brow, and finding it cut, he looked at the back of his hand, and saw by the deep colour that it was blood; indeed, he could now feel it trickle down his face.

What to do he hardly knew; he could stand, and after having got upon his feet, he staggered back against the wall, against which he leaned for support, and afterwards he crept along with the aid of its support, until he came to the door.

He was observed from the window, where Henry and Charles Holland, seeing him come up with such an unsteady gait, rushed to the door to ascertain what was the matter.

"What, doctor!" exclaimed Henry Bannerworth; "what is the matter?"

"I am almost dead, I think," said Chillingworth. "Lend me your arm, Henry."

Henry and Charles Holland immediately stepped out, and took him between them into the parlour, and placed him upon a couch.

"What on earth has happened, doctor? — have you got into disgrace with the populace?"

"No, no; give me some drink — some water. I am very faint — very faint."

"Give him some wine, or, what's better, some grog," said the admiral. "Why, he's been yard-arm with some pirate or other, and he's damaged about the figure-head. You ain't hurt in your lower works, are you, doctor?" said the admiral.

But the doctor took no notice of the inquiry; but eagerly sipped the contents of a glass that Charles Holland had poured out of a bottle containing some strong Hollands, and which appeared to nerve him much.

"There!" said the admiral, "that will do you good. How did all this damage to your upper works come about, eh?"

"Let him wash his face and hands first; he will be better able to talk afterwards."

"Oh, thank you," said Chillingworth. "I am much better; but I have had some hard bruises."

"How did it happen?"

"I went by myself to watch in the room where the picture was in Bannerworth Hall."

"Where the picture was!" said Henry; "where it is, you mean, do you not, doctor?"

"No; where it was, and where it is not now."

"Gone!"

"Yes, gone away; I'll tell you all about it. I went there to watch, but found nobody or nothing there; but suddenly a man stepped out from behind the picture, and we had a fight over it; after which, just as I was getting the worst of it, Jack Pringle came in."

"The dog!" muttered the admiral.

"Yes, he came in just in time, I believe, to save my life; for the man, whoever he was, would not have hesitated about it."

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"Well, Jack is a good man," said the admiral; "there may be worse, at least."

"Well, we had a desperate encounter for some minutes, during which this fellow wanted to carry off the picture."

"Carry off the picture?"

"Yes, we had a struggle for that; but we could not capture him; he was so violent that he broke away and got clear off."

"With the picture?"

"No, he left the picture behind. Well, we were very tired and bruised, and we sat down to recover ourselves from our fatigue, and to consider what was best to be done; but we were some time before we could leave, and then we determined that we would take the picture away with us, as it seemed to be coveted by the robber, for what object we cannot tell."

"Well, well -- where is the picture?"

"You shall hear all about it in a minute, if you'll let me take my time. I am tired and sore. Well, we brought the picture out, and Jack helped me carry it till he came within a couple of hundred yards of the cottage, and there left me."

"The lubber!" said the admiral, interjectionally.

"Well, I rested awhile, and then taking the picture on my shoulders, I proceeded along with it until I came to the wall, when suddenly I heard a great shout, and then down came something heavy upon me, just as if a man had jumped down upon me."

"And -- and -- "

"Yes," said the doctor, "it was -- "

"Was what?" inquired the admiral.

"Just what you all seemed to anticipate; you are all before me, but that was it."

"A man?"

"Yes; I had a struggle with him, and got nearly killed, for I am not equal to him in strength. I was sadly knocked about, and finally all the senses were knocked out of me, and I was, I suppose, left for dead."

"And what became of the picture?"

"I don't know; but I suppose it was taken away, as, when I came to myself, it was gone; indeed, I have some faint recollection of seeing him seize the portrait as I was falling."

There was a pause of some moments, during which all the party appeared to be employed with their own thoughts, and the whole were silent.

"Do you think it was the same man who attacked you in the house that obtained the picture?" at last inquired Henry Bannerworth.

"I cannot say, but I think it most probable that it was the same; indeed, the general appearance, as near as I could tell in the dark, was the same; but what I look upon as much stronger is, the object appears to be the same in both cases."

"That is very true," said Henry Bannerworth -- "very true; and I think it more than probable myself. But come, doctor, you will require rest and nursing after your dangers."

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## Chapter XCIII. THE ALARM AT ANDERBURY. -- THE SUSPICIONS OF THE BANNERWORTH FAMILY, AND THE MYSTERIOUS COMMUNICATION.

About twenty miles to the southward of Bannerworth Hall was a good-sized market-town, called Anderbury. It was an extensive and flourishing place, and from the beauty of its situation, and its contiguity to the southern coast of England, it was much admired; and, in consequence, numerous mansions and villas of great pretension had sprang up in its immediate neighbourhood.

Besides, there were some estates of great value, and one of these, called Anderbury-on-the-Mount, in consequence of the mansion itself, which was of an immense extent, being built upon an eminence, was to be let, or sold.

This town of Anderbury was remarkable not only for the beauty of its aspect, but likewise for the quiet serenity of its inhabitants, who were a prosperous, thriving race, and depended very much upon their own resources.

There were some peculiar circumstances why Anderbury-on-the-Mount was to let. It had been for a great number of years in possession of a family of the name of Milltown, who had resided there in great comfort and respectability, until an epidemic disorder broke out, first among the servants, and then spreading to the junior branches of the family, and from them to their seniors, produced such devastation, that in the course of three weeks there was but one young man left of the whole family, and he, by native vigour of constitution, had baffled the disorder, and found himself alone in his ancestral halls, the last of his race.

Soon a settled melancholy took possession of him, and all that had formerly delighted him now gave him pain, inasmuch as it brought to his mind a host of recollections of the most agonising character.

In vain was it that the surrounding gentry paid him every possible attention, and endeavoured to do all that was in their power to alleviate the unhappy circumstances in which he was placed. If he smiled, it was in a sad sort, and that was very seldom; and at length he announced his intention of leaving the neighbourhood, and seeking abroad, and in change of scene, for that solace which he could not expect to find in his ancestral home, after what had occurred within its ancient walls.

There was not a chamber but which reminded him of the past -- there was not a tree or a plant of any kind or description but which spoke to him plainly of those who were now no more, and whose merry laughter had within his own memory made that ancient place echo with glee, filling the sunny air with the most gladsome shouts, such as come from the lips of happy youth long before the world has robbed it of any of its romance or its beauty.

There was a general feeling of regret when this young man announced the fact of his departure to a foreign land; for he was much respected, and the known calamities which he had suffered, and the grief under which he laboured, invested his character with a great and painful interest.

An entertainment was given to him upon the eve of his departure, and on the next day he was many miles from the place, and the estate of Anderbury-on-the-Mount was understood to be sold or let.

The old mansion had remained, then, for a year or two vacant, for it was a place of too much magnitude, and required by far too expensive an establishment to keep it going, to enable any person whose means were not very large to think of having anything to do with it.

So, therefore, it remained unlet, and wearing that gloomy aspect which a large house, untenanted, so very quickly assumes.

It was quite a melancholy thing to look upon it, and to think what it must have once been, and what it might be still, compared to what it actually was; and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood had made up their minds that Anderbury-on-the-Mount would remain untenanted for many a year to come, and, perhaps, ultimately fall into ruin and decay.

But in this they were doomed to be disappointed, for, on the evening of a dull and gloomy day, about one week after the events we have recorded as taking place at Bannerworth Hall and its immediate neighbourhood, a travelling carriage, with four horses and an out-rider, came dashing into the place, and drew up at the principal inn in the town, which was called the Anderbury Arms.

The appearance of such an equipage, although not the most unusual thing in the world, in consequence of the

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many aristocratic families who resided in the neighbourhood, caused, at all events, some sensation, and, perhaps, the more so because it drove up to the inn instead of to any of the mansions of the neighbourhood, thereby showing that the stranger, whoever he was, came not as a visitor, but either merely baited in the town, being on his road somewhere else, or had some special business in it which would soon be learned.

The out-rider, who was in handsome livery, had galloped on in advance of the carriage a short distance, for the purpose of ordering the best apartments in the inn to be immediately prepared for the reception of his master.

"Who is he?" asked the landlord.

"It's the Baron Stolmuyer Saltsburgh."

"Bless my heart, I never heard of him before; where did he come from -- somewhere abroad I suppose?"

"I can't tell you anything of him further than that he is immensely rich, and is looking for a house. He has heard that there is one to let in this immediate neighbourhood, and that's what has brought him from London, I suppose."

"Yes, there is one; and it is called Anderbury-on-the-Mount."

"Well, he will very likely speak to you about it himself, for here he comes."

By this time the carriage had halted at the door of the hotel, and, the door being opened, and the steps lowered, there alighted from it a tall man attired in a kind of pelisse, or cloak, trimmed with rich fur, the body of it being composed of velvet. Upon his head he wore a travelling cap, and his fingers, as he grasped the cloak around him, were seen to be covered with rings of great value.

Such a personage, coming in such style, was, of course, likely to be honoured in every possible way by the landlord of the inn, and accordingly he was shown most obsequiously to the handsomest apartment in the house, and the whole establishment was put upon the alert to attend to any orders he might choose to give.

He had not been long in the place when he sent for the landlord, who, hastily scrambling on his best coat, and getting his wife to arrange the tie of his neckcloth, proceeded to obey the orders of his illustrious guest, whatever they might chance to be.

He found the Baron Stolmuyer reclining upon a sofa, and having thrown aside his velvet cloak, trimmed with rich fur, he showed that underneath it he wore a costume of great richness and beauty, although, certainly, the form of it covered was not calculated to set it off to any great advantage, for the baron was merely skin and bone, and looked like a man who had just emerged from a long illness, for his face was ghastly pale, and the landlord could not help observing that there was a strange peculiarity about his eyes, the reason of which he could not make out.

"You are the landlord of this inn, I presume," said the baron, "and, consequently, no doubt well acquainted with the neighbourhood?"

"I have the honour to be all that, sir. I have been here about sixteen years, and in that time I certainly ought to know something of the neighbourhood."

"Tis well; some one told me there was a little cottage sort of place to let here, and as I am simple and retired in my habits I thought that it might possibly suit me."

"A little cottage, sir! There are certainly little cottages to let, but not such as would suit you; and if I might have presumed, sir, to think, I should have considered Anderbury-on-the-Mount, which is now to let, would have been the place for you. It is a large place, sir, and belonged to a good family, although they are now all dead and gone, except one, and it's he who want's to let the old place."

"Anderbury-on-the-Mount," said the baron, "was the name of the place mentioned to me; but I understood it was a little place."

"Oh! sir, that is quite a mistake; who told you so? It's the largest place about here; there are a matter of twenty-seven rooms in it, and it stands altogether upon three hundred acres of ground."

"And have you the assurance," said the baron, "to call that anything but a cottage, when the castle of the Stolmuyers, at Saltsburgh, has one suite of reception rooms thirty in number, opening into each other, and the total number of apartments in the and whole building is two hundred and sixty, it is surrounded by eight miles of territory."

"The devil!" said the landlord. "I beg your pardon, sir, but when I am astonished, I generally say the devil. They want eight hundred pounds a year for Anderbury-on-the-Mount."

"A mere trifle. I will sleep here to-night, and in the morning I will go and look at the place. It is near the sea?"

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"Half a mile, sir, exactly, from the beach; and one of the most curious circumstances of all connected with it is, that there is a subterranean passage from the grounds leading right away down to the sea-coast. A most curious place, sir, partly put out of the cliff, with cellars in it for wine, and other matters, that in the height of summer are kept as cool as in the deep winter time. It's more for curiosity than use, such a place; and the old couple, that now take care of the house, make a pretty penny, I'll be bound, though they won't own it, by showing that part of the place."

"It may suit me, but I shall be able to give a decisive answer when I see it on the morrow. You will let my attendants have what they require, and see that my horses be well looked to."

"Certainly, oh! certainly sir, or course; you might go far, indeed, sir, before you found an inn where everything would be done as things are done here. Is there anything in particular, sir, you would like for dinner?"

"How can I tell that, idiot, until the dinner time arrives?"

"Well, but, sir, in that case, you know, we scarcely know what to do, because you see, sir, you understand —"

"It is very strange to me that you can neither see nor understand your duty. I am accustomed to having the dinner tables spread with all that money can procure; then I choose, but not before, what it suits me to partake of."

"Well, sir, that is a very good way, and perhaps we ain't quite so used to that sort of thing as we ought to be in these parts; but another time, sir, we shall know better what we are about, without a doubt, and I only hope, sir, that we shall have you in the neighbourhood for a long time; and so, sir, putting one thing to another, and then drawing a conclusion from both of them, you see, sir, you will be able to understand."

"Peace! begone! what is the use of all this bellowing to me — I want it not — I care not for it."

The baron spoke these words so furiously, that the landlord was rather terrified than otherwise, and left the room hastily, muttering to himself that he had never come across such a tiger, and wondering where the baron could have possibly come from, and what amount of wealth he could be possessed of that would enable him to live in such a princely style as he mentioned.

If the Baron Stolzmyer of Saltzburgh had wished ever so much to impress upon the minds of all persons in the neighbourhood the fact of his wealth and importance, he could not have adopted a better plan to accomplish that object than by first of all impressing such facts upon the mind of the landlord of the Anderbury Arms, for in the course of another hour it was tolerably well spread all over the town, that never had there been such a guest at the Anderbury Arms; and that he called Anderbury-on-the-Mount, with all its rooms — all its outbuildings, and its three hundred acres of ground, a cottage.

This news spread like wildfire, awaking no end of speculation, and giving rise to the most exaggerated rumours, so that a number of persons came to the inn on purpose to endeavour to get a look at the baron; but he did not stir from his apartments, so that these wondermongers were disappointed, and even forced to go away as wise as they came; but in the majority of cases they made up their minds that in the morning they should surely be able to obtain a glimpse of him, which was considered a great treat, for a man with an immense income is looked upon in England as a natural curiosity.

The landlord took his guest at his word as regards the dinner, and provided such a repast as seldom, indeed, graced the board at the Anderbury Arms — a repast sufficient for twenty people, and certainly which was a monstrous thing to set before one individual.

The baron, however, made no remark, but selected a portion from some of the dishes, and those dishes that he did select from, were of the simplest kind, and not such as the landlord expected him to take, so that he really paid about one hundred times the amount he ought to have done for what actually passed his lips.

And then what a fidget the landlord was in about his wines, for he doubted not but such a guest would be extremely critical and hard to please; but, to his great relief, the baron declined taking any wine, merely washing down his repast with a tumbler of cool water; and then, although the hour was very early, he retired at once to rest.

The landlord was not disposed to disregard the injunction which the baron had given him to attend carefully on his servants and horses, and after giving orders that nothing should be stinted as regarded the latter, he himself looked to the creature comforts of the former, and he did this with a double motive, for not only was he anxious to make the most he could out of the baron in the way of charges, but he was positively panting with curiosity to know more about so singular a personage, and he thought that surely the servants must be able to furnish him with

some particulars regarding their eccentric master.

In this, however, he was mistaken, for although they told him all they knew, that amounted to so little as really not to be worth the learning.

They informed him that they had been engaged all in the last week, and that they knew nothing of the baron whatever, or where he came from, or what he was, excepting that he paid them most liberal wages, and was not very exacting in the service he required of them.

This was very unsatisfactory, and when the landlord started on a mission, which he considered himself bound to perform, to a Mr. Leek, in the town, who had the letting of Anderbury-on-the-Mount, he was quite vexed to think what a small amount of information he was able to carry to him.

"I can tell him," he said to himself as he went quickly towards the agent's residence; "I can tell him the baron's name, and that in the morning he wants to look at Anderbury-on-the-Mount; but that's all I know of him, except that he is a most extraordinary man -- indeed, the most extraordinary that I ever came near."

Mr. Leek, the house agent, notwithstanding the deficiency of the facts contained in the landlord's statement, was well enough satisfied to hear that any one of apparent wealth was inquiring after the large premises to let, for, as he said truly to the landlord, --

"The commission on letting and receiving the rentals of such a property is no joke to me."

"Precisely," said the landlord. "I thought it was better to come and tell you at once, for there can be no doubt that he is enormously rich."

"If that be satisfactorily proved, it's of no consequence what he is, or who he is, and you may depend I shall be round to the inn early in the morning to attend upon him; and in that case, perhaps, if you have any conversation with him, you will be so good as to mention that I will show him over the premises at his own hour, and you shall not be forgotten, you may depend, if any arrangement is actually come to. It will be just as well for you to tell him what a nice property it is, and that it is to be let for eight hundred a year, or sold outright for eight thousand pounds."

"I will, you may depend, Mr. Leek. A most extraordinary man you will find him; not the handsomest in the world, I can tell you, but handsome is as handsome does, say I; and, if he takes Anderbury-on-the-Mount, I have no doubt but he will spend a lot of money in the neighbourhood, and we shall all be the better of that, of course, as you well know, sir."

This then was thoroughly agreed upon between these high contracting powers, and the landlord returned home very well satisfied, indeed, with the position in which he had put the affair, and resolved upon urging on the baron, as far as it lay within his power so to do, to establish himself in the neighbourhood, and to allow him to be purveyor-in-general to his household, which, if the baron continued in his liberal humour, would be unquestionably a very pleasant post to occupy.

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## Chapter XCIV. THE VISITOR, AND THE DEATH IN THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

About an hour and a half after the baron had retired to rest, and while the landlord was still creeping about enjoining silence on the part of the establishment, so that the slumbers of a wealthy and, no doubt, illustrious personage should not be disturbed, there arrived a horseman at the Anderbury Arms.

He was rather a singular-looking man, with a shifting, uneasy-looking glance, as if he were afraid of being suddenly pounced upon and surprised by some one; and although his apparel was plain, yet it was good in quality, and his whole appearance was such as to induce respectful attention.

The only singular circumstance was, that such a traveller, so well mounted, should be alone; but that might have been his own fancy, so that the absence of an attendant went for nothing. Doubtless, if the whole inn had not been in such a commotion about the illustrious and wealthy baron, this stranger would have received more consideration and attention than he did.

Upon alighting, he walked at once into what is called the coffee-room of the hotel, and after ordering some refreshments, of which he partook but sparingly, he said, in a mild but solemn sort of tone, to the waiter who attended upon him, --

"Tell the Baron Stolmuyer, of Saltzburgh, that there is one here who wants to see him."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the waiter, "but the baron is gone to bed."

"It matters not to me. If you nor no one else in this establishment will deliver the message I charge you with, I must do so myself."

"I'll speak to my master, sir; but the baron is a very great gentleman indeed, and I don't think my master would like to have him disturbed."

The stranger hesitated for a time, and then he said, --

"Show me the baron's apartment. Perhaps I ought not to ask any one person connected with this establishment to disturb him, when I am quite willing to do so myself. Show me the way."

"Well, but, sir, the baron may get in a rage, and say, very naturally, that we had no business to let anybody walk up to his room and disturb him, because we wouldn't do so ourselves. So that you see, sir, when you come to consider, it hardly seems the right sort of thing."

"Since," said the stranger, rising, "I cannot procure even the common courtesy of being shown to the apartment of the person whom I seek, I must find him myself."

As he spoke he walked out of the room and began ascending the staircase, despite the remonstrances of the waiter, who called after him repeatedly, but could not induce him to stop; and when he found that such was the case, he made his way to the landlord, to give the alarm that, for all he knew to the contrary, some one had gone up stairs to murder the baron.

This information threw the landlord into such a fix, that he knew not what to be at. At one moment he was for rushing up stairs and endeavouring to interfere, and at another he thought the best plan would be to pretend that he knew nothing about it.

While he was in this state of uncertainty, the stranger succeeded in making his way up stairs to the floor from which proceeded the bedrooms, and, apparently, having no fear whatever of the Baron Stolmuyer's indignation before his eyes, he opened door after door, until he came to one which led him into the apartment occupied by that illustrious individual.

The baron, half undressed only, lay in an uneasy slumber upon the bed, and the stranger stood opposite to him for some minutes, as if considering what he should do.

"It would be easy," he said, "to kill him; but it will pay me better to spare him. I may be wrong in supposing that he has the means which I hope he has; but that I shall soon discover by his conversation."

Stretching out his hand, he tapped the baron lightly on the shoulder, who thereupon opened his eyes and sprang to his feet instantly, glancing with fixed earnestness at the intruder, upon whose face shone the light of a lamp which was burning in the apartment.

Then the baron shrank back, and the stranger, folding his arms, said, --

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"You know me. Let our interview be as brief as possible. There needs no explanations between us, for we both know all that could be said. By some accident you have become rich, while I continue quite otherwise. It matters not how this has occurred, the fact is everything. I don't know the amount of your possessions; but, from your style of living, they must be great, and therefore it is that I make no hesitation in asking of you, as a price for not exposing who and what you are, a moderate sum."

"I thought that you were dead."

"I know you did; but you behold me here, and, consequently, that delusion vanishes."

"What sum do you require, and what assurance can I have that, when you get it, the demand will not be repeated on the first opportunity?"

"I can give you no such assurance, perhaps, that would satisfy you entirely; but, for more reasons than I choose to enter into, I am extremely anxious to leave England at once and for ever. Give me the power to do so that I require, and you will never hear of me again."

The baron hesitated for some few seconds, during which he looked scrutinizingly at his companion, and then he said, in a tone of voice that seemed as if he were making the remark to himself rather than to the other, —

"You look no older than you did when last we parted, and that was years ago."

"Why should I look older? You know as well as I that I need not. But, to be brief, I do not wish to interfere with any plans or projects you may have on hand. I do not wish to be a hindrance to you. Let me have five thousand pounds, and I am off at once and for ever, I tell you."

"Five thousand! the man raves — five thousand pounds! Say one thousand, and it is yours."

"No; I have fixed my price; and if you do not consent, I now tell you that I will blazon forth, even in this house, who and what you are; and, let your schemes of ambition or of cupidity be what they may, you may be assured that I will blast them all."

"This is no place in which to argue such a point; come out into the open air; 'walls have ears;' but come out, and I will give you such special reasons why you should not now press your claim at all, that you shall feel much beholden to me for them, and not regret your visit."

"If that we come to terms, I no more desire than you can do that any one should overhear our conversation. I prefer the open air for any conference, be it whatever it may — much prefer it; and therefore most willingly embrace your proposition. Come out."

The baron put on his travelling cap, and the rich velvet cloak, edged with fur, that he possessed, and leaving his chamber a few paces in advance of his strange visitor, he descended the staircase, followed by him. In the hall of the hotel they found the landlord and almost the whole of the establishment assembled, in deep consultation as to whether or not any one was to go up stairs and a certain if the stranger who had sought the baron's chamber was really a friend or an enemy.

But when they saw the two men coming down, at all events apparently amicably, it was a great relief, and the landlord rushed forward and opened the door, for which piece of service he got a very stately bow from the baron, and a slight inclination of the head from his visitor, and then they both passed out.

"I have ascertained," said the man who came on horseback, "that for the last week in London you have lived in a style of the most princely magnificence, and that you came down here, attended as if you were one of the first nobles of the land."

"These things amuse the vulgar," said the baron. "I do not mind admitting to you that I contemplate residing on this spot, and perhaps contracting a marriage."

"Another marriage?"

"And why not? If wives will die suddenly, and no one knows why, who is to help it. I do not pretend to control the fates."

"This, between us, is idle talk indeed — most idle; for we know there are certain circumstances which account for the strangest phenomena; but what roaring sound is that which comes so regularly and steadily upon the ear."

"It is the sea washing upon the coast. The tide is no doubt advancing, and, as the eddying surges roll in upon the pebbly shore, they make what, to my mind, is this pleasant music."

"I did not think we were so near the ocean. The moon is rising; let us walk upon the beach, and as that sound is such pleasant music, you shall hear it while I convince you what unpleasant consequences will arise from a refusal of the modest and moderate terms I offer you."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"We shall see, we shall see; but I must confess it does seem to me most extraordinary that you ask of me a positive fortune, for fear you should deprive me of a portion of one; but you cannot mean what you say."

While they were talking they reached a long strip of sand which was by the seashore, at the base of some cliffs, through which was excavated the passage from the coast into the grounds of Anderbury House, and which had been so expatiated upon by the landlord of the inn, in his description of the advantages attendant upon that property.

There were some rude steps, leading to a narrow arched door-way, which constituted an entrance to this subterraneous region; and as the moonlight streamed over the wide waste of waters, and fell upon this little door-way in the face of the cliff, he became convinced that it was the entrance to that excavation, and he eyed it curiously.

"What place is that?" said his companion.

"It is a private entrance to the grounds of a mansion in this neighbourhood."

"Private enough, I should presume; for if there be any other means of reaching the house, surely no one would go through such a dismal hole as that towards it; but come, make up your mind at once. There need be no quarrelling upon the subject of our conference, but let it be a plain matter of yes or no. Is it worth your while to be left alone in peace, or is it not?"

"It is worth my while, but not at such a price as that you mentioned; and I cannot help thinking that some cheaper mode of accomplishing the same object will surely present itself very shortly."

"I do not understand you; you talk ambiguously."

"But my acts," said the baron, "shall be clear and plain enough, as you shall see. Could you believe it possible that I was the sort of person to submit timely to any amount of extortion you chose to practise upon me. There was a time when I thought you possessed great sense and judgment, when I thought that you were a man who weighed well the chances of what you were about; but now I know to the contrary; and I think for less than a thousand pounds I may succeed in ridding myself of you."

"I do not understand you; you had better beware how you tamper with me, for I am not one who will be calmly disposed to put up with much. The sense, tact, and worldly knowledge which you say you have before, from time to time, given me credit for, belongs to me still, and I am not likely easily to commit myself."

"Indeed; do you think you bear such a charmed life that nothing can shake it?"

"I think nothing of the sort; but I know what I can do — I am armed."

"And I; and since it comes to this, take the reward of your villany; for it was you who made me what I am, and would now seek to destroy my every hope of satisfaction."

As the baron spoke he drew from breast a small pistol, which, with the quickness of thought, he held full in the face of his companion, and pulled the trigger.

There can be no doubt on earth but that his intention was to commit the murder, but the pistol missed fire, and he was defeated in his intention at that moment. Then the stranger laughed scornfully, and drawing a pistol from his pocket, he presented it at the baron's head, saying, —

"Do I not bear a charmed life? If I had not, should I have escaped death from you now? No, I could not; but you perceive that even a weapon that might not fail you upon another occasion is harmless against me; and can you expect that I will hesitate now to take full and ample revenge upon you for this dastardly attempt?"

These words were spoken with great volubility, so much so, indeed, that they only occupied a few very brief seconds in delivering; and then, perhaps, the baron's career might have ended, for it seemed to be fully the intention of the other to conclude what he said by firing the pistol in his face; but the wily aspect of the baron's countenance was, after all, but a fair index of the mind, and, just as the last words passed the lips of his irritated companion, he suddenly dropped in a crouching position to the ground, and, seizing his legs, threw him over his head in an instant.

The pistol was discharged, at the same moment, and then, with a shout of rage and satisfaction, the baron sprang upon his foe, and, kneeling upon his breast, he held aloft in his hand a glittering dagger, the highly-polished blade of which caught the moonbeams, and reflected them into the dazzled eyes of the conquered man, whose fate now appeared to be certain.

"Fool!" said the baron, "you must needs, then, try conclusions with me, and, not content with the safety of insignificance, you must be absurd enough to think it possible you could extort from me whatever sums your

fancy dictated, or with any effect threaten me, if I complied not with your desires."

"Have mercy upon me. I meant not to take your life; and, therefore, why should you take mine?"

"You would have taken it, and, therefore, you shall die. Know, too, at this your last moment, that, vampire as you are, and as I, of all men, best know you to be, I will take especial care that you shall be placed in some position after death where the revivifying moonbeams may not touch you, so that this shall truly be your end, and you shall rot away, leaving no trace behind of your existence, sufficient to contain the vital principle."

"No — no! you cannot — will not. You will have mercy."

"Ask the famished tiger for mercy, when you intrude upon his den."

As he spoke the baron ground his teeth together with rage, and, in an instant, buried the poniard in the throat of his victim. The blade went through to the yellow sand beneath, and the murderer still knelt upon the man's chest, while he who had thus received so fatal a blow tossed his arms about with agony, and tried in vain to shriek.

The nature of the wound, however, prevented him from uttering anything but a low gurgling sound, for he was nearly choked with his own blood, and soon his eyes became fixed and of a glassy appearance; he stretched out his two arms, and dug his fingers deep into the sand.

The baron drew forth the poniard, and a gush of blood immediately followed it, and then one deep groan testified to the fact, that the spirit, if there be a spirit, had left its mortal habitation, and winged its flight to other realms, if there be other realms for it to wing its flight to.

"He is dead," said the baron, and, at the same moment, a roll of the advancing tide swept over the body, drenching the living, as well as the dead, with the brine of the ocean.

The baron stooped and rinsed the dagger in the advancing tide from the clotted blood which had clung to it, and then, wiping it carefully, he returned it to its sheath, which was hidden within the folds of his dress; and, rising from his kneeling posture upon the body, he stood by its side, with folded arms, gazing upon it, for some minutes, in silence, heedless of the still advancing water, which was already considerably above his feet.

Then he spoke in his ordinary accents, and evidently caring nothing for the fact that he had done such a deed.

"I must dispose of this carcase," he said, "which now seems so lifeless, for the moon is up, and if its beams fall upon it, I know, from former experience, what will happen; it will rise again, and walk the earth, seeking for vengeance upon me, and the thirst for that vengeance upon me, and the thirst for that vengeance will become such a part of its very nature, that it will surely accomplish something, if not all that it desires."

After a few moments' consideration, he stooped, and, with more strength than one would have thought it possible a man reduced almost, as he was, to a skeleton could have exerted, he lifted the body, and carried it rapidly up the beach towards the cliffs. He threw it down upon the stone steps that led to the small door of the excavation in the cliff, and it fell upon them with a sickening sound, as if some of the bones were surely broken by the fall.

The object, then, of the baron seemed to be to get this door open, if he possibly could; but that was an object easier to be desired than carried into effect, for, although he exerted his utmost power, he did not succeed in moving it an inch, and he began evidently to think that it would be impossible to do so.

But yet he did not give up the attempt at once, but looking about upon the beach, until he found a large heavy stone, he raised it in his arms, and, approaching the door, he flung it against it with such tremendous force, that it flew open instantly, disclosing within a dark and narrow passage.

Apparently rejoiced that he had accomplished this much, he stepped cautiously within the entrance, and then, taking from a concealed pocket that was in the velvet cloak which he wore a little box, he produced from it some wax-lights and some chemical matches, which, by the slightest effort, he succeeded in igniting, and then, with one of the lights in his hand to guide him on his way, he went on exploring the passage, and treading with extreme caution as he went, for fear of falling into any of the ice-wells which were reported to be in that place.

After proceeding about twenty yards, and finding that there was no danger, he became less cautious; but, in consequence of such less caution, he very nearly sacrificed his life, for he came upon an ice-well which seemed a considerable depth, and into which he had nearly plunged headlong.

He started back with some degree of horror; but that soon left him, and then, after a moment's thought, he sought for some little nook in the wall, in which he might place the candle, and soon finding one that answered the purpose well, he there left it, having all the appearance of a little shrine, while he proceeded again to the



mouth of that singular and cavernous-looking place. He had, evidently, quite made up his mind what to do, for, without a moment's hesitation, he lifted the body again, and carried it within the entrance, walking boldly and firmly, now that he knew there was no danger between him and the light, which shed a gleam through the darkness of the place of a very faint and flickering character.

He reached it rapidly, and when he got to the side of the well, he, without a moment's hesitation, flung it headlong down, and, listening attentively, he heard it fall with a slight splash, as if there was some water at the bottom of the pit.

It was an annoyance, however, for him to find that the distance was not so deep as he had anticipated, and when he took the light from the niche where he had placed it, and looked earnestly down, he could see the livid, ghastly-looking face of the dead man, for the body had accidentally fallen upon its back, which was a circumstance he had not counted upon, and one which increased the chances greatly of its being seen, should any one be exploring, from curiosity, that not very inviting place.

This was annoyance, but how could it be prevented, unless, indeed, he chose to descend, and make an alteration in the disposition of the corpse? But this was evidently what he did not choose to do; so, after muttering to himself a few words expressive of his intention to leave it where it was, he replaced the candle, after extinguishing it, in the box from whence he had taken it, and carefully walked out of the dismal place.

The moonbeams were shining very brightly and beautifully upon the face of the cliffs, when he emerged from the subterranean passage, so that he could see the door, the steps, and every object quite distinctly; and, to his gratification, he found that he had not destroyed any fastening that was to the door, but that when it was slammed shut, it struck so hard and fast, that the strength of one man could not possibly move it, even the smallest fraction of an inch.

"I shall be shown all this to-morrow," he said; "and if I take this house I must have an alteration made in this door, so that it may open with a lock, instead of by main violence, as at present; but if, in the morning, when I view Anderbury House, I can avoid an entrance into this region, I will do so, and at my leisure, if I become the possessor of the estate, I can explore every nook and cranny of it.

He then folded his cloak about him, after pulling the door as closely as he could. He walked slowly and thoughtfully back to the inn. It was quite evident that the idea of the murder he had committed did not annoy him in the least, and that in his speculations upon the subject he congratulated himself much upon having so far succeeded in getting rid of certainly a most troublesome acquaintance.

"'Tis well, indeed," he said, "that just at this juncture he should throw himself in my way, and enable me so easy to feel certain that I shall never more be troubled with him. Truly, I ran some risk, and when my pistol missed fire, it seemed as if my evil star was in its ascendant, and that I was doomed myself to become the victim of him whom I have laid in so cold a grave. But I have been victorious, and I am willing to accept the circumstance as an omen of the past — that my fortunes are on the change. I think I shall be successful now, and with the ample means which I now possess, surely, in this country, where gold is loved so well, I shall be able to overcome all difficulties, and to unite myself to some one, who — but no matter, her fate is an after consideration."

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## Chapter XCV. THE MARRIAGE IN THE BANNERWORTH FAMILY ARRANGED.

After the adventure of the doctor with regard to the picture about which such an air of mystery and interest has been thrown, the Bannerworth family began to give up all hopes of ever finding a clue to those circumstances concerning which they would certainly have liked to have known the truth, but of which it was not likely they would ever hear anything more.

Dr. Chillingworth now had no reserve, and when he had recovered sufficiently to feel that he could converse without an effort, he took an opportunity, while the whole of the family were present, to speak of what had been his hopes and his expectations.

"You are all aware," he said, "now, of the story of Marmaduke Bannerworth, and what an excessively troublesome person he was, with all deference, to you, Henry; first of all, as to spending all his money at the gaming-table, and leaving his family destitute; and then, when he did get a lump of money which might have done some good to those he left behind him — hiding it somewhere where it could not be found at all, and so leaving you all in great difficulty and distress, when you might have been independent."

"That's true enough, doctor," said Henry; "but you know the old proverb, — that ill-gotten wealth never thrives; so that I don't regret not finding this money, for I am sure we should have been none the happier with it, and perhaps not so happy."

"Oh, bother the old proverb; thirty or forty thousand pounds is no trifle to be talked lightly of, or the loss of which to be quietly put up with, on account of a musty proverb. It's a large sum, and I should like to have placed it in your hands."

"But as you cannot, doctor, there can be no good possibly done by regretting it."

"No, certainly; I don't mean that; utter regret is always a very foolish thing; but it's questionable whether something might not be done in the matter, after all, for you, as it appears, by all the evidence we can collect, that it must have been Varney, after all, who jumped down upon me from the garden-wall in so sudden a manner; and, if the picture be valuable to him, it must be valuable to us."

"But how are we to get it, and, if we could, I do not see that it would be of much value to anybody, for, after all, it is but a painting."

"There you go again," said the doctor, "depreciating what you know nothing about; now, listen to me, Master Henry, and I will tell you. That picture evidently had some sort of lining at the back, over the original canvas; and do you think I would have taken such pains to bring it away with me if that lining had not made me suspect that between it and the original picture the money, in bank notes, was deposited?"

"Had you any special reason for supposing such was the case?"

"Yes; most unquestionably I had; for when I got the picture fairly down, I found various inequalities in the surface of the back, which led me to believe that rolls of notes were deposited, and that the great mistake we had all along made was in looking behind the picture, instead of at the picture itself. I meant immediately to have cut it to pieces when I reached here with it; but now it has got into the hands of somebody else, who knows, I suspect, as much I do."

"It is rather provoking."

"Rather provoking! is that the way to talk of the loss of Heaven knows how many thousands of pounds! I am quite aggravated myself at the idea of the thing, and it puts me in a perfect fever to think of it, I can assure you."

"But what can we do?"

"Oh! I propose an immediate crusade against Varney, the vampyre, for who but he could have made such an attack upon me, and force me to deliver up such a valuable treasure?"

"Never heed it, doctor," said Flora; "let it go; we have never had or enjoyed that money, so it cannot matter, and it is not to be considered as the loss of an actual possession, because we never did actually possess it."

"Yes," chimed in the admiral; "bother the money! what do we care about it; and, besides, Charley Holland is going to be very busy."

"Busy!" said the doctor; "how do you mean?"

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"Why, isn't he going to be married directly to Flora, here, and am not I going to settle the whole of my property upon him on condition that he takes the name of Bell instead of Holland? for, you see, his mother was my sister, and of course her name was Bell. As for his father Holland, it can't matter to him now what Charley is called; and if he don't take the name of Bell I shall be the last in the family, for I am not likely to marry, and have any little Bells about me."

"No," said the doctor; "I should say not; and that's the reason why you want to ring the changes upon Charles Holland's name. Do you see the joke, admiral?"

"I can't say I do — where is it? It's all very well to talk of jokes, but if I was like Charles, going to be married, I shouldn't be in any joking humour, I can tell you, but quite the reverse; and as for you and your picture, if you want it, doctor, just run after Varney yourself for it; or, stay — I have a better idea than that — get your wife to go and ask him for it, and if she makes half such a clamour about his ears that she did about ours, he will give it her in a minute, to get rid of her."

"My wife! — you don't mean to say she has been here?"

"Yes, but she has though. And now, doctor, I can tell you I have seen a good deal of service in all parts of the world, and, of course, picked up a little experience; and, if I were you, some of these days, when Mrs. Chillingworth ain't very well, I'd give her a composing draught that would make her quiet enough."

"Ah! that's not my style of practice, admiral; but I am sorry to hear that Mrs. Chillingworth has annoyed you so much."

"Pho, pho, man! — pho, pho! do you think she could annoy me? Why, I have encountered storms and squalls in all latitudes, and it isn't a woman's tongue now that can do anything of an annoying character I can tell you; far from it — very far from it; so don't distress yourself upon that head. But come, doctor, we are going to have the wedding the day after to-morrow."

"No, no," said Flora; "the week after next, you mean."

"Is it the week after next? I'll be hanged if I didn't think it was the day after tomorrow; but of course you know best, as you have settled it all among you. I have nothing to do with it."

"Of course, I shall, with great pleasure," returned the doctor, "be present on the interesting occasion; but do you intend taking possession of Bannerworth Hall again?"

"No, certainly not," said Henry; "we propose going to the Dearbrook estate, and there remaining for a time to see how we all like it. We may, perchance, enjoy it very much, for I have heard it spoken of as an attractive little property enough, and one that any one might fancy, after being resident a short time upon it."

"Well," said the admiral; "that is, I believe, settled among us, but I am sure we sha'n't like it, on account of the want of the sea. Why, I tell you, I have not seen a ship myself for this eighteen months; there's a state of things, you see, that won't do to last, because one would get dry-mouldy; it's a shocking thing to see nothing but land, land, wherever you go."

From the preceding conversation may be gathered what were the designs of the Bannerworth family, and what progress had been made in carrying them out. From the moment they had discovered the title-deeds of the Dearbrook property, they had ceased to care about the large sum of money which Marmaduke Bannerworth had been supposed to have hidden in some portion of Bannerworth Hall.

They had already passed through quite enough of the busy turmoils of existence to be grateful for anything that promised ease and competence, and that serenity of mind which is the dearest possession which any one can compass.

Consequently was it, that, with one accord, they got rid of all yearning after the large sum which the doctor was so anxious to procure for them, and looked forward to a life of great happiness and contentment. On the whole, too, when they came to talk the matter over quietly among themselves, they were not sorry that Varney had taken himself off in the way he had, for really it was a great release; and, as he had couched his farewell in words which signified it was a final one, they were inclined to think that he must have left England, and that it was not likely they should ever again encounter him, under any circumstances whatever.

It was to be considered quite as a whim of the old admiral's, the changing of Charles Holland's name to Bell; but, as Charles himself said when the subject was broached to him, — "I am so well content to be called whatever those to whom I feel affection think proper, that I give up my name of Holland without a pang, willingly adopting in its stead one that has always been hallowed in my remembrance with the best and kindest recollections."

And thus this affair was settled, much to the satisfaction of Flora, who was quite as well content to be called Mrs. Bell as to be called Mrs. Holland, since the object of her attachment remained the same. The wedding was really fixed for the week after that which followed the conversation we have recorded; but the admiral was not at all disposed to allow Flora and his nephew Charles to get through such an important period of their lives without some greater demonstration and show than could be made from the little cottage where they dwelt; and consequently he wished that they should leave that and proceed at once to a larger mansion, which he had his eye upon a few miles off, and which was to be had furnished for a time, at the pleasure of any one.

"And we won't shut ourselves up," said the admiral; "but we will find out all the Christian-like people in the neighbourhood, and invite them to the wedding, and we will have a jolly good breakfast together, and lots of music, and a famous lunch; and, after that, a dinner, and then a dance, and all that sort of thing; so that there shall be no want of fun."

As may be well supposed, both Charles and Flora shrunk from so public an affair; but, as the old man had evidently set his heart upon it, they did not like to say they positively would not; so, after a vain attempt to dissuade him from removing at all from the cottage until they removed for good, they gave up the point to him, and he had it all his own way.

He took the house, for one month, which had so taken his fancy, and certainly a pretty enough place it was, although they found out afterwards, that why it was he was so charmed with it consisted in the fact that it bore the name of a vessel which he had once commanded; but this they did not know until a long time afterwards, when it slipped out by mere accident.

They stipulated with the admiral that there should not be more than twenty guests at the breakfast which was to succeed the marriage ceremony; and to that he acceded; but Henry whispered to Charles Holland, —

"I know this public wedding to be distasteful to you, and most particularly do I know it is distasteful to Flora; so, if you do not mind playing a trick upon the old man, I can very easily put you in the way of cheating him entirely."

"Indeed; I should like to hear, and, what is more, I should like to practise, if you think it will not so entirely offend him as to make him implacable."

"Not at all, not at all; he will laugh himself, when he comes to know it, as much as any of us; the present difficulty will be to procure Flora's connivance; but that we must do the best way we can by persuasion."

What this scheme was will ultimately appear; but, certain it is, that the old admiral had no suspicion of what was going on and proceeded to make all his arrangements accordingly.

From his first arrival in the market town — in the neighbourhood of which was Bannerworth Hall — it will be recollected that he had taken a great fancy to the lawyer, in whose name a forged letter had been sent him, informing him of the fact that his nephew, Charles Holland, intended marrying into a family of vampyres.

It was this letter, as the reader is aware, which brought the old admiral and Jack Pringle into the neighbourhood of the Hall; and, although it was a manoeuvre to get rid of Charles Holland, which failed most signally, there can be no doubt but that such a letter was the production of Sir Francis Varney, and that he wrote it for the express purpose of getting rid of Charles from the Hall, who had begun materially to interfere with his plans and projects there.

After some conversation with himself, the admiral thought that this lawyer would be just the man to recommend the proper sort of people to be invited to the wedding of Charles and Flora; so he wrote to him, inviting himself to dinner, and received back a very gracious reply from the lawyer, who declared that the honour of entertaining a gentleman whom he so much respected as Admiral Bell, was greater than he had a right to expect by a great deal, and that he should feel most grateful for his company, and await his coming with the greatest impatience.

"A devilish civil fellow, that attorney," said the admiral, as he put the letter in his pocket, "and almost enough to put one in conceit of lawyers."

"Yes," said Jack Pringle, who had overheard the admiral read the letter. "Yes, we will honour him; and I only hope he will have plenty of grog; because, you see, if he don't — — D — n it! what's that! Can't you keep things to yourself?"

This latter exclamation arose from the fact that the admiral was so indignant at Jack for listening to what he had been saying, as to throw a leaden inkstand, that happened to be upon the table, at his head.

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"You mutinous swab!" he said, "cannot a gentleman ask me to dinner, or cannot I ask myself, without you putting your spoke in the windlass, you vagabond?"

"Oh! well," said Jack, "if you are out of temper about it, I had better send my mark to the lawyer, and tell him that we won't come, as it has made some family differences."

"Family, you thief!" said the admiral. "What do you mean? What family do you think would own you? D --- n me, if I don't think you came over in some strange ship. But, I tell you what it is, if you interfere in this matter, I'll be hanged if I don't blow your brains out."

"And you'll be hanged if you do," said Jack, as he walked out of the room; "so it's all one either way, old fizgig."

"What!" roared the admiral, as he sprang up and ran after Jack. "Have I lived all these years to be called names in my own ship --- I mean my own house? What does the infernal rascal mean by it?"

The admiral, no doubt, would have pursued Jack very closely, had not Flora intercepted him, and, by gentle violence, got him back to the room. No one else could have ventured to have stopped him, but the affection he had for her was so great that she could really accomplish almost anything with him; and, by listening quietly to his complaints of Jack Pringle --- which, however, involved a disclosure of the fact which he had intended to keep to himself, that he had sought the lawyer's advice --- she succeeded in soothing him completely, so that he forgot his anger in a very short time.

But the old man's anger, although easily aroused, never lasted very long; and, upon the whole, it was really astonishing what he put up with from Jack Pringle, in the way of taunts and sneers, of all sorts and descriptions, and now and then not a little real abuse.

And, probably, he thought likewise that Jack Pringle did not mean what he said, on the same principle that he (the admiral), when he called Jack a mutinous swab and a marine, certainly did not mean that Jack was those things, but merely used them as expletives to express a great amount of indignation at the moment, because, as may be well supposed, nothing in the world could be worse, in Admiral Bell's estimation, that to be a mutinous swab or a marine.

It was rather a wonder, though, that, in his anger some day, he did not do Jack some mischief; for, as we have had occasion to notice in one or two cases, the admiral was not extremely particular as to what sorts of missiles he used when he considered it necessary to throw something at Jack's head.

It would not have been a surprising thing if Jack had really made some communication to the lawyer; but he did stop short at that amount of pleasantries, and, as he himself expressed it, for once in a way he let the old man please himself.

The admiral soon forgot this little dispute, and then pleased himself with the idea that he should pass a pleasant day with the attorney.

"Ah! well," he said; "who would have thought that ever I should have gone and taken dinner with a lawyer --- and not only done that, but invited myself too! It shows us all that there may be some good in all sorts of men, lawyers included; and I am sure, after this, I ought to begin to think what I never thought before, and that is, that a marine may actually be a useful person. It shows that, as one gets older, one gets wiser."

It was an immense piece of liberality for a man brought up, as Admiral Bell had been, in decidedly one of the most prejudiced branches of the public service, to make any such admissions as these. A very great thing it was, and showed a liberality of mind such as, even at the present time, is not readily found.

It is astonishing, as well as amusing, to find how the mind assimilates itself to the circumstances in which it is placed, and how society, being cut up into small sections, imagines different things merely as a consequence of their peculiar application. We shall find that even people, living at different ends of a city, will look with a sort of pity and contempt upon each other; and it is much to be regretted that public writers are found who use what little ability they may possess in pandering to their feelings.

It was as contemptible and silly as it was reprehensible for a late celebrated novelist to pretend that he believed there was a place called Bloomsbury-square, but he really did not know; because that was merely done for the purpose of raising a silly laugh among persons who were neither respectable on account of their abilities or their conduct.

But to return from this digression. The admiral, attired in his best suit, which always consisted of a blue coat, the exact colour of the navy uniform, an immense pale primrose coloured waistcoat, and white kerseymere

continuations, went to the lawyer's as had been arranged.

If anything at all could flatter the old man's vanity successfully, it certainly would be the manner in which he was received at the lawyer's house, where everything was done that could give him satisfaction.

A very handsome repast was laid before him, and, when the cloth was removed, the admiral broached the subject upon which he wished to ask the advice of his professional friend. After telling him of the wedding that was to come off, he said, —

"Now, I have bargained to invite twenty people; and, of course, as that is exclusive of any of the family, and as I don't know any people about this neighbourhood except yourself, I want you and your family to come to start with, and then I want you to find me out some more decent people to make up the party."

"I feel highly flattered," said the attorney, "that, in such a case as this, you should have come to me, and my only great fear is, that I should not be able to give you satisfaction."

"Oh! you needn't be afraid of that; there is no fear on that head; so I shall leave it all to you to invite the folks that you think proper."

"I will endeavour, certainly, admiral, to do my best. Of course, living in the town, as I have for many years, I know some very nice people as well as some very queer ones."

"Oh! we don't want any of the queer ones; but let those who are invited be frank, hearty, good-tempered people, such as one will be glad to meet over and over again without any ceremony — none of your simpering people, who are afraid to laugh for fear of opening their mouths too wide, but who are so mightily genteel that they are afraid to enjoy anything for fear it should be vulgar."

"I understand you, admiral, perfectly, and shall endeavour to obey your instructions to the very letter; but, if I should unfortunately invite anybody you don't like, you must excuse me for making such a mistake,"

"Oh, of course — of course. Never mind that; and if any disagreeable fellow comes, we will smother him in some way."

"It would serve him right, for no one ought to make himself disagreeable, after being honoured with an invitation from you; but I will be most especially careful, and I hope that such a circumstance will not occur."

"Never mind. If it should, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll set Jack Pringle upon him, and if he don't worry his life out it will be a strange thing to me."

"Oh," said the lawyer, "I am glad you have mentioned him, for it gives me an opportunity of saying that I have done all in my power to make him comfortable."

"All in your power to make him comfortable! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have placed such a dinner before him as will please him; I told him to ask for just whatever he likes."

The admiral looked at the lawyer with amazement, for a few moments, in silence, and then he said,

"D — n it! why, you don't mean to tell me, that that rascal is here."

"Oh yes; he came about ten minutes before you arrived, and said you were coming, and he has been down stairs feasting all the while since."

"Stop a bit. Do you happen to have any loaded fire arms in the house?"

"We have got an old blunderbuss; but what for, admiral?"

"To shoot that scoundrel, Pringle. I'll blow his brains out, as sure as fate. The impudence of his coming here, directly against my orders, too."

"My dear sir, calm yourself, and think nothing of it; it's of no consequence whatever."

"No consequence; where is that blunderbuss of yours? Do you mean to tell me that mutiny is of no consequence? Give me the blunderbuss."

"But, my dear sir, we only keep it in terrorem, and have no bullets."

"Never mind that, we can cram in a handful of nails, or brass buttons, or hammer up a few halfpence — anything of that sort will do to settle his business with."

"How do you get on, old Tarbarrel?" said Jack, putting his head in at the door. "Are you making yourself comfortable? I'll be hanged if I don't think you have a drop too much already, you look so precious red about the gills. I have been getting on famous, and I thought I'd just hop up for a minute to make your mind easy about me, and tell you so."

It was quite evident that Jack had done justice to the good cheer of the lawyer, for he was rather unsteady, and

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had to hold by the door—post to support himself, while there was such a look of contentment upon his countenance as contrasted with the indignation that was manifest upon the admiral's face, that, as the saying is, it would have made a cat laugh to see them.

"Be off with ye, Jack," said the lawyer; "be off with ye. Go down stairs again and enjoy yourself. Don't you see that the admiral is angry with you."

"Oh, he be bothered," said Jack; "I'll soon settle him if he comes any of his nonsense; and mind, Mr. Lawyer, whatever you do, don't you give him too much to drink."

The lawyer ran to the door, and pushed Jack out, for he rightly enough suspected that the quietness of the admiral was only that calm which precedes a storm of more than usual amount and magnitude, so he was anxious to part them at once.

He then set about appeasing, as well as he could, the admiral's anger, by attributing the perseverance of Jack, in following him wherever he went, to his great affection for him, which, combined with his ignorance, might make him often troublesome when he had really no intention of being so.

This was certainly the best way of appeasing the old man; and, indeed, the only way in which it could be done successfully, and the proof that it was so, consisted in the fact, that the admiral did consent, at the suggestion of the attorney, to forgive Jack once more for the offence he had committed.

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## Chapter XCVI. THE BARON TAKES ANDERBURY HOUSE, AND DECIDES UPON GIVING A GRAND ENTERTAINMENT.

It was not considered anything extraordinary that, although the Baron Stelmuyer of Saltzburgh went out with the mysterious stranger who had arrived at the Anderbury Arms to see him, he should return without him, for certainly he was not bound to bring him back, by any means whatever.

Moreover, he entered the inn so quietly, and with such an appearance of perfect composure, that no one could have suspected for a moment that he had been guilty really of the terrific crime which had been laid to his charge — a crime which few men could have committed in so entirely unmoved and passionless a manner as he had done it.

But he seemed to consider the taking of a human life as a thing not of the remotest consequence, and not to be considered at all as a matter which was to put any one out of the way, but as a thing to be done when necessity required, with all the ease in the world, without arousing or awaking any of those feelings of remorse which one would suppose ought to find a place in the heart of a man who had been guilty of such monstrous behaviour.

He walked up to his own apartment again, and retired to rest with the same feeling, apparently, of calmness, and the same ability to taste of the sweets of repose as had before characterized him.

The stranger's horse, which was a valuable and beautiful animal, remained in the stable of the inn, and as, of course, that was considered a guarantee for his return, the landlord, when he himself retired to rest, left one of his establishment sitting up to let in the man who now lay so motionless and so frightful in appearance in one of the ice-wells of the mysterious passage leading from the base of the cliffs to the grounds of Anderbury House.

But the night wore on, and the man who had been left to let the stranger in, after making many efforts to keep himself awake, dropped into sound repose, which he might just as well have done in the first instance, inasmuch as, although he knew it not, he was engaged in the vain task of waiting for the dead.

The morning was fresh and beautiful, and, at a far earlier hour than a person of his quality was expected to make his appearance, the baron descended from his chamber; for, somehow or other, by common consent, it seems to be agreed that great personages must be late in rising, and equally late in going to bed.

But the baron was evidently not so disposed to turn night into day, and the landlord congratulated himself not a little upon the fact that he was ready for his illustrious guest when he descended so unexpectedly from his chamber as he did.

An ample breakfast was disposed of; that is to say, it was placed upon the table, and charged to the baron, who selected from it what he pleased; and when the meal was over the landlord ventured to enter the apartment, and said to him, with all due humility, —

"If you please, sir, Mr. Leek, who has the letting of Anderbury-on-the-Mount, that is, Anderbury House, as it is usually called, is here, sir, and would be happy to take your orders as to when you would be pleased to look at those premises?"

"I shall be ready to go in half an hour," said the baron; "and, as the distance is not great, I will walk from here to the mansion."

This message was duly communicated to Mr. Leek, who thereupon determined upon waiting until the baron should announce his readiness to depart upon the expedition; and he was as good as his word, for, in about half-an-hour afterwards, he descended to the hall, and then Mr. Leek was summoned, who came out of the bar with such a grand rush, that he fell over a mat that was before him, and saluted the baron by digging his head into his stomach, and then falling sprawling at his feet, and laying hold of his ankle.

This little incident was duly apologised for, and explained; after which Mr. Leek walked on through the town, towards Anderbury-on-the-Mount, followed by the illustrious personage whom he sincerely hoped he should be able to induce to take it.

It was a curious thing to see how they traversed the streets together; for while the baron walked right on, and with a solemn and measured step, Mr. Leek managed to get along a few paces in front of him, sideways, so that he could keep up a sort of conversation upon the merits of Anderbury House, and the neighbourhood in general, without much effort; to which remarks the baron made such suitable and dignified replies as a baron would be



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supposed to make.

"You will find, sir," said Mr. Leek, "that everything about Anderbury is extremely select, and amazingly correct; and I am sure a more delightful place to live in could not be found."

"Ah!" said the baron; "very likely."

"It's lively, too," continued Mr. Leek; "very likely; and there are two chapels of ease, besides the church."

"That's a drawback," said the baron.

"A drawback, sir! well, I am sorry I mentioned it; but perhaps you are a Roman Catholic, sir, and, in that case, the chapels of ease have no interest for you."

"Not the slightest; but do not, sir, run away with any assumption concerning my religious opinions, for I am not a Roman Catholic."

"No, sir, no, sir; nor more am I; and, as far as I think, and my opinion goes, I say, why shouldn't a gentleman with a large fortune be what he likes, or nothing, if he likes that better? but here we are, sir, close to one of the entrances of Anderbury House. There are three principal entrances, you understand, sir, on three sides of the estate, and the fourth side faces the sea, where there is that mysterious passage that leads down from the grounds to the beach, which, perhaps, you have heard of, sir."

"The landlord of the inn mentioned it."

"We consider it a great curiosity, sir, I can assure you, in these parts — a very great curiosity; and it's an immense advantage to the house, because, you see, sir, in extremely hot weather, all sorts of provisions can be taken down there, and kept at such a very low temperature as to be quite delightful."

"That is an advantage."

Mr. Leek rang the bell that hung over one of the entrances, and his summons for admission was speedily answered by the old couple who had charge of the premises, and then, with a view of impressing them with a notion of the importance of the personage whom he had brought to look at the place, he said, aloud, —

"The Baron Stoltmayor, of Saltsomething, has come to look at the premises."

This announcement was received with all due deference and respect, and the task of showing the baron the premises at once fairly commenced.

"Here you have," said Mr. Leek, assuming an oratorical attitude — "here you have the umbrageous trees stooping down to dip their leaves in the purling waters; here you have the sweet foliage lending a delicious perfume to the balmy air; here you have the murmuring waterfalls playing music of the spheres to the listening birds, who sit responsive upon the dancing boughs; here you have all the fragrance of the briny ocean, mingling with the scent of a bank of violets, and wrapping the senses in Elysium; here you may never tire of an existence that presents never-ending charms, and that, in the full enjoyment of which, you may live far beyond the allotted span of man."

"Enough — enough," said the baron.

"Here you have the choicest exotics taking kindly to a soil gifted by nature with the most extraordinary powers of production; and all that can pamper the appetite, or yield delight to the senses, is scattered around by nature with a liberal hand. It is quite impossible that royalty should come near the favoured spot without visting it as a thing of course; and I forgot to mention that a revenue is derived from some cottages, which, although small, is yet sufficient to pay the tithe on the whole estate."

"There, there — that will do."

"Here you have purling rills and cascades, and fish-ponds so redundant with the finny tribe, that you have but to wish for sport, and it is yours; here you have in the mansion, chambers that vie with the accomodation of a palace — ample dormitories and halls of ancient grandeur; here you have — "

"Stop," said the baron, "stop; I cannot be pestered in this way with your description. I have no patience to listen to such mere words — show me the house at once, and let me judge for myself."

"Certainly, sir; oh! certainly; only I thought it right to give you a slight description of the place as it really was; and now, sir, that we have reached the house, I may remark that here we have — "

"Silence!" said the baron; "if you begin with here we have, I know not when you will leave off. All I require of you is to show me the place, and to answer any question which I may put to you concerning it. I will draw my own conclusions, and nothing you can say, one way or another, will affect my imagination."

"Certainly, sir, certainly; I shall only be too happy to answer any questions that may be put to me by a person

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of your lordship's great intelligence; and all I can remark is, that when you reach the drawing-room floor, any person may truly say, here you have — I really beg your pardon, sir — I had not the slightest intention of saying here you have, I assure you; but the words came out quite unawares, I assure you."

"Peace — peace!" cried again the baron; "you disturb me by this incessant clatter."

Thus admonished, Mr. Leek was now quiet, and allowed the baron in his own way to make what investigation he pleased concerning Anderbury House."

The investigation was not one that could be gone over in ten minutes; for the house was extremely extensive, and the estate altogether presented so many features of beauty and interest, that it was impossible not to linger over it for a considerable period of time.

The grounds were most extensive, and planted with such a regard to order and regularity, everything being in its proper place, that it was a pleasure to see an estate so well kept. And although the baron was not a man who said much, it was quite evident, by what little he did utter, that he was very well pleased with Anderbury-on-the-Mount.

"And now," said Mr. Leek, "I will do myself the pleasure, sir, of showing your grace the subterranean passage."

At this moment a loud ring at one of the entrance gates was heard, and upon the man who had charge of the house answering the summons for admission, he found that it was a gentleman, who gave a card on which was the name of Sir John Westlake, and who desired to see the premises.

"Sir John Westlake," said Mr. Leek; "oh! I recollect he did call at my office, and say that he thought of taking Anderbury-on-the-Mount. A gentleman of great wealth and taste is Sir John, but I must tell him, baron, that you have the preference if you choose to embrace it."

At this moment the stranger advanced, and when he saw the baron, he bowed courteously, upon which Mr. Leek said, —

"I regret, Sir John, that if you should take a fancy to the place, I am compelled first of all to give this gentleman the refusal of it."

"Certainly," said Sir John Westlake; "do not let me interfere with any one. I have nearly made up my mind, and came to look over the property again; but of course, if this gentleman is beforehand with me, I must be content. I wish particularly to go down to the subterranean passage to the beach, if it is not too much trouble."

"Trouble! certainly not, sir. Here, Davis, get some links, and we can go at once; and as this gentleman likewise has seen everything but that strange excavation, he will probably descend with us."

"Certainly," said the baron; "I shall have great pleasure;" and he said it with so free and unembarrassed an air, that no one could have believed for a moment in the possibility that such a subject of fearful interest to him was there to be found.

The entrance from the grounds into this deep cavernous place was in a small but neat building, that looked like a summer-house; and now, torches being procured, and one lit, a door was opened, which conducted at once into the commencement of the excavation; and Mr. Leek heading the way, the distinguished party, as that gentleman loved afterwards to call it in his accounts of the transaction, proceeded into the very bowels of the earth, as it were, and quickly lost all traces of the daylight.

The place did not descend by steps, but by a gentle slope, which it required some caution to traverse, because, being cut in the chalk, which in some places was worn very smooth, it was extremely slippery; but this was a difficulty that a little practice soon overcame, and as they went on the place became more interesting every minute.

Even the baron allowed Mr. Leek to make a speech upon the occasion, and that gentleman said, —

"You will perceive that this excavation must have been made, at a great expense, out of the solid cliff, and in making it some of the most curious specimens of petrification and fossil remains were found. You see that the roof is vaulted, and that it is only now and then a lump of chalk has fallen in, or a great piece of flint; and now we come to one of the ice-wells."

They came to a deep excavation, down which they looked, and when the man held the torch beneath its surface, they could dimly see the bottom of it, where there was a number of large pieces of flint stone, and, apparently, likewise, the remains of broken bottles.

"There used to be a windlass at the top of this," said Mr. Leek, "and the things were let down in a basket. They

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do say that ice will keep for two years in one of these places."

"And are there more of these excavations?" said the baron.

"Oh, dear, yes, sir; there are five or six of them for different purposes; for when the family that used to live in Anderbury House had grand entertainments, which they sometimes had in the summer season, they always had a lot of men down here, cooling wines, and passing them up from hand to hand to the house."

From the gradual slope of this passage down to the cliffs, and the zigzag character of it, it may be well supposed that it was of considerable extent. Indeed, Mr. Leek asserted that it was half a mile in actual measured length.

The baron was not at all anxious to run any risk of a discovery of the dead body which he had cast into that ice-well which was nearest to the opening on to the beach, so, as he went on, he negatived the different proposals that were made to look down into the excavations, and succeeded in putting a stop to that species of inquiry in the majority of instances, but he could not wholly do so.

Perhaps it would have been better for his purpose if he had encouraged a look into every one of the ice-wells; for, in that case, their similarity of appearance might have tired out Sir John Westlake before they got to the last one; but as it was, when they reached the one down which the body had been precipitated, he had the mortification to hear Mr. Leek say, —

"And now, Sir John, and you, my lord baron, as we have looked at the first of these ice wells and at none of the others, suppose we look at the last."

The baron was afraid to say anything; because, if the body were discovered, and identified as that of the visitor at the inn, and who had been seen last with him, any reluctance on his part to have that ice-well examined, might easily afterwards be construed into a very powerful piece of circumstantial evidence against him.

He therefore merely bowed his assent, thinking that the examination would be but a superficial one, and that, in consequence, he should escape easily from any disagreeable consequences.

But this the fates ordained otherwise; and there seemed no hope of that ice-well in particular escaping such an investigation as was sure to induce some uncomfortable results.

"Davis," said Mr. Leek, "these places are not deep, you see, and I was thinking that if you went down one of them, it would be as well; for then you would be able to tell the gentlemen what the bottom was fairly composed of, you understand."

"Oh, I don't mind, sir," said Davis. "I have been down one of them before today, I can tell you, sir."

"I do not see the necessity," said Sir John Westlake, "exactly, of such a thing; but still if you please, and this gentleman wishes —"

"I have no wish upon the occasion," said the baron; "and, like yourself, cannot see the necessity."

"Oh, there is no trouble," said Mr. Leek; "and it's better, now you are here, that you see and understand all about it. How can you get down, Davis?"

"Why, sir, it ain't above fourteen feet altogether; so I sha'n't have any difficulty, for I can hang by my hands about half the distance, and drop the remainder."

As he spoke he took off his coat, and then stuck the link he carried into a cleft of the rock, that was beside the brink of the excavation.

The baron now saw that there would be no such thing as avoiding a discovery of the fact of the dead body being in that place, and his only hope was, that in its descent it might have become so injured as to defy identification.

But this was a faint hope, because he recollected that he had himself seen the face, which was turned upwards, and the period after death was by far too short for him to have any hope that decomposition could have taken place even to the most limited extent.

The light, which was stuck in a niche, shed but a few inefficient rays down into the pit, and, as the baron stood, with folded arms, looking calmly on, he expected each moment a scene of surprise and terror would ensue.

Nor was he wrong; for scarcely had the man plunged down into that deep place, than he uttered a cry of alarm and terror, and shouted, —

"Murder! murder! Lift me out. There is a dead man down here, and I have jumped upon him."

"A dead man!" cried Mr. Leek and Sir John Westlake in a breath.

"How very strange!" said the baron.

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"Lend me a hand," cried Davis; "lend me a hand out; I cannot stand this, you know. Lend me a hand out, I say, at once."

This was easier to speak of than to do, and Mr. Davis began to discover that it was easier by far to get into a deep pit, than to get out of one, notwithstanding that his assertion of having been down into those places was perfectly true; but then he had met with nothing alarming, and had been able perfectly at his leisure to scramble out the best way he could.

Now, however, his frantic efforts to release himself from a much more uncomfortable situation than he had imagined it possible for him to get into, were of so frantic a nature, that he only half buried himself in pieces of chalk, which he kept pulling down with vehemence from the sides of the pit, and succeeded in accomplishing nothing towards his rescue.

"Oh! the fellow is only joking," said the baron, "and amusing himself at our expense."

But the manner in which the man cried for help, and the marked terror which was in every tone, was quite sufficient to prove that he was not acting; for if he were, a more accomplished mimic could not have been found on the stage than he was.

"This is serious," said Sir John Westlake, "and cannot be allowed. Have you any ropes here by which we can assist him from the pit? Don't be alarmed, my man, for if there be a dead body in the pit, it can't harm you. Take your time quietly and easily, and you will assuredly get out."

"Aye," said the baron, "the more haste, the worst speed, is an English proverb, and in this case it will be fully exemplified. This man would easily leave the pit, if he would have the patience, with care and quietness, to clamber up its side."

It would appear that Davis felt the truth of these exhortations, for although he trembled excessively, he did begin to make some progress in his ascent, and get so high, that Mr. Leek was enabled to get hold of his hand, and give him a little assistance, so that, in another minute or so, he was rescued from his situation, which was not one of peril, although it was certainly one of fright.

He trembled so excessively, and stuttered and stammered, that for some minutes no one could understand very well what he said; but at length, upon making himself intelligible, he exclaimed, —

"There has been a murder! there has been a murder committed, and the body thrown into the ice pit. I felt that I jumped down upon something soft, and when I put down my hand to feel what it was, it came across a dead man's face, and then, of course, I called out."

"You certainly did call out."

"Yes, and so would anybody, I think, under such circumstances. I suppose I shall be hung now, because I had charge of the house?"

"That did not strike me until this moment," said the baron; "but if there be a dead body in that pit, it certainly places this man in a very awkward position."

"What the deuce do you mean?" said Davis; "I don't know no more about it than the child unborn. There is a dead man in the ice-well, and that is all I know about it; but whether he has been there a long time, or a short time, I don't know any more than the moon, so it's no use bothering me about it."

"My good man," said the baron, "it would be very wrong indeed to impute to you any amount of criminality in this business, since you may be entirely innocent; and I, for one, believe that you are so, for I cannot think that any guilty man would venture into the place where he had put the body of his victim, in the way that you ventured into that pit. I say I cannot believe it possible, and therefore I think you innocent, and will take care to see that no injustice is done you; but at the same time I cannot help adding, that I think, of course, you will find yourself suspected in some way."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," said Davis; "but as I happen to be quite innocent, I am very easy about it, and don't care one straw what people say. I have not been in this excavation for Heaven knows how long."

"But what's to be done?" said Mr. Leek. "I suppose it's our duty to do something, under such circumstances."

"Unquestionably," said the baron; "and the first thing to be done, is to inform the police of what has happened, so that the body may be got up; and as I have now seen enough of the estate to satisfy me as regards its capabilities, I decide at once upon taking it, if I can agree upon the conditions of the tenancy, and I will purchase it, if the price be such as I think suitable."

"Well," said Mr. Leek, "if anything could reconcile me to the extraordinary circumstance that has just

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occurred, it certainly is, baron, the having so desirable a tenant for Anderbury—on—the—Mount as yourself. But we need not traverse all this passage again, for it is much nearer now to get out upon the sea coast at once, as we are so close to the door opening upon the beach. It seems to me that we ought to proceed at once to the town, and give information to the authorities of the discovery which we have made."

"It is absolutely necessary," said the baron, "so to do; so come along at once. I shall proceed to my inn, and as, of course, I have seen nothing more than yourselves, and consequently could only repeat your evidence, I do not see that my presence is called for. Nevertheless, of course, if the justices think it absolutely necessary that I should appear, I can have no possible objection so to do."

This was as straightforward as anything that could be desired, and, moreover, it was rather artfully put together, for it seemed to imply that he, Mr. Leek, would be slighted, if his evidence was not considered sufficient.

"Of course," said Mr. Leek; "I don't see at all why, as you, sir, have only the same thing to say as myself, I should not be sufficient."

"Don't call upon me on any account," said Sir John Westlake.

"Oh! no, no," cried Mr. Leek; "there is no occasion. I won't, you may depend, if it can be helped."

Sir John, in rather a nervous and excited manner, bade them good day, before they got quite into the town, and hurried off; while the baron, with a dignified bow, when he reached the door of his hotel, said to Mr. Leek, —

"Of course I do not like the trouble of judicial investigations more than anybody else, and therefore, unless it is imperatively necessary that I should appear, I shall take it as a favour to be released from such a trouble."

"My lord baron," said Mr. Leek, "you may depend that I shall mention that to the magistrates and the coroner, and all those sort of people;" and then Mr. Leek walked away, but he muttered to himself, as he did so, "They will have him, as sure as fate, just because he is a baron; and his name will look well in the 'County Chronicle.'"

Mr. Leek then repaired immediately to the house of one of the principal magistrates, and related what had occurred, to the great surprise of that gentleman, who suggested immediately the propriety of making the fact known to the coroner of the district, as it was more his business, than a magistrate's, in the first instance, since nobody was accused of the offence.

This suggestion was immediately followed, and that functionary directed that the body should be removed from where it was to the nearest public-house, and immediately issued his precept for an inquiry into the case.

By this time the matter had begun to get bruited about in the town, and of course it went from mouth to mouth with many exaggerations; and although it by no means did follow that a murder had been committed because a dead body had been found, yet, such was the universal impression; and the matter began to be talked about as the murder in the subterranean passage leading to Anderbury House, with all the gusto which the full particulars of some deed of blood was calculated to inspire. And how it spread about was thus: —

The fact was, that Mr. Leek was so anxious to let Anderbury—on—the—Mount to the rich Baron Stelmuyer, of Saltzburgh, that he got a friend of his to come and personate Sir John Westlake, while he, the baron, was looking at the premises, in order to drive him at once to a conclusion upon the matter; so that what made Sir John so very anxious that he should not be called forward in the matter; consisted in the simple fact that he was nothing else than plain Mr. Brown, who kept a hatter's shop in the town; but he could not keep his own counsel, and, instead of holding his tongue, as he ought to have done, about the matter, he told it to every one he met, so that in a short time it was generally known that something serious and startling had occurred in the subterranean passage to Anderbury House, and a great mob of persons thronged the beach in anxious expectation of getting more information on the matter.

The men, likewise, who had been ordered by the coroner to remove the body, soon reached the spot, and they gave an increased impetus to the proceedings, by opening the door of the subterranean passage, and then looking earnestly along the beach as if in expectation of something or somebody of importance.

When eagerly questioned by the mob, for the throng of persons now assembled quite amounted to a mob, to know what they waited for, one of them said, —

"A coffin was to have been brought down to take the body in."

This announcement at once removed anything doubtful that might be in the minds of any of them upon the subject, and at once proclaimed the fact not only that there was a dead body, but that if they looked out they would see it forthwith.

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The throng thickened, and by the time two men were observed approaching with a coffin on their shoulders, there was scarcely anybody left in the town, except a few rare persons, indeed, who were not so curious as their neighbours.

It was not an agreeable job, even to those men who were not the most particular in the world, to be removing so loathsome a spectacle as that which they were pretty sure to encounter in the ice-well; but they did not shrink from it, and, by setting about it as a duty, they got through it tolerably well.

They took with them several large torches, and then, one having descended into the pit, fastened a rope under the arms of the dead man, and so he was hauled out, and placed in the shell that was ready to receive him.

They were all surprised at the fresh and almost healthful appearance of the countenance, and it was quite evident to everybody that if any one had known him in life, they could not have the least possible difficulty in recognising him now that he was no more.

And the only appearance of injury which he exhibited was in that dreadful wound which had certainly proved his death, and which was observable in his throat the moment they looked upon him. 232, 78 = 132, 31, 43 #841f2b (352 76 51 HSV)

The crush to obtain a sight of the body was tremendous at the moment it was brought out, and a vast concourse of persons followed it in procession to the town, where the greatest excitement prevailed. It was easily discovered that no known person was missing; and some who had caught a sight of the body, went so far as to assert that it must have been in the ice-well for years, and that the extreme cold had preserved it in all its original freshness.

The news, of course, came round, although not through the baron, for he did not condescend to say one word about it at the inn, and it was the landlord who first started the suggestion of —

"What suppose it is the gentleman who left his horse here?"

This idea had no sooner got possession of his brain, than it each moment seemed to him to assume a more reasonable and tangible form, and without saying any more to any one else about it, he at once started off to where the body lay awaiting an inquest, to see if his suspicions were correct.

When he arrived at the public-house and asked to see the body, he was at once permitted to do so; for the landlord knew him, and was as curious as he could be upon the subject by any possibility. One glance, of course, was sufficient, and the landlord at once said, —

"Yes, I have seen him before, though I don't know his name. He came to my house last night, and left his horse there; and, although I only saw him for a moment as he passed through the hall, I am certain I am not mistaken. I dare say all my waiters will recognise him, as well as the Baron Stelmuyer of Saltzburgh, who is staying with me, and who no doubt knows very well who he is, for he went out with him late and came home alone; and I ordered one of my men to wait up all night in order to let in this very person who is now lying dead before us."

"The deuce you did! But you don't suppose the baron murdered him, do you?"

"It's a mystery to me altogether — quite a profound mystery. It's very unlikely, certainly; and what's the most extraordinary part of the whole affair is, how the deuce could he come into one of the ice-wells belonging to Anderbury House. That's what puzzles me altogether."

"Well, it will all come out, I hope, at the inquest, which is to be held at four o'clock to-day. There must have been foul play somewhere, but the mystery is where, and that Heaven only knows, perhaps."

"I shall attend," said the landlord, "of course, to identify him; and I suppose, unless anybody claims the horse, I may as well keep possession of it."

"Don't flatter yourself that you will get the horse out of the transaction. Don't you know quite well that the government takes possession of everything as don't belong to nobody?"

"Yes; but I have got him, and possession, you know, is nine points of the law."

"It may be; but their tenth point will get the better of you for all that. You take my word for it, the horse will be claimed of you; but I don't mind, as an old acquaintance, putting you up to a dodge."

"In what way?"

"Why, I'll tell you what happened with a friend of mine; but don't think it was me, for if it was I would tell you at once, so don't think it. He kept a country public-house; and, one day, an elderly gentleman came in, and appeared to be unwell. He just uttered a word or two, and then dropped down dead. He happened to have in his

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fob a gold repeater, that was worth, at least, a hundred guineas, and my friend, before anybody came, took it out, and popped in, in its stead, an old watch that he had, which was not worth a couple of pounds."

"It was running a risk."

"It was; but it turned out very well, because the old gentleman happened to be a very eccentric person, and was living alone, so that his friends really did not know what he had, or what he had not, but took it for granted that any watch produced belonged to him. So, if I were you in this case, when the gentleman's horse is claimed, I'd get the d ---dest old screw I could, and let them have that."

"You would?"

"Indeed would I, and glory in it, too, as the very best thing that could be done. Now, a horse is of use to you?"

"I believe ye, it is."

"Exactly; but what's the use of it to government? and, what's more, if it went to the government, there might be some excuse; but the government will know no more about it, and make not so much as I shall. Some Jack-in-office will lay hold of it as a thing of course and a perquisite, when you might just as well, and a great deal better, too, keep it yourself, for it would do you some good, as you say, and none to them."

"I'll do it; it is a good and a happy thought. There is no reason on earth why I shouldn't do it, and I will. I have made up my mind to it now."

"Well, I am glad you have. What do you think now the dead man's horse is worth?"

"Oh! fifty or sixty guineas value."

"Then very good. Then, when the affair is all settled, I will trouble you for twenty pounds."

"You?"

"Yes, to be sure. Who else do you suppose is going to interfere with you? One is enough, ain't it, at a time; and I think, after giving you such advice as I have, that I am entitled, at all events, to something."

"I tell you what," said the landlord of the hotel, "taking all things into consideration, I have altered my mind rather, and won't do it."

"Very good. You need not; only mind if you do, I am down upon you like a shot."

The excitement contingent upon the inquest was very great; indeed, the large room in the public house, where it was held, was crowded to suffocation with persons who were anxious to be present at the proceedings. When the landlord reached home, of course he told his guest, the baron, of the discovery he had made, that the murdered man was the strange visitor of the previous night; for now, from the frightful wound he had received in his throat, the belief that he was murdered became too rational a one to admit of any doubts, and was that which was universally adopted in preference to any other suggestion upon the occasion; although, no doubt, people would be found who would not scruple to aver that he had cut his own throat, after making his way into the well belonging to Anderbury House.

The landlord had his own misgivings concerning his guest, the baron, now that something had occurred of such an awful and mysterious a nature to one who was evidently known to him. It did not seem to be a pleasant thing to have such an intimate friend of a man who had been murdered in one's house, especially when it came to be considered that he was the last person seen in his company, and that, consequently, he was peculiarly called upon to give an explanation of how, and under what circumstances, he had parted with him.

The baron was sitting smoking in the most unconcerned manner in the world, when the landlord came to bring him this intelligence, and, when he had heard him to an end, the remark he made was, ---

"Really, you very much surprise me; but, perhaps, as you are better acquainted with the town than I am, you can tell me who he was?"

"Why, sir, that is what we hoped you would be able to tell us."

"How should I tell you? He introduced himself to me as a Mr. Mitchell, a surveyor, and he said that, hearing I talked of purchasing or renting Anderbury-on-the-Mount, he came to tell me that the principal side wall, that you could see from the beach, was off the perpendicular."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes; and as this was a very interesting circumstance to me, considering that I really did contemplate such a purchase or renting, and do so still, as it was a moonlight night, and he said he could show me in a minute what he meant if I would accompany him, I did so; but when we got there, and on the road, I heard quite enough of him to convince me that he was a little out of his senses, and, consequently, I paid no more attention to what he said, but

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walked home and left him on the beach."

"It's a most extraordinary circumstance, sir; there is no such person, I assure you, as Mitchell, a surveyor, in the town; so I can't make it out in the least."

"But, I tell you, I consider the man out of his senses, and perhaps that may account for the whole affair."

"Oh, yes, sir, that would, certainly; but still, it's a very odd thing, because we don't know of such a person at all, and it does seem so extraordinary that he should have made his appearance, all of a sudden, in this sort of way. I suppose, sir, that you will attend the inquest, now, that's to be held upon him?"

"Oh, yes; I have no objection whatever to that; indeed, I feel myself bound to do so, because I suppose mine is the the latest evidence that can be at all produced concerning him."

"Unquestionably, sir; our coroner is a very clever man, and you will be glad to know him --- very glad to know him, sir, and he will be glad to know you, so I am sure it will be a mutual gratification. It's at four o'clock the inquest is to be, and I dare say, sir, if you are there by half-past, it will be time enough."

"No doubt of that; but I will be punctual."

We have already said the room in which the inquest was to be held was crowded almost to suffocation, and not only was that the case, but the lower part of the house was crammed with people likewise; and there can be very little doubt but the baron would have shrunk from such an investigation from a number of curious eyes, if he could have done so; while the landlord of the house would have had no objection, as far as his profit was concerned in the sale of a great quantity of beer and spirits, to have had such a an occurrence every day in the week, if possible.

The body lay still in the shell where it had been originally placed. After it had been viewed by the jury, and almost every one had remarked upon the extraordinary fresh appearance it wore, they proceeded at once to the inquiry, and the first witness who appeared was Mr. Leek, who deposed to have been in company with some gentlemen viewing Anderbury House, and to have found the body in one of the ice-wells of that establishment.

This evidence was corroborated by that of Davis, who had so unexpectedly jumped into the well, without being aware that it contained already so disagreeable a visitor as it did in the person of the murdered man, regarding the cause of whose death the present inquiry was instituted.

Then the landlord identified the body as that of a gentleman who had come to his house on horseback, and who had afterwards walked out with Baron Stolzmyer of Saltzburgh, who was one of his guests.

"Is that gentleman in attendance?" said the coroner.

"Yes, sir, he is; I told him about it, and he has kindly come forward to give all the evidence in his power concerning it."

There was a general expression of interest and curiosity when the baron stepped forward, attired in his magnificent coat, trimmed with fur, and tendered his evidence to the coroner, which, of course, was precisely the same as the statement he had made to the landlord of the house; for, as he had made up such a well connected story, he was not likely to prevaricate or to depart from it in the smallest particular.

He was listened to with breathless attention, and, when he had concluded, the coroner, with a preparatory hem! said to him,

"And you have reason to suppose, sir, that this person was out of his senses?"

"It seemed to me so; he talked wildly and incoherently, and in such a manner as to fully induce such a belief."

"You left him on the beach?"

"I did. I found when I got there that it was only a very small portion, indeed, of Anderbury House that was visible; and, although the moon shone brightly, I must confess I did not see, myself, any signs of deviation from the perpendicular; and, such being the case, I left the spot at once, because I could have no further motive in staying; and, moreover, it was not pleasant to be out at night with a man whom I thought was deranged. I regretted, after making this discovery, that I had come from home on such a fool's errand; but as, when one is going to invest a considerable sum of money in any enterprise, one is naturally anxious to know all about it, I went, little suspecting that the man was insane."

"Did you see him after that?"

"Certainly not, until to-day, when I recognised in the body that has been exhibited to me the same individual."

"Gentlemen," said the coroner to the jury, "it appears to me that this is a most mysterious affair; the deceased person has a wound in his throat, which, I have no doubt, you will hear from a medical witness has been the cause



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of death; and the most singular part of the affair is, how, if he inflicted it upon himself, he has managed to dispose of the weapon with which he did the deed."

"The last person seen in his company," said one of the jury, "was the baron, and I think he is bound to give some better explanation of the affair."

"I am yet to discover," said the baron, "that the last person who acknowledges to having been in the company of a man afterwards murdered, must, of necessity, be the murderer?"

"Yes; but how do you account, sir, for there being no weapon found by which the man could have done the deed himself?"

"I don't account for it at all — how do you?"

"This is irregular," said the coroner; "call the next witness."

This was a medical man, who briefly stated that he had seen the deceased, and that the wound in his throat was amply sufficient to account for his death; that it was inflicted with a sharp instrument having an edge on each side.

This, then, seemed to conclude the case, and the coroner remarked, —

"Gentlemen of the jury, — I think this is one of those peculiar cases in which an open verdict is necessary, or else an adjournment without date, so that the matter can be resumed at any time, if fresh evidence can be procured concerning it. There is no one accused of the offence, although it appears to me impossible that the unhappy man could have committed the act himself. We have no reason to throw the least shade of suspicion or doubt upon the evidence of the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh; for as far as we know anything of the matter, the murdered man may have been in the company of a dozen people after the baron left him."

A desultory conversation ensued, which ended in an adjournment of the inquest, without any future day being mentioned for its re-assembling, and so the Baron Stolmuyer entirely escaped from what might have been a very serious affair to him.

It did not, however, appear to shake him in his resolution of taking Anderbury-on-the-Mount, although Mr. Leek very much feared it would; but he announced to that gentleman his intention fully of doing so, and told him to get the necessary papers drawn up forthwith.

"I hope," he said, "within a few weeks' time to be fairly installed in that mansion, and then I will trouble you, Mr. Leek, to give me a list of the names of all the best families in the neighbourhood; for I intend giving an entertainment on a grand scale in the mansion and grounds."

"Sir," said Mr. Leek, "I shall, with the greatest pleasure, attend upon you in every possible way in this affair. This is a very excellent neighbourhood, and you will have no difficulty, I assure you, sir, in getting together an extremely capital and creditable assemblage of persons. There could not be a better plan devised for at once introducing all the people who are worth knowing, to you."

"I thank you," said the baron; "I think the place will suit me well; and, as the Baroness Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh is dead, I have some idea of marrying again; and therefore it becomes necessary and desirable that I should be well acquainted with the surrounding families of distinction in this neighbourhood."

This was a hint not at all likely to be thrown away upon Mr. Leek, who was the grand gossip-monger of the place, and he treasured it up in order to see if he could not make something of it which would be advantageous to himself.

He knew quite enough of the select and fashionable families in that neighbourhood, to be fully aware that neither the baron's age nor his ugliness would be any bar to his forming a matrimonial alliance.

"There is not one of them," he said to himself, "who would not marry the very devil himself and be called the Countess Lucifer, or any name of the kind, always provided there was plenty of money; and that the baron has without doubt, so it is equally without doubt he may pick and choose where he pleases."

This was quite correct of Mr. Leek, and showed his great knowledge of human nature; and we entertain with him a candid opinion, that if the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh had been ten times as ugly as he was, and Heaven knows that was needless, he might pick and choose a wife almost when he pleased.

This is a general rule; and as, of course, to all general rules there are exceptions, this one cannot be supposed to be free from them. Under all circumstances, and in all classes of society, there are single-minded beings who consult the pure dictates of their own hearts, and who, disdaining those things which make up the amount of the ambition of meaner spirits, stand aloof as bright and memorable examples to the rest of human nature.

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Such a being was Flora Bannerworth. She would never have been found to sacrifice herself to the fancied advantages of wealth and station, but would have given her heart and hand to the true object of her affection, although a sovereign prince had made the endeavour to wean her from it.

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## Chapter XCVII. THE ADMIRAL'S PREPARATIONS, AND THE VISIT TO DEARBROOK.

It was quite finally settled between the admiral and the Bannerworths that he was to have the whole conducting of the marriage business, and he even succeeded in getting a concession from Flora Bannerworth, that he might invite more than twenty guests as had at first been stipulated. Indeed, she told him that he might ask forty if he pleased.

The admiral had asked for this enlargement of his powers, because he had received from the lawyer such a satisfactory list of people who were eligible to be invited, that he found it extremely difficult to draw any invidious distinction; and, accordingly, he felt fully inclined, as far as he was concerned, to invite them all, which was a piece of liberality he scarcely expected Flora would accede to.

When, however, he got leave to double the number, he considered that he was all right, and he said to Jack Pringle, to whom, as usual, he had got completely reconciled, --

"I say, Jack, my boy, we'll have the whole ship's crew, and no mistake; for, at a wedding, the more the merrier, you know."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Jack, "that's true. I have not been married more than a dozen times myself, at the outside, and I always took care to have lots of fun."

"A dozen times, Jack! you don't mean that?"

"I rather think I do. You know I was married at different ports of India twice; and then wasn't I married in Jamaky; and then after that wasn't I married in the South Seas, in one of the Friendly Islands?"

"A deuced deal too friendly, I should say. Why, confound you, Jack, you must have the impudence of the very devil."

"Yes, I believe ye I have. I look upon it that it's our impudence has got us on in the world."

"How dare you say our, you vagabond? But, however, I won't quarrel with you now, at any rate, for I expect you to dance a hornpipe at the wedding. But mind me now, Jack, I am serious -- I won't have any drunkenness."

"Well, it's rather a hard thing that a fellow can't get drunk at a wedding; but I suppose I must put up with that deadly injury, and do the best I can. And now, admiral, as you have looked over that little affair of mine, in going to the lawyer's when you didn't want me, I'll make you a voluntary promise, and that is, that I'll only take two bottles all the day long."

"Two bottles of what?"

"Oh, rum, of course."

"Well, that's moderate; for as I have known you, I think, take about five, of course I can't very well say anything to two; so you may take that much, Jack, for I really think you won't be much the worse of it."

"The worse of it! I should think not, sir. It rather strikes me that two bottles of rum wouldn't hurt a new-born baby. It's just for all the world like milk, you know; it has no effect upon me; and as far as being fond of drink goes, I'd just as soon take pump water, if it had a different taste, and was a d -- d deal stronger."

"Well, well, Jack, that's a bargain, you know, so we need say nothing more about it."

"I suppose there will be a fiddle, and all that sort of thing?"

"Oh, don't doubt that there shall be lots of fun."

"Then I am your man. I'll show them a thing or two that will make them open their eyes a bit; and if so be as they want anything in the shape of a yarn, I'm the proper sort of individual to give it them, I rather think, and no mistake. I'll tell them how you ran away once, with a female savage after you, with a long thing like a skewer, that she called a spear, and how you called to all the ship's crew to come and help you, as if the very devil was at your heels."

Jack very prudently did not wait for an answer to this; for he was rather well aware that it was not the sort of thing that was exactly pleasing to the admiral, who was just upon the point, of course, of getting into one of his rages, which would have produced another quarrel, only, as a matter of course, to end in another reconciliation.

The old man, however, was too well pleased with the unlimited commission he had to do as he pleased regarding the marriage affair, to allow himself to be put much out of the way in the matter, and he bent all his

mind and energies towards the completion of that piece of business which he had in hand, and which was certainly the most interesting to him that he had ever been permitted to engage in.

Passing as he did almost the whole of his life upon the ocean, he had never married, and his affection for Charles Holland, who was the only relative he had in the world, was of that concentrated nature which is only to be found under such circumstances.

Charles's mother had always had a large portion of the admiral's regards, and when upon returning home once from a cruise of three years' duration he found that she was dead, and had left behind her an orphan child, he at once avowed his intention of filling the place of a parent to it, and that he had both in the spirit and the letter kept his word, we know that Charles Holland was always most ready to admit.

Perhaps the severest shock he ever experienced was when that letter purporting to be from Charles, but which was really the production of Marchdale and Varney, was produced, and which seemed at the first blush to imply a dishonourable breaking of his contract with Flora; and if anything could have increased his admiration of her, it certainly was the generous and noble manner in which she repudiated that attempt to injure Charles in her esteem, and at once declared her belief that the letter was a forged document.

We may easily imagine, then, from these preceding circumstances, that the marriage of Charles with one whom he so entirely approved of was one of the most gratifying affairs in the old man's life, and that he viewed it with an extraordinary interest.

As we have before stated, he got possession for a month of the house on which he had fixed his fancy, and an extremely handsome and commodious place it was.

It was arranged that after they had remained there for some time they should all move off to Dearbrook together, and as it was only in early infancy that the Bannerworths had seen that estate, they purposed paying it a visit before the marriage ceremony took place.

This was an idea of the old admiral's, for he said truly enough, "You can't possibly know what state it is in till you go there, and it may be necessary, for all we know, to do a great deal to it before it is fit for occupation."

Apart from this consideration, too, it seemed likely enough that somebody might be in it; for of late it had changed hands, and, for all they knew, the Bannerworth family might have to institute a suit at law for its recovery.

The distance was sufficient to make it a whole day's journey; but it was a very pleasant one, for they went in a travelling carriage, replete with every accommodation, and the road passed through one of the most fertile and picturesque counties of England, being interspersed with hill and dale most charmingly, and reminding the younger branches of the Bannerworths of some of those delightful continental excursions which they once had the means of making, but which, for a long time, they had not had an opportunity of enjoying.

It was towards the close of a day of great beauty, for the season, that they reached the village of Dearbrook, close to where the estate was situated, and put up at the principal inn, to which they were directed.

The circumstances under which the Dearbrook property had been left for a long time had been such, that there was likely to be some difficulty concerning it.

In fact, it had been used by Marmaduke Bannerworth as a kind of security from time to time for his gambling debts, so it was probable that hardly any one had had it long enough to trouble himself about rentals.

"If we find any one," said Henry Bannerworth, "in possession, I shall not trouble them to pay anything for the use of the house they have had, provided they quietly give up possession, and leave the place in a decent state."

"Oh, that of course they will do," said Charles Holland, "and be too glad to escape arrears of rent; but it would be no bad thing to ask the landlord of this house what is the state of the property; no doubt he can not only let us know whether it be tenanted or not, but, if so, what sort of people they are who occupy it."

This suggestion was agreed to, and when the landlord was summoned, and the question put, he said, —

"Oh, yes, I know the Dearbrook estate quite well; it's a very handsome little property, and is at present occupied by a Mr. Jeremiah Shepherd, a Quaker — a very worthy gentleman indeed, I believe; but I suppose all Quakers are worthy people, because, you see, sir, they wear broad brimmed hats and no collars to their coats."

"An excellent reason," said the admiral; "but I had a friend who did know something about Quakers, and he used to say that they had got such a reputation for honesty that they could afford to be rogues for the rest of their existence."

"Well, well," said Henry, "we can but call upon him. Do you think that this would be a reasonable hour?"

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"Oh, yes, sir," said the landlord; "he is sure to be at home at this hour if you have any business to transact with Mr. Shepherd. He is a very respectable man, sir, and as it is his own property that he lives upon, he is quite a gentleman, and never wears anything but drab breeches and gaiters."

Without waiting to enter into any further conversation with the landlord, who had such extraordinary reasons for his opinions, Henry, and Charles, and the admiral, leaving the rest of the party at the inn, proceeded to Dearbrook Lodge, as it was called, and found as they approached it that it exceeded in appearance their warmest anticipations.

It was a substantial red brick house, of the Tudor style of architecture, and had that air of dignified and quite repose about it which a magnificent lawn, of the greenest possible turf, in the front always gives to a country mansion.

The grounds, too, seemed to be extensive, and, to take it for all in all, the Bannerworth family had every reason to be well pleased with this first view that they got of their acquired property.

"You will have some trouble," said the admiral, "with the Quaker, you may depend. They are a race that cry hold fast to anything in the shape of pounds, shillings, and pence, and are not very easy to be dealt with."

"Oh, the man will not be so absurd, I should think," said Charles. "It can be proved that the estate was in the Bannerworth family for many years, and your possession, Henry, of the title deeds will set the question at rest. But see what a stately looking servant is coming in answer to the ring which I have just given to the bell."

A footman, most certainly having all the appearance of what is so frequently advertised for as "a serious man servant," advanced to the gate, and, in answer to the inquiry if Mr. Shepherd was within, he said, --

"Yes, truly is he; but he liketh not to be disturbed, for he is at prayers -- that is to say, at dinner, and is not accustomed to be disturbed thereat."

"I regret that we must disturb him," said Henry, "for our business happens to be important, and we must positively see him."

Upon this remonstrance the servant unlocked the gate, and conducted them up a path by the side of the lawn which led to the house, and the more they saw of it the more pleased they were with the many natural beauties with which it abounded, and Henry whispered to Charles, --

"I am quite sure that Flora will be delighted with this place, for, if I know anything of her taste, it will just suit it agreeably and comfortably, and I do sincerely hope that we shall be able to get possession without the disagreeable necessity of a law suit."

They were ushered into a handsome apartment, and then told that Mr. Shepherd would be with them very shortly; and they were not sorry to have a little leisure for studying the place before its reputed owner made his appearance.

"I suppose," said Henry, "the best way will be at once to state that I am the owner of the place, and upon what conditions I am willing to forego any claim that I might otherwise succeed in setting up for arrears of rental during the time that he has been here."

"Oh, yes," said Charles; "you cannot be too explicit; but hush! here he comes, and you will soon know what sort of an individual you have to deal with in this matter."

At this moment, the door opened, and Mr. Shepherd, the present ostensible possessor of the Dearbrook estate, and whose appearance spoke to the truth of the landlord's word, made his appearance. But as what he said was sufficiently important to deserve a new chapter, we shall oblige him with one.

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## Chapter XCVIII. THE INTERVIEW WITH THE QUAKER AT DEARBROOK.

The Quaker was a man of about middle age, and was duly attired in the garb of the particular sect to which he belonged. There was about his countenance all that affectation of calmness and abandonment of worldly thoughts and desires which is mistaken by so many people for the reality of self-denial, when, really, those who know this sect well, are perfectly aware that there is not a more money-loving, grasping people on the face of the earth.

After gravely motioning his visitors to be seated, Mr. Shepherd cast his eyes up to the ceiling, as if he were muttering some prayer, and then he said, —

"Verily, may I ask to what I am to attribute this visit from individuals who, in this vale of unblestness, are unknown to me."

"Certainly, sir," said Henry; "you are entitled, of course, at once, to such an explanation of us. I have called upon you because I am the proprietor of this estate, to know how it is that you became in possession of it, and under what pretence you hold that possession?"

Mr. Shepherd slightly changed colour, and staggered back a pace or two before he said, —

"The property is mine, but I naturally decline to produce my title to any body who may ask for it. Thou mayest go, now; behind, thee is the door."

"Mr. Shepherd," said Henry, "I am fully in a conditon, as to means and evidence both, to prove my title to the estate, and an action of ejectment will soon force you from it; but I am unwilling, under any circumstances, to do what I fully may do if anything short of that will answer my purpose. I therefore give you fair notice, that if, upon my convincing you that I am the owner of the estate, you go out quietly within fourteen days, I will make no inquiry as to how long you have been here, and will say nothing whatever upon the subject of rental owing to me on account of such occupation."

"I defy thee, friend," said the Quaker; "and if thou givest me any trouble I shall put thee in Chancery, from whence thou wilt not get out for the term of thy natural life; so I give thee due notice, and thou mayest please thyself in the transaction; and again I tell thee the door is exactly behind thee, out of which I beg to request thou shouldest at once walk."

"I tell you what, Mr. Quaker," said the admiral, who had with difficulty restrained himself thus far, "I look upon you as one of the greatest humbugs ever I came across, and that's saying a great deal, for in my time I have come across some thumpers; and if we don't make you smart for this confounded obstinancy, you wolf in sheep's clothing, we will know the reason why. If it costs me a thousand pounds I will make you suffer for it."

"Thou mayest be damned, friend," said the Quaker; "possession is a great number of points of the law, and, as I have it, I mean to keep it. I have a friend who is in the law, and who will put thee as comfortably in Chancery, and with as little expense to me as possible. This is a very charming estate, and I have not the slightest intention of giving it up."

"But you must," said Charles, "give it up to the right owner. How can you be so foolish as to run yourself to legal expenses for nothing?"

"Teach thy grandmother, young man, to suck eggs," said the Quaker. "I wish thee all a remarkably good day, and thou mayest all return from whence thou camest, and hang thyself, if thou pleasest, for all I care; and having made up my mind to live and die on this very pleasant property. I shall have to put thee all into Chancery."

"Why, you canting thief!" said the admiral.

"Thou mayest be damned," said the Quaker. "In speaking so to thee, I use the language which I am perfectly well aware thou wilt best understand; so I say unto thee again, thou mayest be damned. Obediah, show these sinners off the premises; and, should they refuse to go with that quickness that shall seem to be fitting and proper, thou mayest urge them on with divers kicks on their hinder persons, and thou mayest likewise call to thy aid, Towzer, the large dog, to bite singularly great mouthfuls out of them."

The Quaker turned, and was walking in a very stately manner out of the room, when the admiral stepped forward, and exhilarated his movements with such a kick, that away he went as if he had been shot out of a gun.

"There, friend," said the admiral, "since you seem found of kicking, I think that is a very good beginning. It strikes me you didn't know who you had to deal with; and now, Mr. Obediah, it's your turn, and we'll manage

Towzer when we get outside."

"I think thee all the same, friend," said Obediah, "but would rather be excused."

"Perhaps you would like your nose pulled instead, then?"

"No, friend, it is quite long enough already; and I shall take myself off to the lower regions of these premises forthwith."

So saying, Obediah rushed from the room with great precipitancy, leaving, most ceratinly, the admiral and his party masters of the field; and although both Henry and Charles both disapproved of the assault which the admiral had committed, they could not interfere for laughing, and, as they left the house, which they did now of their own accord, Charles said, —

"Uncle, you may depend you will be pulled up to the quarter session."

"Damn the quarter session!" said the admiral. "Do you think I was going to sit still, quietly, while that vagabond promised to kick me; but, as it is, it's all up with coming to Dearbrook to live for one while to come; for, if he is really as good as his word, and puts the matter into Chancery, there's an end of it. I have heard it's like ducking in head foremost into a hollow tree, with a wasp's nest at the bottom of it; you may kick, but I'll be damned if you can get out."

"Well," said Henry, "I believe that's rather an apt illustration; but we must do the best we can in such a case, and, in the meantime, seek out some other place to reside in. Your friend, the little lawyer in the town, shall have the case to conduct for us, and perhaps, after all, we shall defeat the Quaker sooner than you imagine."

"I long to see the day come," said the admiral, "when that fellow will have to troop out of the place; for, in all my life, I never did know such confounded impudence as he treated us with."

"Never mind, never mind," said Charles; "the time must come, of course, when this pleasant estate, to which we have taken such a fancy, will be ours; and, until then, we shall have no difficulty whatever in finding some sweet verdant spot, full of exquisite and natural beauties, which we can make a home of well and easily, caring nothing for being a short time only kept from possession of that which, of right, shall, in a short time, belong to us; and there is one thing that I am rejoiced at, which is, that Flora has not seen this place; so that she can have no regret about it, because she don't know of its existence farther than by name, and it can hold no place in her imagination which could make it a subject matter of regret."

When they reached the inn, they informed Mrs. Bannerworth and Flora of the ill success of their enterprise, and of the obstinacy of the tenant of the house; and on that evening they had a good laugh with each other about the little scene that had occurred between the admiral and the Quaker; so that, upon the whole, perhaps, they were quite as happy — for people can but laugh and be merry — as if they had at once got possession of the Dearbrook estate without any trouble or difficulty whatever.

They determind upon staying there for that night, although they might have got fresh horses and gone back, if it had pleased them so to do; but there was much to tempt them in the romantic scenery, around which they took a stroll, when it was lit up by the sweet moonlight, and everything came out in silvery relief, looking so beautiful and serene, so pensively quiet and so admirable, that it was calculated to draw the mind entirely from all thought of earthly matters, and to completely rid them of even the shadow of an annoyance connected with that Dearbrook property which was so wrongfully detained from them.

"It is at such seasons as this," said Flora, "that contentment steals into the heart, and we really feel with how little we should be satisfied, provided it be sufficient to insure those ordinary comforts of existence which we all look for."

"It is, indeed," said Charles; "and you and I, Flora, would not repine if our lot had been much more humble than it is, provided Heaven had left us youth and love."

"Those, indeed," said Henry, "are dear possessions."

"Well, then," remarked the admiral, "you have got youth on your side, and I once knew a worse looking fellow than even you are; so why don't you fall in love with somebody at once?"

"Don't make so sure, uncle," said Flora archly, "that he has not."

The old admiral laughed — for he liked Flora to call him uncle, and said, —

"You shall tell me all about it, Flora, some day when we are alone; but not now, while these chaps are listening to every word we utter."

"I will," said Flora; "it's a grand secret of Henry's, which I am determind to tell."

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"That's very unkind of you," said Henry, "to say the least of it."

"Not at all. If you had trusted me, Henry, it would be quite another thing; but as I found it out from my own natural sagacity, I cannot see that I am bound in the slightest to bestow upon you any consolation on account of it, or to shew you any mercy on the subject."

"And she hopes," said Charles, "that that will be a lesson to you to tell her upon another occasion everything whatever, without the slightest stint or hindrance."

"I stand convicted," said Henry; "and my only consolation is, that I don't mind a straw the admiral knowing all about it, and I meant to tell him myself, as a matter of course."

"Did you?" said the admiral; "that's a very good attempt to get out of it; but it won't answer exactly, Henry, with those who know better; so say no more."

In such light and pleasant conversation they passed some time, until the chill night air, grateful and pleasant as it was to the senses, made them think it prudent to retire to the inn again.

After they had partaken of the evening meal, and Flora and Mrs. Bannerworth had retired to rest, the gentlemen sat up, at the express desire of the admiral, to talk over the affair upon which they were all in common so deeply interested.

A general feeling of anxiety evidently pervaded all their minds to ascertain something of the whereabouts or the fate of Varney, who had so very mysteriously taken himself off at a time when they least of all expected he would have executed such a manoeuvre.

"You all see," said the admiral, "that what is bred in the bone, as I told you, will never be out of the flesh; and this vampyre fellow could not possibly be quiet, you see, for long, but he must be at his old tricks."

"I do not know," said Charles Holland, "but I am rather inclined to think that he has somehow become aware that he had become rather a trouble to us, and so his pride, of which I think we have had evidence enough that he has a large share of, took the alarm; and he went off as quick as he could."

"It may be so," said Henry; "and, of course, in the absence of anything to the contrary, I feel inclined to give even Varney, the Vampyre, credit for as much purity of motive as I can."

"That's all very well, in its way," said the admiral; "but you must acknowledge that he did not leave in the most polite manner in the world; and then I, for one, cannot exactly approve of his jumping upon Dr. Chillingworth's back, from off a garden wall, as a cat would upon a mouse."

"Be liberal, uncle," said Charles, "and recollect that we are not quite sure it was Varney, for the doctor declines to be positive upon the subject, and he ought to know."

"Stuff," said the admiral; "the doctor knows well enough; but he is like the man that threatened to kick the other for laughing at his wife — he said he was sure he had done it, but if he had been d — d sure, he would have kicked him into the middle of next week."

"Certainly," said Charles, "the doctor seems quite clearly of opinion, that whoever committed that assault upon him, did so with a full knowledge of the worth of the picture, which he believes contained within its extra lining, bank notes to a large amount."

"And which," said Henry, "after all, is but a supposition, and Varney, after such an attempt to possess himself of such a treasure, if it was he that made it, may be actually now a houseless wanderer; but I consider that such has been the notoriety of his proceedings, that if he now attempts any vampyre tricks, he very soon will be discovered, and we shall hear of him."

"From his own account," said Charles Holland, "he has not been the most scrupulous person in the world with regard to the means by which he has, from time to time, recruited an exhausted exchequer; and we can easily imagine that this vampyre business of his would so terrify and paralyse people, that he would have little difficulty in robbing a house under such circumstances."

"You may depend," added Charles, "that he has done one of two things. He has either commenced a much more reckless career than ever he has yet attempted, or he has gone away completely into obscurity, and will never be heard of again. I sincerely myself hope that the latter is the case, for it will be better for him, and better for everybody connected with him."

"Hang the fellow," said the admiral; "I should not like him to starve, although he has given us so much trouble; and I hope that if anything very queer happens to him, he will not scruple to let us know, and he shall not positively want. But come, is it to be another tumbler a-piece, or to bed?"



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Bed was voted, for such they knew was the admiral's wish, or he never would have mentioned the alternative; and in the course of another half hour the whole of these persons, in whose fate we profess to have so profound an interest, were wrapped in repose.

We will now turn to a consideration of what this singular and mysterious Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh was about, for that he has some ulterior objects in view, which, by no means, at present, shew themselves, we cannot doubt; and, likewise, there can be no question but that very shortly some of his views and projects will develop themselves.

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## Chapter XCIX. THE BARON BECOMES MASTER OF ANDERBURY-ON-THE-MOUNT, AND BEGINS TO CONGRATULATE HIMSELF. -- THE DREAM.

It was a wonderful relief to Mr. Leek to find that the fact of a dead body having been found in the subterranean passage of Anderbury House, was really no bar to the baron possessing himself of those premises.

Mr. Leek could not disguise from himself that, to many persons, it would have been a serious impediment, and the very mystery in which that affair was still wrapped up, would have made the impediment greater, because people don't so much think of a murder, which is all found out, and for which the perpetrator suffers; but a murdered body found, and yet no murderer, keeps public curiosity upon the stretch, and is almost certain destruction to house property.

But now, whether the baron bought Anderbury House, or rented it, was much the same to Mr. Leek; for, in the former case, he got his per centage all at once; and, in the latter, acting as agent, he got more, but he got it by degrees.

He waited, therefore, with some degree of feverish impatience to know which way that illustrious individual would make up his mind; and when he said, at length, in his strange calm way, that he would give 10,000 pounds for Anderbury-on-the-Mount, Mr. Leek wrote off, in violent haste, to the owner, advising him to accept the same without delay; and, as the owner never intended again to set foot in Anderbury House, and, moreover, wanted money, he wrote back again in as violent haste that he would take 10,000 pounds most certainly, and wished the transaction concluded as quickly as it very well could be, promising Mr. Leek, which was a very gratifying thing to that gentleman, not on account of the money, as he himself said, "Oh, dear, no!" but as a matter of feeling, a handsome bonus, in addition to his per centage, if he quickly got the matter completed.

Armed with this authority, the agent showed an amount of generalship which must, if he had been placed in the situation of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington, have won for him all the continental battles.

He went at once to the baron, and told him that he had received a letter from the owner of Anderbury-on-the-Mount, asking 10,500 pounds for the estate, but leaving it at his, Mr. Leek's option to take 10,000 pounds if he chose.

"Now, my lord baron," said Mr. Leek, "business is business, and I may as well put 250 pounds in my pocket, and your lordship put 250 pounds in yours, as not."

"That is to say," said the baron, "that you are willing to sell your employer's interest to me."

"Oh, why, it isn't exactly that, you know, my lord; only you know, in these transactions, everybody does the best he can for himself; and I am sure I should be very sorry if you thought that -- that -- "

"Mr. Leek," interrupted the baron, "you need have no delicacy with me, whatever. I believe you to be as great a rogue as ever stepped; so you need make no excuses, only, of course, you cannot expect me to assist you in your villany -- that is quite out of the question; so you will understand that I decline giving more than the 10,000 pounds for Anderbury House; and, if that is not accepted in one hour from this time, I will not have it at all."

"It's accepted now at once," groaned Mr. Leek, who found that the baron was too many for him. "It's accepted at once, my lord; and I beg that you will bury the past in what do you call it -- oblivion."

"Very good," said the baron. "I presume, if I give you a check for a thousand pounds as a deposit, I may have possession at once, while the deeds are preparing."

"Certainly, my lord baron; oh! certainly."

The baron then gave Mr. Leek, and took his acknowledgment for the same, a check for a thousand pounds on one of the most eminent banking-houses in London; and in two hours from that time, such was the celerity and precision of his movements, he took possession of Anderbury House, and engaged the man and woman who had been minding it to be his temporary servants, until he could get up an establishment suitable to his rank, and the place he inhabited.

It would have been a strange sight to Mr. Leek, and would have made him open his eyes a little with wonder, if he could have seen the baron traversing the apartments of Anderbury House alone.

"And am I at last settled?" he said to himself, as he stood in a large saloon. "Am I at last settled in a home

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such as I can really call my own? — and shall I not be hunted from it by my enemies? Let me consider — I will be quick in giving such an entertainment here, that it shall be talked of for many a day to come. It shall be such an entertainment as shall present to me all of youth, beauty, rank, and wealth, that can be found in the neighbourhood; and out of them I will choose some one who shall be the baroness, and, for a time, pace the stately halls as their mistress — for a time; yes, I have said only for a time. I wonder if there be a family vault to this property, because, if there be, I may want to use it."

In this purchase of Anderbury on-the-Mount, the ancient furniture of the place had been all included; so that, in truth, the baron had but to walk in and to find himself, if he could make himself so, quite at home.

A costly bed-chamber was prepared for him; the bed-linen and furniture of which was sent by Mr. Leek from his own house; and, no doubt, he fully intended to be well paid for the same.

The baron, after about two hours spent in the examination of his house, sat down in one of the principal apartments, and partook of a very slight repast; and after that, folding his arms upon his bosom, he seemed to give himself up to thought entirely; and from the smile that occasionally showed itself on his remarkable physiognomy, it would seem that those thoughts of his were of a pleasant and felicitous character.

Now and then, too, from a few and unsettled words that fell from his lips, it would seem as if he were greatly felicitating himself upon something which he had achieved that was of a character to give him intense satisfaction.

Perhaps it was the death of this singular man who called upon him, that gave him so much pleasure; and we are inclined to think that was the case, for, after the commission of a murder such as that, one of two feelings were pretty sure to possess him.

Remorse might take possession of him, and he might suffer much mental anguish in consequence of the deed; or the object which he achieved by that death might be of such a nature as to become quite a subject of congratulation, so as, whenever, he thought upon it, to give him the pleasantest and most delightful feelings.

It looked very much as if this was the case as regarded the baron, because it was as clear and evident as the sun at noon day, that he had felt no degree of remorse or regret for that deed; and that, as regards his conscience, certainly the murder he had committed sat as easy upon it as anything well could.

The evening was now drawing on, and the large apartments of the ancient house began to be enveloped in gloom; but, unlike the generality of persons who have committed crimes, and whose consciences are charged with injustice, the gathering gloom of night seemed to have no terror whatever for the Baron Stelmuyer.

But at length, with something of a sense of weariness, he rose and rang for attendance, desiring to be shown to the bedchamber which had been prepared for his reception.

It was a strange thing; but it seemed to be customary with him not to undress when he retired to rest; but, as he had done at the hotel, he only took off a portion of his apparel, and then cast himself upon the bed, and, in a few moments, it seemed as if a deep repose crept over him.

We say seemed; but, in reality, it was a disturbed and anxious sleep which the baron had; and soon he began to toss his arms to and fro restlessly, and to utter deep groans, indicative of mental anguish.

Occasionally, likewise, a muttered word or two, scarcely articulately pronounced, would come from his lips, such as — "Save me, save me! Not yet, not yet — my doom — no — no — the moonlight — the moonlight — kill him — strike him down!"

This state of mind continued for a considerable time, until with a shrill cry he sprung to his feet, and stood in an attitude of horror, trembling in every limb, and exhibiting a most horrible and frightful picture of mental distress.

Then there came a loud knocking at his chamber-door, and the voice of the man Davis, who had been alarmed at the strange shriek that had come from the baron's lips fell upon his ears. The sound of any human voice, at such a time, was like music to him.

"Are you ill, sir?" cried Davis; "are you ill?"

"No — no — it was nothing but a dream — only a dream;" and then he added to himself, "but it was a dream of such absolute horror, that I shall dread to close my eyes in rest again, lest once more so fearful a vision should greet me. It was a dream of such frightful significance, that it will live in my remembrance like a reality, and be dreamed of again as such."

He sat down, and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow; then rising, he walked with unsteady steps

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towards the window, and throwing aside the massive curtain which shut out the night without by making a still deeper night within, a flood of beautiful and tender moonlight fell into the apartment.

As the cold rays fell upon his face, he breathed more freely, and seemed more to revive beneath their influence than as if he had suddenly found the bright sunshine beaming upon him in all the refulgence of its mid-day glory.

"I am better now," he muttered; "I am much better now. What a fearful vision that was which came across my heated fancy! Welcome, welcome, beautiful moonbeams, welcome; for deep in my very heart I feel your cheering influence now."

The violent trembling which had seized him passed away, and once more he resumed his wonted composure and calm hideousness of expression, if we may be allowed the word.

Now, for some time, he sat in silence, and then, in a low deep tone, he spoke.

"It was a strange dream! A dream made up of strange fancies and strange impulses! I thought that I stood in a vaulted chamber, and that all around me depicted nothing but gloom and desolation; but, as I there stood, the chamber filled with hideous forms, coming from where I knew not, but still crowding, crowding in, until the shadow of the merest shade could not have found a place.

"And so they crushed me into the smallest possible space; and there I stood, with a hundred grinning faces close around me, and in such a mad paroxysm of terror, that I would have given the world for escape from that dreadful thralldom.

"But they giped at me, filling my ears with shrieking noises, and then at once there was a proposition -- a proposition yelled out with shrieking vehemence by every voice. It was, to place me in the tombs even as I was, a living man.

"'Heap mountains of earth upon him,' cried a voice. 'Endow him with the rare gift of immortality, and then let him lie buried for thousands of years yet to come.'

"They seized upon me, those gaunt and terrific forms, and deep into the bowels of the earth I was hurried -- a depth beyond all calculation; and when I thought my fate was sealed, a change came over me, and I found myself in one of the ice-wells of this mansion, cold and death-like, while a crowd of eager, curious faces, illumined by the light of torches, gazed down upon me, but no one spoke; and then they began to cast large fragments of the rocky cliff upon me.

"I called for aid, and asked for death; but still they proceeded to fill up the pit, while I lay, incapable of anything but agonised thought, at the bottom of it.

"Then it was, I presume, that in my despair I shook off that fearful slumber and awakened."

He was silent, and seemed again much to rejoice in the moonbeams, as they fell upon his face; and, after a time, in order, it would appear, that he might feel more of their influence, he opened the window, and stepped out upon a balcony which was immediately in front of it.

The view that he now had was a beautiful one in the extreme, spreading far over, in one direction, a beautiful tract of highly cultivated country; and on the other, as far as the eye could reach, upon the boundless ocean, on which the moonbeams fell with such beauty and power, that, still and placid as the waters were on that particular night, the sea looked like a sheet of radiant silver, broken into gentle irregularities.

It was a scene upon which a poet or a painter -- but painters should all be poets, although poets may not be painters -- might gaze with rapture and delight.

Not the slightest breath of air stirred the gentlest leaf upon a forest tree; but such a calmness and such a serenity reigned over all things, that one might imagine oneself looking upon some new and beautiful world, the harmony of which had never yet been disturbed by the jarring sounds of elemental strife.

Strange thoughts and feelings seemed to come over the baron, as he then looked upon that mild and placid scene without, and, after a time, he spoke, saying, --

"And what do I struggle for now?" What is it now but mere existence that is the end and aim of all these anxious thoughts and feelings? Nothing more, nothing more, but the mere liberty to breathe and to be anxious -- the capacity to endure pain. That is what I live for -- nothing else -- nothing else in the wide world; for when and how can I expect that calm contentment of the soul which man takes such pains to cast from him, but which I know the full value of, can ever be mine?"

Once more he cast his eyes around him, upon the great extent of cultivated country, and although he felt he

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could call the most of it, that lay immediately beneath his observation, his own, it yet gave him but little gratification to do so, and probably he looked with about as much indifference upon his own possessions as any one possibly could.

"This is a new career," he said, "and something tells me that it is my last; so, while it continues, I will not shrink from it, but, on the contrary, enjoy it; and I will endeavour to lose the recollection of those stormy periods of my existence which have passed away in a complete round and whirl of what the world calls enjoyments and delights. I will spend large sums on brilliant entertainments, and this house, which they tell me has been so long deserted by everything in the shape of festivity and hilarity, shall once again ring with joyous laughter, and I will make an endeavour to forget what I am."

He evidently dreaded again to lie down to repose, for, after some time further spent in thought, and in the expression of the feelings that lay uppermost in his mind, he put on again that portion of his apparel which he had taken off.

"In this soft and pleasant moonlight," he said, "which is so grateful to my senses, I will walk in the gardens of this mansion; and, should a sense of weariness oppress me, I shall be able to find, no doubt, some pleasant spot where I can lie down to rest, and I shall not fear horrifying or anxious dreams when I can repose beneath the beams of the moon, which cool my fevered brow."

With a slow and stately step he moved across the long and beautiful corridor from which his chamber opened, and then, descending the grand staircase, and in that house a grand staircase it really was, he made his way across the hall, and, undoing the fastening of a window which opened into a large and handsome conservatory, he passed through that again, and soon found himself in the extensive gardens of Anderbury.

Certainly, if there be any sight more chaste and beautiful than another, it is a highly-cultivated and well-wooded garden by moonlight, and we cannot but admire the taste of the Baron Stelmuyer in preferring it even to the stately bed-chamber he had so recently left, and which, notwithstanding all the advantages and beauties that art could bestow upon it, could never hope to rival, or even to come near, the natural beauties of that highly-cultivated piece of ground.

And there are some flowers, too, that give out their sweetest odours to the night air, and some again that unfold their choicest beauties only when the sun has set, and the cold moonbeams can but look down upon them.

When he got fairly into the garden, he found that there was a light, gentle breeze playing among the shorter shrubs and flowers, but that it reached not high enough to stir the leaves of the trees; but it is extremely doubtful if, completely taken up as this man was, no doubt, with worldly pursuits, he did not, after the first few moments, completely forget the world of natural beauties by which he was surrounded.

Folding his arms, he walked along the stately avenues with a solemn tread, and then, soon banishing from his mind those feelings of melancholy sadness which had oppressed him, he began evidently to indulge in dreams of felicity which, by the manner in which he spoke of them, were evidently but dreams.

"What can I desire or want more than I have?" he said, "Immense wealth — consequently, immense power. Golden opinions may always be purchased with gold, and what is there then really to hinder me pursuing to the full the career which I have marked out to myself? Surely I can surround myself with all that is young, and delightful, and beautiful? Can I not make these halls echo with such laughter, that surely it must awaken, even in my breast, joyous emotions? Then there is the wine cup; why should not that flow with rich abundance, gladdening the hearts of all, and adding even to genius, for the time, a new fire, and a more delightful expression of its thoughts and feelings?"

"And music, too: surely I can have abundance of music, to shed the witchery of its charms about me; and, with these inducements and allurements, I must and will succeed in banishing reflection, if I achieve no more."

As he now stood, and turned his eyes towards the east, he fancied he saw that the morning light was beginning faintly to show itself in the far off horizon.

"Another day is coming," he said, "and how much, how very much might be done in a day. I will, with the assistance of that man Leek, who, I can readily perceive, is quite willing to bow down to any idol, provided it be of gold, to commence the career of festivities that I have set my heart upon, and we shall soon see how striking an alteration will take place in the halls of Anderbury."

He entered a small summer-house which was built in the garden, and through the stained glass of which the moon shone with a variegated light, and there he sat down, and, after a time, tasted of that repose which, upon the

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bed of down that he had left, and surrounded by all the costly litter of his handsome bedchamber he had courted in vain.

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## Chapter C. MR. LEEK SPECULATES UPON THE BARON'S MATRIMONIAL INTENTIONS.

Mr. Leek pondered deeply over what the baron had said to him regarding his intention to take unto himself a wife, and viewed the resolution in all its bearing, with a view of discovering in what way such a thing could be turned to account, and whether that account might not be managed to his own advantage, which was a matter than Mr. Leek very often considered of paramount importance to himself, as being the pivot upon which things moved.

In Mr. Leek was certainly centered all those notions which usually arise from a desire to benefit onesself, and causing, as far as in him lay, all events to circle around him when they least appeared to do so.

"I must make this move of the baron's matrimonial alliance redound to my own advantage in some way or other, though I cannot precisely say in what way; but, if I have any hand in it, there must be a way, of that there can be no doubt; the only thing is to discover the way."

Mr. Leek set himself steadily to consider the subject in all its various bearings, determined he would not give up the chase until he had discovered what was to be done.

"I have it — I have it!" he muttered — "I have it; who can suggest anything better? I must have something to do in the suggestive style. I will persuade the baron to invite some one with whom I can have a few words in private. I will have some few words in the way of a bargain with them.

"Yes, yes; I will do my best to make somebody else's fortune; but at the same time they must do something for me in return. I must have a quid for my quo, as the parsons say. They cannot preach the gospel without they have a full stomach; for who can be pious and hungry at the same moment? I can't, my thoughts would be diverted; but the case holds good in every relation in life; even though whom I would benefit must benefit me, else I lose the natural desire I have to benefit them. This reciprocity is the motto I like to apply in cases of this kind, and very proper too."

Thus did Mr. Leek argue the matter within his own mind, and then, having thus made a resolution, his next step was to consider how he should put it in practice — how he should be able to realize his hopes, and give life and being to the suggestions of his inventive faculties, which were usually of a practical nature.

"Well, well," he muttered. "Let me see — it's difficult to say who's who now—a—days; but that must not cause me to lose a chance, and I think I can make pretty sure of my bargain. I think, if I undertake anything, I can go through it and not fail. I will have so much of security as will prove a bargain, and thus bring shame and disgrace upon them if they refuse to make good the conditions."

Thus Mr. Leek had an eye to the future, and the contingencies that might, under different circumstances, arise by any possibility.

Men like Mr. Leek do not often fail in their endeavours when they take a comprehensive view of any affair in which they might engage, and thus, by contemplating it in all its various phases, insure, as much as may be, success to all their schemes.

The next consideration that presented itself to Mr. Leek was the party. It was all very well to chalk out a plan of action — the mode in which a thing should be done; but it was another to adapt the tools to the occasion, and make them subservient to the purpose he had in view.

He did not choose his tools first, and then adapt his work; no, he saw his object and adapted the means to the end; and, in considering this part of the affair, he came to the following resolution.

"I think I know who to pitch upon," muttered Mr. Leek to himself, in a thoughtful tone. "Aye, she has several children, and is a widow, too. I know she is comparatively poor, and not too much troubled with compunction, or any absurd notions of delicacy upon this matter. I can tell her what I mean better than I could to a good many. Yes, I will go and visit her. I can come to an understanding at once."

This was satisfactory, and he arose to quit the house, and proceeded to the residence of Mrs. Williams, the lady whose accommodating disposition, and whose desire to see her daughters well provided for, would cause her to bargain about matters that many would think too serious and too much a matter of the affections to be permitted to be looked upon in the light of a mere affair of pounds, shillings, and pence.

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Now, Mrs. Williams was a lady who possessed something very much like a genteel independence, which is a very mysterious matter, and one which puzzled many people to divine. No one can understand what a genteel independence means.

It is one of those things that enables people to flit about, apparently comfortable in circumstances, with genteel clothes, and fingers on which nor marks of toil are observable, but which are white and soft, through often lean attenuated, in consequence of privations.

However, to return to Mrs. Williams. She was a widow, had several marriageable daughters, and was most anxious that they should be settled out in life, so that she might be sure of their future welfare. She was a sharp-sighted, clever woman in some respects; and, in others, she was as women usually are, which is not saying much.

The house the widow occupied was on a pattern of neatness and gentility, and ornamented with woman's work from one end to the other; the ladies were accomplished and well educated, and possessed of some personal charms; and they were not altogether unacquainted with the fact.

"Yes, yes," he muttered; "I will go to Mrs. Williams, and there we can come to an immediate understanding. Helen Williams will, I think, stand a very good chance indeed. I must go and have some conversation with her, and learn her sentiments before I break ground with him; else she may try something without my aid on her own account."

This was a laudable object, and was but, as he said, merely putting another person in the way of making a fortune, and putting something into his own pocket at the same time; which was doing two good things at once, charitable acts of the first class, because charity begins at home, and then it gives to one's neighbours when we have a surplus.

It did not take Mr. Leek very long to reach the widow's house; and it was not without some degree of confidence that he rang the bell for admission; and, when a servant appeared, he said, —

"Is Mrs. Williams at home?"

"Yes, sir, she is," answered the drudge; "do you want her?"

"I wish to see her, else I should not have come here," replied Mr. Leek. "Tell her Mr. Leek desires to speak with her."

"Very well, sir," said the girl, who left the hall, and then walked to the parlour, in which Mrs. Williams was seated, and overheard all that was said in the passage.

"Mr. Leek, ma'am," said the girl.

"Tell Mr. Leek to walk in," said the lady; and, in due form, Mr. Leek did walk in, introduced by the servant, who soon departed, leaving the two worthies in each other's presence.

"Good morning, Mrs. Williams."

"And good morning, Mr. Leek; this visit is unexpected, but valued. I am happy to see you. Will you be seated?"

"Thank you," said Leek, "I will. Unexpected incidents give rise to other unexpected incidents; so, you see, one event gives rise to another, and they follow each other in rapid succession."

"So they do," said Mrs. Williams.

"Well," said Mr. Leek, as if greatly relieved in mind, giving sound to something very much like a sigh, "and how so you find yourself this variable weather — eh, Mrs. Williams?"

"As well as can be expected, you know, at my time of life."

"Your time of life! Upon my word, you are a young woman; and, if I might hazard an opinion, one with no small share of charms; indeed, you are decidedly a beautiful woman, Mrs. Williams."

"Ah! Mr. Leek, I thought you were too much a man of business to be given to flattery; but I am afraid of you."

"There is no need, ma'am, I assure you. But how are your lovely daughters? — in the enjoyment of good health and spirits?"

"Yes, they are very well, I thank you, Mr. Leek — very well indeed; they usually are; they are considered to enjoy very good health."

"That is a good thing, I am sure — a very good thing, upon my word; they usually are well?"

"Yes; they have very little that ails them."

"It will be a blessing to you when they are comfortably provisioned off, under the protection of some one who



will seek their future happiness as he own," said Mr. Leek.

"Why, as to that," said Mrs. Williams, "I am not so anxious as many might be. I love to see my children round about me; I love to be in their company, and to know that no one can illuse them."

"That is very true," said Mr. Leek.

"And yet, I have, I must say, at times, a wish that I might, before I die, see them comfortably settled in life, and their future happiness secured."

"Certainly; it is quite a mother's wish that it should be so; that her children might enter the world, and that they might be provided for and subject to none of the disagreeable contingencies of life."

"Those are my feelings."

"I thought as much, Mrs. Williams. Have you heard of the Kershaws lately?" inquired Mr. Leek.

"Yes; I did hear there was a marriage in the family: pray is it true?"

"It is."

"A good marriage?"

"Yes, I believe a very good marriage; one in which a great deal of money is floating about from one to the other; indeed, I hear the gentleman is very rich."

"How did they become acquainted with such a man? I did not think they had any friends who could have brought them into contact with such a person."

"A friend," said Leek.

"Indeed! Why, as I said, I did not know they possessed such friends; but still, I suppose, there was some drawback — either low-bred contracted friendships, or some circumstances or other, that caused him to settle there."

"I believe not," said Leek.

"And what is he then?" inquired Mrs. Williams.

"Why, he was a stronger in those parts; but he had an excellent fortune, and was, according to all accounts, a very excellent match."

"How came they to find him out? who introduced them to him? I should like to know such a person."

"Why, some friend."

"How very disinterested of that friend," said Mrs. Williams.

"Not quite. It was a mutual understanding, I believe."

"How?"

"Why, thus; the friend wanted money, and the lady wanted a husband for her daughter."

"Well, I dare say she did, and I should have thought she was like to have waited long enough."

"And so she would; but an active man of business may have the means of pushing a family's fortune, if they will but make it worth his while; it was in this manner the Kershaws have made their fortune."

"And what did they do?"

"Why, they pushed a daughter into certain company into which she was introduced by the man of business; not by himself, but he managed it so that she was introduced, in a manner that made it appear as if they had no connection, and then he could exert himself in another manner, and so contrived to serve them by spreading favourable reports."

"And that's how Mary Kershaw got her husband, is it?" inquired Mrs. Williams, with a serious air.

"Yes, it is, indeed."

"How very immoral!"

"Eh?"

"How very immoral of a mother speculating in matrimonial matters for her daughter. How could she expect that she could procure happiness for her, when she uses such means?"

"What better could she use? You mistake the motive of the affair altogether, Mrs. Williams; give me leave to say you do."

"Indeed."

"Yes, decidedly. Thus, you don't attempt to buy a daughter's happiness; you only pay an agent; that is all. But it can be no crime that that agent is engaged upon matters connected with the happiness of your daughter, which is the great object of a mother's care."

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"Certainly — certainly; how plain all that is," said Mrs. Williams; "but I can't think it is exactly what I should do myself."

"Perhaps not. But I have exactly such a chance, at this very moment."

"You, Mr. Leek?"

"Yes, I. I have the means, I believe, of obtaining a good fortune for the daughter of a very respectable person, of the first respectability, and with natural advantages in her favour. Such a one, if it were worth my while to lose time in carrying such an affair — "

"Why, then, the matter looks a little different to what it did, and certainly who could object to do what was just and right?"

"Exactly. Now, if you were desirous of seeing your daughter Helen, for instance, comfortably provided for, what would you give — making it a suppositious case — what would you give to see your daughter happy and comfortable for life, with a good home over her head?"

"A good deal."

"What?"

"I cannot say; but, of course, that would depend much upon the value of such a prize; but I would not hesitate at a trifle in such a matter as that, come what may."

"Well — well, that is really the best way to consider the affair in all its various branches; you become more satisfied in the end. Now, do you really think you would be able to tolerate such an attempt to benefit yourself and daughter?"

"I do."

"Will you enter into particulars?"

"Yes, Mr. Leek; whenever you please. I am willing to attend to your proposal, and will be bound to anything I may say; for, in matters of this kind, I must consider anything one may say or undertake, as a debt of honour."

"Exactly. But what we agree to now we must put in black and white, because, by-and-bye, we may not think of it so well as we should when we see it drawn up before one."

"Agreed. But what of this person?"

"Why, I think, if we were to agree, you would find this gentleman very rich and munificent, and living in a princely style; he is, in fact, a man of rank — of title, in fact."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, it is, I assure you, because I know him, and have had business matters to do with him; and, though a correct man, he is not at all nice about matters in which money is the chief ingredient. He pays eight hundred a year for rent, so you may guess he is not at all unlikely to give your daughter a handsome settlement."

"If he will have her."

"Exactly; if he have her; there is the contingency, of course, which, however, cannot affect you."

"Yes, it must, since my daughter does not obtain her husband."

"And you pay no money. If the benefit is contingent to you, it is to me also. I do not wish to bind you to anything that will cause you to be a loser under any circumstances."

"Very well," said Mrs. Williams. "Say what you please; there is pen, ink, and paper; make it out, and I will sign any memorandum you may please, provided it be of the complexion you have mentioned."

"I wish for no other."

Mr. Leek, accordingly, sat down near a table, and produced an agreement, which was, to give him a certain sum of money, provided Helen Williams was married to the baron.

"And who is he, my dear Mr. Leek?" said the lady.

"There," said Leek, "read that, and you will see his name."

And, as he spoke, he pushed the memorandum towards her, and she took it up and read it carefully over, and when she had so done, she signed it, and returned it, saying, —

"So he is a baron."

"Yes; I told you he was a man of rank and title."

"You did; and where will he live?"

"At Anderbury House."

"A fine place; I know it. A splendid and princely place it is, too. He must have a large fortune there. It will be

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a splendid match for Helen. I wonder if there be any prospect of success; it appears almost too great a catch."

"I should say there was every prospect of success."

"But we must not let Helen know anything of our compact. I know her feelings so well, that I am fully persuaded that she would not acquiesce in the arrangement at all."

"Certainly; it may for ever remain our own secret, with which no human being need be acquainted."

"That is precisely what I wish; but now how are we to manage the introduction?"

"That will be easy enough."

"I am glad of it; but how is it to be managed at all?"

"Thus: the baron will give grand entertainments, and as he knows I am very well acquainted with the generality of the gentry about, he has asked me to point out those whom he might safely invite to his splendid banquets."

"Then you will have the kindness to invite us," said Mrs. Williams. "I see through it now. Ay, a very good plan. Then you can say everything that is necessary."

"To be sure I can, and will," said Leek.

"Well, I am glad you have called about this to-day, for we have had some little scheme in view, but unknown to the principal party concerned; however, as this one is in view, I shall prosecute no other."

"It would be dangerous to attempt two such speculations at once, else he would be unlikely to fulfil a promise even after he had gone some way towards doing so."

"I would run no risk in landing such a prize," said Mrs. Williams, who began to have a keen relish for the chance they had in view, such as they had not yet heard of from any quarter.

"Then I may fully rely upon your putting Helen forward upon every occasion that may present itself?"

"You may."

"And in the meantime keep as much to yourself as you can. You must profess to be unbounded in your admiration for all he says or does, and then you will obtain a preference for companionship, and every little is an aid in such matters."

"I shall be careful."

"And in the meantime I will bid you good day," said Mr. Leek.

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## Chapter CI. THE GRAND ENTERTAINMENT GIVEN BY THE BARON AT ANDERBURY HOUSE, AND HIS ANNOUNCEMENT.

The baron made quick work of it, for in five days after the one on which he took Anderbury House, he gave his first entertainment. Money works wonders, and in the baron's hands it seemed to have lost none of its magical power; for Anderbury House in that time was furnished like a palace; rich and costly were the decorations — the ornamental parts were bold and florid.

The house and grounds were of a most magnificent character, though they had been viewed as separate features; but when considered as one, as that which was part and parcel of one great whole, it was truly princely.

Great care, labour, and expense had been exerted to make the mansion one befitting the habitation of a prince; and the baron himself was looked upon as little less than a prince; his disregard of money, his liberality, all concurred in making him looked upon as one of the most popular men in that neighbourhood.

Indeed, none such as he had ever been seen or heard of in that quarter. He was safe to be considered as one of the grandees of the day.

Anderbury House was now a theme of conversation with every one in the whole town. His magnificence, liberality, and all things connected with him, were all well calculated to cause a feeling of prejudice to be made in his favour.

When people saw the men that were at work, the loads of articles which were sent there, they were amazed, and could hardly credit their senses. Then they all considered how very rich he must be to be able to spend so much in furniture, in hangings, in beautifying, and in ornamental work, which must have been very heavy.

The baron was fully determined to do all he had intended to do in the way of opening his first grand entertainment with great eclat, and in a manner that would take the whole country by surprise.

The day came; the house was furnished, decorated, filled with servants, and everything that could make it appear as though it had been for years in that state.

It is surprising how soon a place can be made to lose all signs of its ever having been uninhabited, and the fact of human beings being in a place soon wears away the look of desolation by which it is otherwise enveloped; but how much easier must it have been, with ample means, for a man like the baron to cause such a house as that of Anderbury House to become what it was.

The great wonder being, not what was done with ample means, but the short time in which it had all been collected together, which was done with such celerity and such small signs of bustle and disturbance, that it appeared as if performed by the wand of a magician, so sudden and so quiet was it done, comparatively.

At the end of five days there was a number of invitations fairly written out and directed, by order of the baron, to the principal inhabitants and gentry of the place to visit Anderbury House, and partake of a grand banquet given by the baron to them and his friends on that occasion.

The day was named, and the information supplied by Mr. Leek to the baron, was of a character that to that individual was extremely valuable, and of which he freely availed himself.

It must not be imagined that the worthy Mr. Leek was in any way oblivious of the promise or obligation into which he had entered with Mrs. Williams, whose name he had taken very great care to insert in the list of invitations that the baron had sent out.

The evening arrived, and the carriages drove up to Anderbury House in rapid succession. There were few or none who knew the baron; they were all, however, anxious, most anxious to see who and what the baron was, who occupied the estate.

The title and name sounded well, and that was what dwelt upon people's minds, and made an impression upon them, and they freely accepted the invitations, especially when they inquired among themselves what was the extent of invitations that had been issued, and they were confined wholly to the elite of the place.

What was thought or said upon the occasion, it would be difficult to say, because it was so various, and there were none who could in any way form an opinion at all, that wore any appearance of probability about it.

But there was a rumour spread about that he was a foreigner who had immense riches, desirous of marrying an Englishwoman, and yet unable to obtain introductions in the usual way, or else he was merely acting in

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accordance with the customs and habits of his own country.

The carriage drive of Anderbury House was completely occupied by the strings of carriages that had taken up and set down for two hours or more, as rapidly as they could.

The fine apartments that Anderbury House contained, that were destined to be used for the occasion, were indeed a splendid suit of rooms; but they were now lit up with chandeliers, and adorned with glasses, and mirrors, and pictures.

As for the ornamental part of the mansion, it was superb. Nothing had been spared in expense, and by the way in which that was laid out, it was evident the baron was a man of taste and judgment, and had converted a nobleman's residence into a palace.

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The gentry came dashing up to the door. The place was crowded, and many were announced, and met and welcomed by the baron, who gave them a cordial and distinguished greeting.

There were many persons present; there were astonished at the display of magnificence and wealth of the baron; they were delighted by his reception of them -- his conversation, and general manners; and many, too, were much astonished by the splendid entertainment which he had provided for them.

All that art or the season could produce was there -- superb wines and liqueurs -- fruits -- to an extent they had never before contemplated or thought of.

Anderbury House was without a rival.

The wines were good, and they warmed the blood; and courtesies and civilities of life were by the aid of the alchemy of old port, splendid and sparkling champagne, sherries, Burgundies, and other wines, soon turned into friendships and cordialities.

"Baron," said one of the guests, "you have a superb place, and you certainly are the proper individual to own such a place."

"And why, my dear sir?" inquired the baron, blandly.

"Because you have the taste and heart to decorate and array the place in a manner befitting its extent, and you have the hospitality of one of the ancients of the east."

"Ha! Ha! very good, my dear sir. You are kind, very kind; but I must admit I do like to see neighbours act honestly, and in good faith with each other; besides, I am of opinion that man is a social animal, and one who lives only in society. I cannot be a hermit."

"Right. If the world were all of your opinion -- and I believe they are, practice only is opposed -- what a state of kindness and comfort we should all be in -- I am sure of it."

"Ay, so am I. Do you like music?"

"I do," was the answer.

"Then you shall hear some. We shall have the dance presently, and then there will be no heart that will not beat in unison with the harmonious strain."

"I think they deserve not to be here in the centre of happiness, if they did not."

"Ho! music, there!" said the baron, as he stamped on the floor of the grand saloon, in which several hundred guests stood.

The call was answered by a loud crash of instrumental music, that came suddenly and startlingly upon the ears of the guests; but then it was followed by a lighter strain, with a pretty but marked melody, such a one, that it instantly communicated to those present, the feeling of being participators, and even actors, in the scene that was about to be enacted upon the floor.

It required but very little exertion to form the dance, where every one was willing and anxious to take their places. There was a slight degree of excitement in the procuring of partners.

Here for a moment the baron was at fault; but, by some means that were not at that moment explained, or even thought of, Mrs. Williams led the beautiful Helen past the spot at the moment. He had spoken to her before, and was well pleased with her. He perceived she was beautiful and amiable. Her mother, too, was with her, and in another moment the baron stepped forward, saying, --

"Madam, if the hand of your daughter is not already engaged, I beg respectfully to claim it for the opening dance?"

Mrs. Williams curseyed with condescension, saying, in reply, --

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"Yes, my lord. My daughter is disengaged."

"Miss Williams," said the baron, with much deference, "may I request the honour of your hand?"

Helen Williams curseyed, and said she was not engaged, and accepted of his offer with a smile, but with some diffidence.

The baron immediately led her to the top of the room, where, by this time, there was a perfect lane for them to pass through, until they reached the top.

All had taken their places by an instinctive sort of feeling that was almost universal in the ball-room.

The signal was given, and then the baron led Helen down the first dance, amidst the admiration of all, and the envy of not a few. The giddy whirl of the dance, the throng of beauty, and the sweet but gay notes of the bands, added to the coup-d'oeil of the scene -- a scene of so much happiness and gaiety, that there were few who could have looked coldly upon it.

The baron, himself, appeared in the highest spirits, and with the greatest hospitality he sought to administer to the wants of his guests, every moment that he could abstract from the present leadership of the dance.

He first visited one, and then the other, until he had made a fair round, and then he found that the night was far advanced, and that, in but a short time, he was convinced that daylight would come.

The guests were well pleased with the splendour of the entertainment, and the profusion that was there. Nothing was wanting. All were well pleased with the arrangements. Great care and great expense had been gone to to gratify and pleasure them, and it had succeeded indeed; if it had not, they would have been captious and ungrateful to an extreme.

The guests, however well pleased with their entertainment, were still unable to bear up against the excitement and fatigue of pleasure for hours, and the animal power fails.

Indeed, there is no one sense which may not be exhausted by an overindulgence; even hearing will, as soon as any other, become invariably tired by listening too long to music; ay, and even become unable to distinguish between the different melodies; and the guests began to flag, and to pay more attention to the side tables, and then to look drowsy, and some few of the younger spirits appeared to have the dance to themselves.

The baron now saw the proper moment had arrived for dismissing the company; and, causing the music to cease, he advanced to the middle of the room, and, waving his hand, said, --

"My honoured guests, the sun begins to peep over the hills, and the bright car of Phoebus rapidly ascends the skies, telling us that another day has begun. The happiest mortals must part, and so must we. Let me thank you all for this kindness, for thus honouring my banquet with your presence, and let me hope it may often be thus.

"Often, I say. Yes, fair ladies, your presence will always be a distinguished honour. While I am a bachelor, I shall continue these fetes once a fortnight regularly, until somebody takes the arrangement of such matters out of my hands, by legally assuming the title of baroness."

There was a long pause after this announcement, and then a sudden buzz of admiration, which was heard on all sides; and the ladies looked at each other, the baron, and the magnificent place they were in. We cannot tell what passed in their minds, but a shrewd guess might readily be formed, and to the performance of that task we leave the reader. There were many courtesies before the separation was effected, and an hour had passed before the Baron Stolzmyer of Saltzburgh found himself alone.

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## Chapter CII. THE WEDDING FEAST. -- THE ADMIRAL'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

And now the day arrived, at length, when Charles Holland was to call Flora Bannerworth his bride.

On this most auspicious event, as may be well imagined, the admiral was in his glory, and he declared his intention of dancing, if any very handsome young lady should ask him to be her partner at the ball, but not otherwise; for it had been agreed to have a ball in the evening.

Jack Pringle, too, was restored completely to favour upon the occasion; indeed, as far as the admiral was concerned, he seemed to have granted a general amnesty to all offenders, because he was heard to say, --

"Well, I really should not mind if any poor devil of a Frenchman was to come; he should know that good eating and drinking was for once in his life; or even that vagabond, old Varney, the vampyre. What a fool he was to take himself off before the wedding, to be sure."

Henry Bannerworth had undertaken to take off the old man's hand all the trouble connected with the actual ceremony. That is to say, letting the clergyman know, and so on; therefore he, the admiral, had nothing at all upon his mind but the festivities that were to be gone into upon the occasion.

The numerous guests recommended by the lawyer were invited to a breakfast, which was to be at one o'clock; while a favoured few, which, together with the family party, made up, altogether, about eighteen persons, were to come to the wedding itself, and to be actually present at the ceremony.

The admiral was rather annoyed at Jack Pringle, about ten o'clock, looking very anxiously at the sky, and shaking his head in a manner which seemed to indicate that he had something of importance on his mind.

"What the deuce is in the wind, now?" said the admiral. "You are always looking for foul weather, you are, and be hanged you!"

"Oh!" said Jack, "I was only considering what they call the blessed aspect of the sky, and it seems to me there is a sort of kind of look about things as says that there won't be no marriage at all to-day."

"No marriage!"

"No, not a bit of it; I'm tolerably sure there won't. I was a going on one of my numerous occasions to be married, and there was just that there kind of look in the sky, and I wasn't."

"What kind of look, you lubber? I rather think, after living afloat a matter of forty years and more, I ought to know the looks of the sky rather, and I don't see any thing unusual in it."

"Don't you? Then I does; and there won't be no marriage."

"Why you infernal croaking swab, you are drunk or out of your senses, one of the two. I would bet my head to a bottle of rum, that there will be a marriage."

"I don't mind," said Jack, "betting one bottle to twenty that there won't."

"Done, then -- done; and, Jack, for once in a way, you will find yourself regularly done, I can tell you. I know you have got some crotchet or another in your head, by which you think you will get the better of the old man; but it won't do: for I won't stand any quibbling or lawyer-like sneaking out of it."

"Oh! I won't sneak out of it, you shall see. It shall be all plain sailing and above board, I can tell you, admiral."

The old man rather puzzled himself to think what Jack could mean; but after a time he gave it up, and forgot it; for his mind began to be too actively engaged upon what was going on to pay much attention to what he considered was some joke of Jack's, which would turn out to be a mere quibble of words after all.

The admiral was right when he said there was no appearance of anything in the weather to indicate that any stop would be put to the festivity on that account; for a more pleasant, and a more genial, delightful day for the occasion never shone out of the heavens.

Indeed, if anything could have been considered as a gratifying omen of the future felicity which Charles Holland was likely to enjoy in the society of Flora Bannerworth, it was the aspect of that day -- a day so replete with beauties that, had it been picked out specially for that occasion, it could not have been more gratifying or delightful.

The house was a large and a handsome one which the admiral had taken, and, since, of course, he considered it to be his own, he was from an early hour in the morning in a perpetual fidget, and here, and there, and

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everywhere, for the purpose of seeing that all the arrangements were complete for the day's proceedings.

As may be well supposed, he was a great hindrance to everybody, and most especially the servants, whom he had temporarily engaged, wished him at the very devil for his interference.

But, however, notwithstanding all these drawbacks, by ten o'clock everything was in a tolerable state of readiness; and then the admiral vociferously congratulated the first of the guests who arrived, for that was a great merit in the old man's eyes, and, although he did not know the person a bit, he almost terrified him by the cordiality of his greeting.

"That's right," he said; "take old Time by the forelock, and always be too soon instead of too late. I'll tell you some capital stories some of these days about the advantage of being a little too soon — But, hillo! here comes somebody else. Egad! we shall have them all here soon. Here, Jack Pringle! where are you?"

"Here!" cried Jack; "hard on to your larboard bow."

"Pipe all hands among the flunkies!"

"Aye, aye, sir," said Jack.

Producing then a boatswain's whistle, he blew a shrill call, which pleased the admiral, for, as he said, that was the proper way to begin anything like an entertainment.

People know they must be punctual at weddings, and generally are tolerably so, with the exception of those persons who are never punctual at anything; so that, in a short time, nearly the whole of those who had been invited to be present at the ceremony had arrived, and the hour was fast getting on towards that when the marriage was to take place.

The admiral would have been blind, indeed, if he had not perceived that there was a great deal of whispering going on among the Bannerworth family, and he got rather indignant and a little uneasy to know what it could all be about; but, most of all, he began to be annoyed at Jack Pringle, for that individual's conduct was certainly of a peculiar and extraordinary character.

Every now and then he would burst out into such an amazing roar of laughter, apparently at nothing, that it became seriously annoying to the old man; and, finally, taking up a pair of nut-crackers that were upon the table, he gave Jack a hard rap upon the top of the head, as he said, —

"Are you out of your senses? what are you going on about?"

"Oh, nothing," said Jack; "I was only a thinking. Don't you recollect our wager?"

"Yes, I do; you have laid me one bottle of rum to twenty that Charles and Flora won't be married today."

"Very good," said Jack, "that's quite correct, and mind, I hold you to it."

"Hold me to it — I'll hold you to it. I know well enough it's some stupid joke you have got hold of."

"Very good," said Jack; "we shall see."

The time crept on, and half-past eleven o'clock came, and the guests were assembled in the drawing-room, where, by a special licence, the ceremony was to have been performed; and on the mantle-shelf of which there was a time-piece, indicating the rapid arrival of the hour named for the ceremony.

"You know, Henry," said the admiral, "I left everything to you. I hope it's all correct, now, and that you have not made any blunders."

"None whatever, I assure you, admiral. I have arranged everything; but Flora has just told me that she wants to speak to you."

"Speak to me! then why the deuce doesn't she speak? I suppose she can speak to me without asking your leave?"

"Admiral," said Flora, "I am extremely anxious to ask you if you will forgive me for something which may possibly annoy you a little, and which certainly I feel myself answerable for."

"What is it?"

"You must promise to forgive me first."

"Well, well, of course — of course I do; what is it?"

"Then, I must say, I would rather not be married to-day."

"What!" cried the admiral.

"I told you so," shouted Jack. "I saw it in the look of the clouds this morning. I never knew anybody get married when there was a light breeze blowing from the nor'-east."

"You be quiet," said the admiral; "I'll be the death of you, presently. What is the meaning of this, Flora? Is it



not rather a cruel jest to say such a thing to me now?"

"It is no jest, sir, but a fact; I must beg to be excused."

"And I, uncle," said Charles Holland, advancing, "am of the same mind; and I join with Flora in begging that you will look over the little disappointment this may occasion you."

"Little disappointment!" cried the admiral; "am I awake -- am I out of my senses? Jack, you rascal, where am I?"

"Can't say," cried Jack; "but I think as how you are abut two points to the south'ard."

"Flora, speak again. You do not, cannot mean to tell me that any foolish quarrel has interfered to prevent this union, upon which I have set my heart? If you are not jesting, there must be some very special reason for this alteration of intention."

"There is," said Flora, as she looked the old man kindly in the face; "there is a very special reason, sir, and one which I will mention to you at once; a reason which makes it next to impossible that the ceremony should proceed. The real fact is -- "

"Well, go on -- go on."

"That Charles and I were married a fortnight ago."

"D -- n me," said the admiral, "if ever I was so taken in my life. A fortnight ago! shiver my timbers -- "

"Go on, old pepper-castor," said Jack; "only remember you owe me twenty bottles of rum."

"I won't look over it," said the admiral; "I won't and I can't; it's treating me ill, Flora -- I tell you, it is treating me ill."

"But you know you have looked over it, admiral," said Flora, "and I have your positive promise to forgive me."

"Besides," said Jack, "she won't do so no more; and, as far as I sees of these ere things, it's a deuced good thing as we ain't bothered with any parson coming here this morning, casting up his eyes like a dying dolphin if you outs with so much as a natural d -- n or two. I can't stand such rubbish, not I; and its my out and out opinion that we shall be all the merrier; and as for the old man -- "

Jack's oratory was put a stop to by the admiral seizing a piece of confectionary that was upon the table, and throwing it with such a dab in his face that he was half choked and covered with currant jam; and he made such a spluttering that the guests could keep their countenances no longer, but burst into a roar of laughter consequent upon that proceeding.

"And you, too, Henry," said the admiral, "I suppose you were in the plot?"

"Why yes," said Henry, "I rather think I was. The fact is, that Flora disliked the public marriage, although she looked forward with pleasure to the meeting with this pleasant party on the present occasion; so, among us, we all cast about for some means for securing the agreeable without the disagreeable, and so, a fortnight ago, they were married quietly and privately, and I plead guilty."

"I thought as much," said the admiral, "I'll be hanged if I didn't; but now just answer me one question, Charles."

"A hundred, if you please, uncle."

"No, one will suffice. I want to know whether you were married in the name of Bell, or in the name of Holland?"

"I took legal advice, uncle, as to the validity of my marriage in the name of Bell; and as I found that a man's marriage was quite legal, let him call himself whatever he pleases, and as I knew that it was your wish I should take the name of Bell, I was married in that name, and Flora now calls herself Mrs. Bell."

"Then I'll say no more about it," said the admiral, "but let it pass so -- let's be as merry as possible; and first of all, we will have a bumper all round to the bride."

This affair, upon which Charles really had had some misgivings, being thus agreeably settled, there was certainly nothing to interfere with the hilarity of the meeting, and as there was an abundance of good cheer, and the guests had been selected judiciously, and were persons who could and would enjoy themselves, an extremely pleasant day was passed.

For about an hour, perhaps, only the admiral now and then exhibited some symptoms of indignation, and shook his head occasionally at Flora; but a smile from her soon restored him, and he did actually contrive to get through a quadrille in some extraordinary manner, by almost knocking every lady down, and ending by falling

sprawling himself.

The only great interruption — and that lasted for nearly half an hour — to the proceedings arose from that incorrigible Jack Pringle, who, as usual, did not get a glass too much, but a whole bottle too much; and then an obscure idea seized him that it was absolutely impossible for him to avoid kissing all the ladies, as it was a wedding, or ought to have been a wedding.

Blaming himself, therefore, very much for not having thought of it before, he made a wild rush into the drawing-room, and commenced operations.

A scene of confusion ensued which quite baffles description, and Jack had to be carried out at last by main force, thinking himself a very ill used person, when he was only doing what was right and proper.

The admiral apologized to the ladies for Jack, calling their attention to the fact that he wasn't such a fool as he looked, and that, after all, it wasn't a bad notion of Jack's, only that he had not set about it in the right way.

"Howsomedever," said the admiral, "I don't mind showing you how he ought to have done it."

This, however, was universally declined, and that with so much decision, too, that the admiral was forced to forego the generous intention; but long before the parties separated for the night, he admitted that it was just as well the marriage business had been all settled before; and it was shrewdly suspected that, from the fact of the admiral singing "Rule Britannia," after he had gone to bed, he had just slightly exceeded the bounds of that moderation which he was always preaching to Jack.

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### Chapter CIII. DR. CHILLINGWORTH MAKES URGENT INQUIRIES FOR THE VAMPYRE; AND THE LAWYER GIVES SOME ADVICE CONCERNING THE QUAKER.

If the Bannerworth family and the admiral were inclined to put up quietly with the loss of the large sum of money which Dr. Chillingworth fully believed that Varney, the vampyre, had gone off with, he could not fully divest himself of the idea that it was recoverable.

When he went home, he succeeded in silencing the clamours of his wife, by assuring her that his practice for half-a-dozen years would not at all be equal to what he should gain if he could successfully carry out what he was aiming at; and as everything, to Mrs. Chillingworth, resolved itself into a question of pounds shillings, and pence, she was tolerable well satisfied, and consented to remain quiet, more especially as he gave her sufficient to keep the household comfortably for some time while again left home.

So thoroughly had he made up his mind not to let the matter rest, that he carefully resolved the best means of setting about, systematically, to inquire for Varney.

He thought it impossible that he could have left the cottage home of the Bannerworths with such great secrecy that no one had observed him.

He was too remarkable a man, too, in personal appearance to escape notice; and if any one saw him, with a grain of curiosity in their composition, they would be sure to look after him with speculative eyes as to who and what he was.

The cottage had not many dwellings near it, and the doctor thought it highly possible that if he visited them all, and made proper inquiries, some one among their inhabitants might be able to tell him that such a man as Varney had been seen.

Accordingly he commenced his tour, and, as luck would have it, at the very second cottage he went to, a woman stated that a tall, dark, singular-looking man had asked leave to sit down for a few minutes, and to be accommodated with a glass of water.

"Had he any parcel or bundle with him?" asked Mr. Chillingworth.

"No," was the reply; "he certainly had nothing of the kind that I could see, and only seemed very weary and exhausted indeed."

"Do you know which direction he went in?"

"I watched him from my cottage door, and after looking about him for some few minutes, he walked away slowly in the direction of the London road."

This was all the information that Dr. Chillingworth could obtain in that quarter; but it strengthened him in his own opinion, that Varney had left that part of the country, and proceeded to London; but with what motives or intentions could not be guessed even, although probably it was with an intention of finding a wider sphere of action.

"If," thought the doctor, "he has gone on the London road, and walked, he must have stopped, in the very weak state that he was, within a very few miles for rest and refreshment; in which case I shall hear tidings of him, if I take myself the same path."

He pursued this plan, and walked on, inquiring at the different inns that he passed, but all in vain, for such a man.

No one had seen anybody resembling Varney; and the doctor, with a sense of great disappointment, was compelled, himself, to stop for rest at a roadside inn, where the mails and stage coaches stopped to change horses.

The landlord of the inn was a good-tempered, conversable man, and was listening, with quiet complacency, to the rather long description of the personal appearance of the individual he sought, that was given by Dr. Chillingworth, when the mail coach from London, which was proceeding to a very distant part of the country, stopped to change horses, and the coachman came to the bar to take his usual glass of refreshment.

While so engaged, he heard something of what Mr. Chillingworth was saying, and he remarked to that gentleman, --

"Do you mean, sir, a long fellow, that looked as if he had been buried a month and dug up again?"

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"Well," said the doctor, "he certainly had something of that appearance; but the man I am inquiring about disappeared last Thursday."

"The very day, sir; I was going up with the mail, when he hailed it, and got up on the outside. It's the very man, you may depend; I remember well enough his getting up, but somehow or another when we got to London he wasn't to be found; and so he had his ride as far as it went, and I have not the least idea of how far that was, for nothing."

"I thank you for your information, and I have no doubt that it was the man I seek for. Although he had a large sum of money with him, I think, yet it was not in an available shape to use, and I dare say he would not be very scrupulous about the means he adopted to avoid the inconvenience of any detention."

"Not he, sir, he wasn't very particular. I dare say he got down somewhere in London, most probably at Piccadilly, where there is always a crowd, and I draw up for about five minutes. I don't look to see who gets down, or who stays up, so, as regards that, he might take himself off easy enough, if he liked."

"But you missed him?"

"Yes, I did, when it was too late. Can you tell me who, or what he is, sir?"

"Yes," said Dr. Chillingworth; "it was Varney, the vampyre, of whom, no doubt, you have all heard so much, and who has made such a commotion in the countryside."

"The deuce it was!" said the coachman; "and I have actually had one of these creatures upon my coach, have I! I only wish I had known it, that's all; I would have pretty soon got rid of such a customer, I can tell him. They don't suit me, those sort of gentry; but I'm off, now; good day, sir. I hope you may catch him."

The coachman got upon his box, and drove away; and Dr. Chillingworth began to think that unless he took a journey to London, which he was scarcely prepared to do, he must give up, for a time, the pursuit of Varney.

Besides, he thought, and justly enough too, that even if he went to the metropolis in search of him, its extent would baffle all inquiry, and make it almost impossible that it could be set about with any prospect of success; so he resolved, before he went any further in the matter, to urge the admiral and the Bannerworths once more upon the subject.

He was firmly, himself, of opinion that something more, and that, perhaps, too, of a very uncomfortable character regarding Varney, would soon be heard, unless they could communicate to him in some manner, and persuade him either to retire from England altogether, or to lead a quiet life with a portion of the wealth he had acquired.

It will be seen with what great pertinacity the doctor clung to that idea which to the Bannerworths appeared such a very doubtful one, namely, that Varney had really got possession of all the money which had been hidden by Marmaduke Bannerworth; but we must leave the doctor for the present inactive, because he felt that, at the period of Flora's marriage, they would be too much occupied to give him the attention he required, and, therefore, he determined to wait until that ceremony, at all events, was completely over.

And now we may as well state at this juncture that the admiral was quite as good as his word, as regarded taking the advice of his friend, the lawyer, concerning the Quaker who still held possession of the Dearbrook estate.

With all the indignation that he felt upon the matter, he laid it before the man of law, explaining how liberally Henry had dealt with him, and what a very uncourteous reception they had met with.

"I am afraid," said the lawyer, "that he may keep you out of it for a year or two, unless you compromise with him."

"What do you mean by compromise?"

"Just this; he knows very well, of course, that he cannot hold possession, and he wants to be paid out, that's the whole of the affair. He considers that you may take friendly advice, and that then you will be told how much shorter, cheaper, and less vexatious a course it is, to put up with almost any amount of imposition, then to get involved in a law suit."

"That's all very fine," said the admiral; "but do you think I'd let that rascally Quaker have a farthing of my money? No, indeed; I should think not. If he expects us to compromise he will be disappointed."

"Well, then, if your determination is to proceed, I will, if you like, take the necessary steps in the name of Mr. Henry Bannerworth. Do you know if he administered to his father's estate?"

"No; I know very little about it. But you had better see him."

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"Certainly," said the lawyer; "that will be the best plan. I had better see him, as you say, and I dare say," added the lawyer to himself, "I shall find him more reasonable than you are by a great deal."

The lawyer did see Henry; for he called upon him and so strongly advised him to compromise the matter with the Quaker, that Henry gave him full instructions to do as he pleased.

"Your title is so clear," said the lawyer, "that it cannot prejudice you to make the offer, or, rather, to allow me to make it for you; besides, I will take care it shall be made without prejudice, and I dare say you will get possession pretty quickly of the Dearbrook estate."

The lawyer wrote to the Quaker, asking for the name of some solicitor who would act in his behalf, and at once received an answer, referring him to a Quaker attorney, who was tolerably notorious for sharp practice, and who was about as great a rogue as could be found in a profession somewhat notorious for such characters.

The shortest plan and the best was that which was at once adopted by the admiral's friend, the attorney; for he went to town and saw the Quaker upon the subject.

The result of their conference was, that Mr. Shepherd wanted a sum equivalent to two years' rental of the premises he occupied, before giving up possession of them; and in reply one year was offered, and there the matter rested for mutual consideration of the principals.

Henry did not feel exactly disposed to do anything in the affair, in actual defiance of the admiral, so he resolved upon trying, at all events, to persuade him into the compromise, if possible; and the principal argument he intended using was, that Flora had heard sufficient of the Dearbrook property, and that it would be a thousand pities, consequently, to keep her out of possession of it, since, from what they had all seen of it, they felt that it would be a very desirable residence indeed.

The admiral's anger, however, had been so roused by the insolent conduct of the Quaker, that it required great care and tact to introduce the subject to him in such a shape, and Henry set about it not without some fear of the result.

"I have seen, admiral," he said, "your friend, the lawyer, about the Dearbrook property, and we shall not have possession in our lifetimes."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, our ghosts may perhaps haunt its verdant shades; but we shall be all dead long before the Court of Chancery decides in our favour; for, owing to the manner of my father's death, some difficulties may be thrown in the way to protract time."

"What! does he tell you so?"

"Yes, indeed he does, admiral; and then, you see, Heaven knows how many claimants may arise for the estate, if it was known how recently we came by the title—deeds."

"The deuce they would! I can't say but there is some reason in that, after all; but what is to be done? You can't say that the Quaker, Shepherd, is to be allowed to retain possession of the Dearbrook estate, just because there are some difficulties in the way of getting it out of his clutches?"

"Certainly not; but the whole question resolves itself into what is the best means of accomplishing that object, and the great difficulty seems to be this; that he actually has possession, which you have heard, of course, is nine points of the law, and puts a man in such a position that he can give a deal of trouble to any one who is not so fortunately situated."

"Can he; then I tell you what I'll do, Henry; I'll pretty soon alter that state of things."

"But how can you, admiral?"

"By going and taking possession, to be sure; and if possession be indeed nine points of the law, I don't see why we shouldn't have them. I have taken a ship or two from an enemy when they have been under their own batteries, and it ain't the most likely thing in the world that a Quaker, who, in the navy, we call a wooden gun, should stop me taking possession of the house."

"I am quite sure," said Henry, "that if you were to set about it, you would do it, — there can be no doubt whatever upon that head; but it's a very difficult thing to treat the law in that sort of way, and you may depend there would be an amazing fuss made about it, so much so, indeed, that some serious consequences might ensue, and we should perhaps lose the estate altogether."

"Hang the estate! it's the Quaker I want to serve out."

"But you have served him out. Don't you recollect the kick you gave him?"

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"Why, yes; I certainly did give him a kick."

"And a good one too."

"You think it was a good one, do you, Henry? Well, I must say, I am very glad of that — very glad of it. It's some consolation, that's quite clear."

"And I think then, after that, admiral — after feeling that you have served him out in that kind of manner, and that he has put up with the degradation of having been kicked by you, you might just as well forego a little of your resentment, and allow me to ascertain if I cannot make something like terms with him."

"Terms with a vagabond like that!"

"Yes. What say you to giving him a trifle, and then let him go; provided he clears out of the estate at once, and gives us no further trouble?"

"I'd ten times rather kick him again."

"Why, yes; and I must confess he deserves kicking most certainly. I admit all that, that a greater scamp you could not find; but, after all, you see, admiral, it comes to a question of pounds, shillings, and pence. Nothing in the world makes a man like that suffer but touching his pocket."

"Very likely; but you propose to put something into his pocket."

"Yes, at first; but it is to save the more, as would easily be found; and, besides, you see how he has been afraid to take any notice of your kicking him."

"To be sure he has; such fellows are always afraid. You didn't expect he would take any notice, did you? and, if you did, I knew better. Afraid, indeed! Ah! to be sure; that's just what he was likely to be — afraid, as a matter of course."

"If you please, sir," said a servant, coming in to the admiral, "here is a gentleman wants to speak to you."

"To me? Who the deuce can that be, I wonder?"

"He says it's on particular business, sir."

"Well, well; show him in here."

A mere youth was shown into the apartment, who, addressing the admiral, said,

"Pray, sir, is your name Bell?"

"To be sure it is; and what of that?"

"Nothing particular, sir; only I have the honour of serving this upon you."

"And what the devil is it?"

Before this question was well out of the admiral's lips the lad had disappeared, and when the old man unfolded the paper, he found that it was a notice of action from Shepherd, the Quaker, on account of the assault which Admiral Bell had committed upon him.

"And this is the fellow," cried the admiral, "that you want me to compromise with. No, Master Henry, that won't do; and, since he has had the imprudence now to commence war with me, he shall not find that I am backward in taking up the cudgels in my own defence, I'll pretty soon let him know that he has got rather an obstinate foe to deal with, and we will see how long he will find it worth his while to persevere."

Henry felt at once that this imprudent act of the Quaker, which, no doubt, was intended to hasten and facilitate a compromise, placed it further off than ever, and that, in the admiral's present state of mind, it was quite absurd to think of talking to him in anything like a peaceable strain, for such could not be done.

The utmost that could be hoped was that he would not actually give way to some act of violence, and that he would, at all events, do nothing more than what the law allowed him to do in the matter.

This was what Henry did not feel quite sure of, and he only hoped it.

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**Chapter CIV. THE BONE-HOUSE OF THE CHURCHYARD OF ANDERBURY.  
-- THE RESUSCITATION. -- THE FIGHT, AND THE ESCAPE OF THE DEAD.  
-- THE BOAT, AND THE VAIN PURSUIT.**

The coroner, after the inquest was over, issued his precept for the interment of the body of the man who was found in the ice-well of Anderbury House, and whose body was deposited at the bone-house in Anderbury churchyard.

There was an end now to these proceedings, though it was much too fresh in people's minds to enable them to forget it; yet, once the coroner's inquiry over, it usually happens that a feeling of satiety, arising from excitement, in the first place, or following that excitement, and induced by the knowledge that all is done that can be towards unravelling the mystery that had caused such a sensation, takes place.

The town of Anderbury was first subsiding to its original quietude, and the only indication of any excitement was that among a few old toppers, who met in the early part of the evening, to discuss anything that there might be stirring to talk about, and to do that required but little inducement, to talk being their principal, not to say only, amusement; indeed, to have deprived them of that would have been to have deprived them of nearly their only inducement to work and to live, that they may indulge in their evening conversations at the alehouse.

There was a very general belief among such people that, as the whole affair was unexplained, that it was mysterious, and the nods and winks were numerous; indeed, it was thought that there was more than the usual amount of mystery. However, this has its limit, and when all is said that can be said, there must be an end to the discussion, which is usually dropped for want of fuel to feed it. \* \* \* \*

That night the baron sat alone in his apartment, apparently buried in deep thought; but, now and then, he might have been seen to lift up his eyes towards the east, as if watching for something, and then he would cast them towards a magnificent timepiece on the mantelpiece, and then he would again relapse into thoughtfulness.

There were several such fits as these, that were broken in the same manner as before, and, at length, the arose and took a small book off one of the tables, and examined a certain page and a certain column, and then he half-muttered to himself,

"Yes -- yes; it is as I thought -- the moon will rise in about an hour and a half; that will do. I will now go to the bone-house, and there watch the body, and ascertain if my fears are correct; if not, I shall be well repaid for my trouble; and should they be, why, I must endeavour to make the affair take the best turn I can. I must try and prevent the completion of my own deed from being disturbed in its integrity. The dead must remain so; and, if not, to that condition he must return, and lie where no moon's ray will reach him."

He arose, and, wrapping his cloak around him, went to the door of his apartment, and paused, as if listening.

"No one is stirring," he muttered; "no one is about."

He stole softly out of the apartment, and descended the stairs, making his way towards a small private door, which opened into the garden, which he secured behind him.

Then he walked rapidly but softly through the garden, which he quitted by another private door, and which he also secured after him; and then proceeded quickly and silently towards the church yard of Anderbury church, which was but ill-qualified to keep intruders out of it, seeing that there was but a low wall and a hedge for the purpose of a fence, which could at various places be easily scaled; indeed, there are few country churchyards that cannot be so entered; and it does not appear usually the practice to endeavour to keep out human beings, but rather to keep the yard clear of all brute intruders, for it was open to all who should choose to come.

The scene was not very distinct; the moon was not yet risen, and darkness reigned upon the earth; he could see but a short way, and he cared but little for that.

"If darkness prevents my seeing, it also prevents others seeing me; therefore, it is welcome. The moon will rise soon enough to aid me in my watch, and if it rise not at all, it would be agreeably satisfactory, seeing that there would be no probability of what I suspect happening without her rays."

He hurried onwards towards the churchyard. The sea was close by, and the night breeze, as if swept across the face of the ocean, gave the indistinct roar, which never ceases, but only increases and abates as a storm or calm prevails at the time, and as the wind increases or diminishes, thus increasing or diminishing the intensity of the

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roar; but it never entirely ceases at any time.

The baron made his way towards the churchyard by an unfrequented path that was well known to him; but as he was about to get over a stile into a field, he thought he heard a voice speaking on the other side of the hedge.

He paused a moment, and crept along the hedge, until he came to the spot where the voice seemed to come from, and then he paused, until he heard them speak again.

"I tell you what it is, Jack; it's a very strange affair — a very strange thing, indeed."

"So it is."

"And one I can't understand at all, though I have endeavoured to do all I can that way. I have thought the matter over very often; but it always comes to this — that it is a very strange affair."

"What can be the cause of it?"

"I don't know."

"Have you seen it?"

"I thought I did once," said the second; "but it was misty and dark; but I think I couldn't be mistaken."

"Nor I."

"You have seen it oftener than I; have you not?"

"Yes — yes — I have, several times."

"How did you see it?"

"Why, thus: I was looking out for the lugger, and there away in the east I saw something white coming across the sea. It came very steady and slow, and looked small at first."

"Yes — yes."

"Well, then, after that it came closer and closer, until I saw it changed its shape to a gigantic woman."

"A woman!" exclaimed the other.

"Yes, or may be a man in a winding-sheet; that is most likely though, after all."

"I think so, too," he replied; "as sure as there are dead bodies in Anderbury churchyard, it forebodes some great evil — of that I am very well persuaded."

"What great evil do you think will happen?"

"How can I tell? I am no prophet. I cannot imagine in what shape it should come; but come it will depend upon it; if it comes not now, when it does come, remember my words."

"I will."

"And you will find them all true some day or other, if it don't come too soon to be pleasant; but I think something may happen to the lugger."

"She has not been seen these two days; and it is now past the time when she ought to have been in. Thus it was with the other lugger that the revenue cutter took."

"Did you see the apparition?"

"No; but there was a token, I believe; but I was not in those parts at that time."

"Well; but how did it happen that they let the lugger be taken by the king's men?"

"Oh! they couldn't well help it, you may depend upon that. She was coming from Cherbourg, laden with brandy and with lace, a good cargo, and worth something, I assure you."

"She must have been worth something."

"She was. Well, she had a very good run for a part of the way, when a fog came on. Well, it wasn't well understand what they were to do. Some were for putting back; others for standing where they were, and some few for running in shore.

"I shall run in shore," said the captain. "I know every hole upon the coast; and I know the exact spot where we are, and how to steer. I can run the vessel to an inch."

"And that inch may do the business for us all," said one of the crew; "but I'm ready."

"And I, too," said the captain; "and I will run her where there will be no chance of any meeting with the preventive people; but the fact is, we can neither see nor be seen; we are safe, boys. A good run on shore, and a swift voyage home."

"Huzza!" shouted the men; and the vessel was run towards the shore, and, at the same time, they were going under an easy sail safe and secure, and had no thought of any evil.

There was a look-out, at the same time we could not see two yards beyond the vessel. The watch was alert,



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but he could see nothing; but suddenly he called out, —

"Ship a-head! Port your helm!"

"What ship's that?" inquired a voice, and, in another moment, they found themselves alongside the revenue cutter, from whom they had so long and so often escaped.

"Board!" shouted the officer on board, and then he called upon our people to surrender; but the captain drew his sword, and called out to the crew to do as he did, and defend the ship; and as he spoke, he cut one man down, but was immediately met by a pistol-shot, which laid him dead on the deck.

After that there was no resistance; the men didn't want to endanger their lives by resisting men who were doing their duty, and protected by law; they were, moreover, out-numbered by the revenue people, and if they resisted, they would be liable to hanging, whereas they could but imprison them.

"They were all taken, and they were all imprisoned for different crimes — all, however, getting free after a term."

"Did that ruin the owners?"

"Oh! no; they calculated upon a loss now and then, and can well afford it too."

"Well, what do you think of the baron at Anderbury House?"

"Think! Why, think he's a trump. What a glorious haul there would be there, if we could get hold of it."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, the plate and other things that are valuable. Look you now, if we could load the lugger with the contents of the house, what would they not fetch in Paris?"

"We should not get it if we were to take it there."

"We should obtain a heavier profit than ever we should under any other circumstances; and I think it will be a very good plan, indeed, to take Anderbury House by storm. There's some thousands of pounds' worth of plate and jewellery there."

"So there is."

"Well, what do you say to make the attempt? Attempt, I say; but I shall not call it an attempt, for there will be no attempt at resistance — we shall have only to walk in and frighten a few servants; there will be nothing but to carry away what we can lay our hands on."

"That will do — anything that will pay."

The baron had been an attentive listener. He had, moreover, had some thoughts in his own mind of jumping over the hedge, and seizing the two men; but, upon second thoughts, he believed that this was the worst that could be done.

"I will frighten them, and thus prevent them from putting their designs into practice to my damage."

The baron silently collected several large stones and clods of earth into one space, and then he peeped through the hedge. He saw where they lay, and took up two clods, pitched one on each of their heads, and then he said, when they started up, —

"Miserable sinners! the eye of Heaven is upon you; go your ways and repent while there is time."

The men were for a moment horrified, and stood still, chained to the spot; but suddenly they were released, and in a moment they rushed from the spot with the fleetness of deer.

The baron watched them out of sight, and then he muttered to himself, —

"'Tis well; they are now out of sight; they are gone, and they will make no attempt upon Anderbury House, I'll warrant them they think their design will be penetrated by others, and they will suffer for it should they attempt it. I trust I can make a very good resistance; however, it is worth thinking off."

He paused a few moments longer, and then turned towards the churchyard.

He pursued his way, however, thoughtfully; every now and then, however, he looked around to ascertain if any one were present, but he was satisfied there was none, and thus he was quite and entirely alone in his walk.

There was now light enough to enable him to distinguish objects at a short distance, and he quickened his pace, as he thought of the moon's rising; but a few minutes brought him into view of the church of Anderbury.

The old church was seen to advantage at such an hour, for as the sky was cloudless, and the stars were out, the tapering spire looked like some great and gigantic indication raised there for some purpose pointing heavenward.

There was a deep gloom surrounding the whole place, for there was not a shadow cast by any one object, neither had the church one side that was lighter than the other.

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In a very short time the baron reached the charnel-house, or the bone-house, as it was more usually called. It was a small place, attached to the church itself. The wants of the population were not great; and, therefore, all these public places were built with the view only of a limited use.

It was large enough for all purposes, and as large as it is usual for them to be in such places; and the baron, before he attempted to enter the place, took a walk all the way round, to ascertain if there was any one lurking about; but finding none, he returned to the door of the charnel-house with the full intention of going in.

However, there was no key, and he could not, therefore, enter it by the usual way, and he must find some other.

"There is sure to be something or other," he muttered, "to cause a temporary stop to one's career in some place or other; but I will not be deterred by such a trifle — there is a place in the roof somewhere here, I think, where I can get in with but little trouble."

The baron looked about for a place that would enable him to climb up, but he suddenly withdrew his hand, exclaiming, —

"Hilloa! what have we here?"

It was soon settled, and the baron held up between him and the light the key of the charnel-house, which he had found as he put his fingers into a niche to assist him in lifting himself up to the roof.

"This is lucky, and will save me much trouble; but I have not much time to spare."

He put the key into the lock, and found it fitted the lock, and he in another moment opened the door of the charnel-house, and entered its unwholesome precincts.

There were but few who would have entered that place at that hour, knowing, too, that a man was lying dead that had died a violent death; few, indeed, would have done so, but the baron was himself above such considerations; and besides, he had an object in view, which was of some importance.

He desired to watch the body of the murdered man — he desired to stay there, and watch the effects of the moon's rays upon it. He now smelt where he was, for there was that fetid smell of death, which always hangs about the bone-house, which is a receptacle of all the mortal remains of man, which have been once cast into the grave, for which their friends have paid large fees — as well for the ceremony, as for the quiet enjoyment of the home of death; but which bargain must be continually violated, and the bones of a man's ancestor, instead of ornamenting some museum, or his carcass doing some good by way of instruction, lie rotting in the grave-yard, till the sexton digs up the same ground and takes fresh his fees, but burning the bones of the former.

The baron entered the receptacle of the remains of mortality. One after the other have men's bones been thrown in here, or, perhaps they have been mixed together, so that it would have puzzled an angel to have separated them from each other.

What more could mortals expect? their bones, at least, will form a fuel to be sure; but very indifferent fuel, too.

Here, however, the baron entered, and stepped lightly into the place. It was an uncomfortable place at best — cold, cheerless, very bare, save of such things as would remind one of the sexton's duty, and of the nature of the place in which he was.

The first thing the baron did, was to look towards the place where the window was placed, but no light came in. He advanced to it, and gazed out upon the night.

"Well, well," he muttered, "the moon is just rising; there will be time enough, and I can remain in this place as long as any of its rays penetrate the windows."

He paused a few moments, during which he looked out upon the country; but all was wrapped up in gloom and darkness, save where some of the moon's beams fell, and then there could be seen some dark spots more prominent than the rest; and then, after awhile, he could distinguish between the different objects, though he could not always tell their different parts.

"Well," he muttered, "I am here now, and am housed. Faugh! how the place smells. I shall never be able to remain here. I shall never get the scent from my nostrils."

He turned from the window, and examined the place. It was a square room, with bare walls. A few shelves, and some odd lumber thrown into one corner, a ladder, some tools, trestles, and a lot of rubbish in the shape of old pieces of coffins, bones, and other matters that belonged to a churchyard. There was very little in all this, to make the place at all likely to become popular with anybody.

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The shell in which the man had been placed was, from some cause or other, upset from off the trestles, and the body had rolled out. It lay in all its ghastly proportions at full length upon the ground, somewhat on one side, and looking towards the window. The posture shewed the body was deprived of life. It was still and motionless — not a sound or motion escaped the lips of the baron, as he gazed upon the victim of the ice-well.

Well did the baron mark the position of the body, and marvel at the singularity of the accident which had exposed the body in the way in which it laid.

"I wonder what could have been the cause of such an accident? Who could have thought it would have happened? I am sure I never could have expected it should have happened."

He took one of the trestles that lay near the body, and placed it so that he could gaze upon the corpse, and out at the window, alternately, without any disturbance to himself.

"Here I can watch the progress of the moon," he thought, "and the body, too; and if I find my conjectures are right, I will soon prevent his quitting this place, and put him in such a position as shall preclude the possibility of the revivifying powers of the moon ever reaching him again. He shall lie till corruption visits his body, and then a return to life be impossible."

Thus muttered the baron, as he gazed fixedly at the body of the man, who had met his death in the manner related, and of whom the baron entertained some singular suspicions.

The moon was rising above the horizon, and shed a soft light over the fields and woods. It was strange and silent, save when the church clock struck out the hours as they fled.

It was a strange sound, and almost startled the baron to hear the hour come booming through the building, and gave such a sound, that it broke the awful stillness of the night which reigned; the moon all the while rising higher and higher in the heavens, until its beams came very near the window.

The baron's patience became somewhat impaired; he saw that the time would soon arrive, when his curiosity must be satisfied, and when the truth would at once break in upon him.

"Can it be," he muttered, "that the dead should ever again rise to communicate with the world, and live to lead a loathsome life? Impossible! and yet 'tis said so by many, who assert they speak but the evidence of their own senses; if it is to be depended upon at all, it will be as well for me as they.

"Why should I not be satisfied as well as they are? I have, moreover, more than ordinary motives for satisfaction. The human bloodsucker shall not live. I am resolved upon that."

The moonbeams now entered the window of the charnel-house. At first it was but a pencil ray, so small and minute, that the baron himself could scarce perceive it; but he did see it, and kept his eye intently fixed upon it, watching its increase in size and change of position with intense excitement.

There was the moon rising high in the heaven, with all its myriads of stars, and black canopy, studding the vault with innumerable gems; and as it rose, so it gave a far greater change to the aspect of the landscape than would have been expected.

The whole side of the charnel-house was illuminated by the moon's rays, but they fell aslant and only entered the window in one direction, which cast them on one side, near where the baron sat.

He could now see how the place was furnished; the significant appurtenances of the charnel-house were easily discernible, and would have given a melancholy turn to the thoughts of anybody who might have examined them; but not so the baron — he was by far too excited to heed them, though he honoured them with a passing glance.

They are used by the sexton in the prosecution of his business, in the performance of his duties; therefore, there need be but little attention paid to them; they cannot harm any one, but are the means of frightening fools.

To frighten the baron was, however, something more than a mere matter of course; his nerves were strung to the purpose with which he visited the place, and they were not to be disturbed by any insignia whatever. There were plenty of ghastly objects about; bones, legs, hands, arms, and even skulls, were lying about in profusion, or rather they were heaped up in one corner of the place, and there was an attempt to hide them by heaping up old boards in front of them, as if it were done on purpose to prevent the prying eye of man from peeping and seeing the secrets of the charnel-house.

It is strange, but true, being accustomed to such scenes as these causes a diminution of the awe and fear in which such things are usually held. Soldiers and sailors care not much for death; they are used to exposure, and the loss of life does not seem to them so terrible as to those who have never faced danger.

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So with the sexton: he turns up the remains of mortality, as if they were so much rubbish, and never had been endowed with life; indeed, it is only necessary to become familiar with the remains of man, and then much of the awe and mystery attending them dies away.

What cares the grave-digger whether the burial service has been read over the remains or not? What cares he if the ground in which they have been placed is consecrated ground? He can't tell the difference, and it matters not to him; he is above such consideration, and so is he and his patrons, as to whether the spot in which the remains lie, has been bought and paid for long ago.

He has no objection to sell again that which has been sold, and that which has been used as the resting-place of some one or other. No matter, they say; the mystery, the freemasonry, and all, have been instituted for the multitude, and not for those who are behind the curtain, and pocket the fees; that is the great object of the conspirators.

However, here they were, all lumped up together, on one side, or rather in one corner, with a few boards thrown over them, as if to prevent their being seen by any incidental intruder.

Here the baron sat, watching the moonlight in its slow progress towards the dead body; and, as it crept towards the object, he felt more and more excited, but yet remained perfectly immovable. He turned his eyes sometimes from the body to the streak of moonlight that passed through the small window, and then to the small window itself, from which he could see the moon himself, but that was fast rising too high, and was becoming invisible by changing its position, so that the baron could not see it.

"The moon travels fast," he muttered, "and a few more minutes will tell me what I am to expect."

As he spoke these words, he felt in his pocket, and appeared satisfied with what he found there — possibly some weapon. The moon's rays were now within an inch or so of the body, and all was as still and silent as the grave; no sound, no motion, not even a breath of air stirred to interrupt the silence and stillness of the scene; even the breathing of the baron himself was suppressed, and he strove to watch without motion.

The moonlight appeared to grow more brilliant, more beautifully white, and cast, as he thought, a stronger and more sickly light than usual into the charnel-house. There was nothing that he had ever before seen like it, and he looked around him more than once to assure himself that he was where he was, and that he was alone with the body in the bone-house.

At such moments the fancy is apt to play us strange freaks, and, if not a strong and nervous man — capable of throwing off any extraneous influence, why he would soon be bowed down by the weight of mental terror and agony — that is, nothing short of temporary madness, and which probably would make a permanent impression, and leave the seeds of mental disease for ever.

But the baron was not easily moved; he had not been brought up in schools where the mind is bound, enchained from infancy by artificial means, which seem to bind the powers of the mind in after years, and, in moments of doubt and difficulty, to render it dependent upon any extraneous circumstance, rather than itself.

However, there were few things thought of then by the baron, who sat intently watching the progress of the moon's beams towards the body, which was now touched by them.

The light fell strong, it edged the white garments that were thrown around the body; the baron watched more and more intently, and each moment lessened the space of time when the truth would come out — when he would be assured of the truth of his conjectures.

There was no ray on the body yet, but it slowly and slowly let the light approach the body; the edge was illumined, and then the moonbeams fell more and more upon it; gradually did they enlarge its surface till the whole body was in the light of the moon.

The baron's excitement and expectation were now at the highest, for the whole body was illumined.

"Now!" he exclaimed, in a muttered whisper; "now is the moment."

No sooner was the whole of the body, the breast, and the face illumined, than there was a perceptible quiver through that form.

"Ha!" exclaimed the baron, with a start.

The features presented a ghastly spectacle; there was a peculiar sickly and horrible expression in the countenance, much of which was caused by the peculiar position in which it was placed; the peculiar colour of the moon's rays and the additional horrors of the place, all seemed to give an effect to an object peculiarly ghastly and horrible.

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The body, after a few moments, as if awakening to life and recollection, lifted up its head, and turned over upon one side towards the moonlight; and then, after a moment, it looked up in the moon's rays, which seem to pour down upon the countenance that lifted up towards it.

The baron rose softly and stealthily.

"You shall feel that this is your last hour. The newly awakened life which feeds upon the blood of others, shall never exist to carry on its disgusting career."

As he muttered these thoughts to himself, he drew a short dagger from his pocket; at the same moment the figure turned its face towards him.

It gave a half unearthly scream, as its eyes met those of the baron's, who exclaimed,

"Now -- now's the time -- death to the monster."

As he spoke, he threw himself headlong on the prostrate form of the vampyre, for such it was; which, as he did so, endeavoured to rise up and escape. The baron, who had aimed a deadly blow at him, as he threw himself upon him, caused him to fall back again; but the fearful being had contrived to ward off the blow, either with its arms, or by means of shifting its position, or something of the sort; the baron missed the blow, and was now in a deadly struggle with the vampyre.

The struggle was fierce; no signs of shrinking on the part of the baron, who carried it on with the full intention of its ending fatally to his opponent, while he was exerting himself to escape the muscular grasp of the baron.

The baron, however, was not a match for the more than superhuman strength of the vampyre, who, endued with all the energy of love of a newly-acquired life, struggled with a desperation scarcely to be conceived.

Had any one looked in, from without, upon the struggle that was going on within, they would have believed that some demons of the dead had suddenly become endued with the power of appearing upon earth, and had chosen that spot upon which they could exercise their malignity in combat with each other.

Suddenly, however, the baron was thrown with great force upon the ground, and he lay for a moment half stunned; then the vampyre, disengaged as he was, stopped to cast a magnificent look of triumph upon his fallen foe, and dashed out of the bone-house by the same entrance as that which afforded ingress to the place to the baron.

In another moment the baron rose up and rushed after the flying vampyre; his defeat by no means extinguishing his courage or ardour.

He soon caught sight of the vampyre as he was flying from the bone-house; indeed, the moonlight was now so strong, that it seemed almost day.

Every object, far or near, appeared distinct and observable; while the waves of the ocean appeared every now and then to throw off the silvery light, like a thousand moving mirrors.

Beautiful as the scene was, there was none there who stood to look upon it. The only living and breathing persons present, were those who were engaged in the chase. Not a soul, save these two, were about -- none saw them -- none witnessed the fearful efforts of the two.

The place looked like some spot of earth spoken of by the enchanters; all was motionless and still, save these two, and the ceaseless motion of the ocean waves.

The vampyre made for the shore, with the baron a short distance behind him. They strained every nerve; and the baron thought he should succeed in securing him on the beach.

There were some boats that were secured on the beach, and towards these the vampyre sped with the fleetness of the wind; and, no sooner did he reach one, than seizing its head, he caused it to run through the sand by the impetus he had acquired in running, and it was afloat in a moment.

There was no time to lose, for just as he had pushed into deep water, the baron had rushed down almost in time to seize the boat but missed it.

He then made for the boats, and succeeded in reaching one that was afloat, secured only by a rope.

In this he pushed out on the waves in pursuit of the object of his search. Away they both went; the sea was comparatively smooth; they both rowed with velocity, that promised much as regarded their capability as rowers.

The spray of the water was thrown up by their oars and by the boats' heads. The baron, however, had the worst of it; he rowed to disadvantage; because, every now and then, he had to turn his head to see which way the object of his pursuit was rowing; and, therefore, a loss of speed occurred; but yet he kept up well in the wake of the vampyre.

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There was, however, no attention paid as to where he was going; as long as it was straight in the wake of the flying, he was satisfied. But he saw nothing else, nor looked at aught else; indeed, the world might have been there, and he would not have been aware of the fact. His whole faculties were bound up in the object before him, to reach which, he exerted his whole strength. However, upon looking up again, he could nowhere see the vampyre. He looked long and steadily in all quarters, but saw him not. He had eluded him.

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## Chapter CV. THE BARON PROPOSES FOR HELEN WILLIAMS, AND IS DULY ACCEPTED, WITH A COMPLIMENT ON HIS BEAUTY.

The baron had put out to sea in chase of the vampyre, without considering that there was really great danger in so doing, inasmuch as that the elements were not quite in a kindly disposed condition, and there was a heavy sea.

Where he had obtained his skill as a seaman, Heaven only knows; but certain it is he had obtained such knowledge somewhere, for he commenced navigating the boat with the greatest skill, and soon succeeded in getting close in shore.

The moment the keel grated upon the beach, a man rushed into the water, and laid hold of the boat with one hand, and the baron with the other, exclaiming, —

"You are my prisoner! You took my boat, and I don't care who or what you are, I will have justice."

"How much money do you require?"

"More than you will like to pay. I sha'n't let you off under a pound."

"Here are five pounds."

"Lor! Excuse me, your honour; I didn't mean what I said; if so be as your honour is such a gentleman as I now sees as your honour is, it don't make any matter in the world. I hopes as how your honour will always take my boat when you wants one, and no mistake."

The baron made no reply to all these compliments, but walked away at once towards his own house on the cliffs.

"I have missed him," he muttered, "and all my labour has been in vain. I thought that at least I had got rid of that affliction; I thought that he at least would have rotted in the tomb. Curse on the tardiness that left him unburied until the moonbeams had rested upon him. After that all was in vain, unless some new death had come over him."

There was a flush of anger upon the baron's face as he reached his own house, and let himself into it by a garden-gate that he always kept the key of, which would have effectually prevented any of his servants from taking any notice of him, had they met him.

But at such an hour, it was not likely he should meet any one, nor did he do so.

He at once sought his own chamber, where he remained for some time immersed in deep thought. This thought was not wholly devoted to a consideration of his annoyance at the escape of the vampyre; but he took into his most serious thoughts the circumstances attending upon his entertainment.

The question of to marry, or not to marry, was not one that had to be settled by the baron. No, that he had done already; and he had not made the announcement he had to Mr. Leek, of his matrimonial intention, unadvisedly.

What the baron now considered was, whether he should propose to Miss Helen Williams or not.

He certainly had been somewhat struck by the quiet beauty of the young girl; and probably he was aware that he was not just the sort of person to win a young maiden's heart, and that if he achieved such a honour at all, it would most probably be in consequence of acting upon the cupidity of her relations.

As he was determined, therefore, to marry, it became necessary that he should select some one for his victim who, in addition to the personal charms which appeared to him to be a desideratum, should be of so pliant and amiable a disposition as to give way to those solicitations and incessant remonstrances which she was likely to be assailed with if she resisted.

It was fortunate for Mr. Leek that the baron did fix his regards upon Helen Williams; because, from what we know of Mrs. Williams, we can well perceive that it is quite evident she will not let any considerations of her daughter's happiness stand in the way of an equitable arrangement with that gentleman.

And although there might have been, and indeed were, persons at the baron's entertainment whom he would more gladly have called by the name of bride than Helen Williams, yet he was not slow to perceive that those parties had wills of their own, and, if their relatives had pleased to do so, they would not themselves have admitted that they were up for sale to the highest bidder.

The result of the baron's considerations, therefore, was, that Helen Williams would suit him very well, and

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that the poverty of her family was just the circumstance of all others which insured his success.

"I will wed her," he said, "although I cannot win her. She will be mine, because I shall purchase her; which, to my mind, is a much more admirable mode of embarking in a matrimonial career than the trouble of a tedious courtship, with all its frivolities and follies."

Whether or not the baron was used to matrimonial affairs, we cannot say; but certain it is he did not seem to consider that the proposing for a young lady and marrying her was a matter of very grave or serious moment; but really, by the style in which he considered it, anybody would have thought it one of the most ordinary concerns of life.

During his short stay at Anderbury, he had managed, by the magic power of wealth, to procure everything he required in the shape of servants, carriages, and horses; and now, on the morning after his most strange and mysterious adventure with the corpse of the murdered man, he ordered his carriage, and went out to pay a number of visits to the parties who had been present at his entertainment.

Among those visits he included one to the Williams's family, and by about twelve o'clock in the day reached their residence, and was received with such an extraordinary amount of bustle, that it was quite ludicrous to see it; but still it suited him, because it showed how they worshipped wealth, with the exception of Helen, and she did not make her appearance at all.

Mrs. Williams was all smiles and sweetness, paying so many compliments to the baron, that, although he knew nothing of the diplomatic arrangement of Mr. Leek, he yet felt quite certain that he had her with him most completely, and that none of her exertions would be wanting for the purpose of securing his victim.

After these compliments had somewhat subsided, the baron said, --

"Madam, I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing your daughter Helen, who did me the honour of being at my poor entertainment the other evening, and attracted while there the eyes of all beholders."

"Oh, certainly, my lord baron. I have not the slightest doubt in my own mind but that Helen is quite -- quite panting, in a manner of speaking, for the honour of seeing you again."

"You are very obliging, madam; and I can assure you that one of the most gratifying circumstances that have occurred to me during my short residence in this neighborhood, had consisted in the fact of my making the acquaintance of you and your amiable family."

"Will you excuse me for one moment?" said Mrs. Williams; and, after a courteous bow from the baron, she left the apartment, and proceeded to the room of her daughter Helen, whom she addressed, saying, --

"Helen, are you aware that the baron is here -- the great baron, the Baron Stoltmeyer of Saltzburgh? Good God! how can you be so foolish? He has actually asked for you, and you are not there; when you know as well as I do, Helen, that such a man as that, to whom the expense is no object, might pop in a moment."

"He might what, mother?"

"Pop the question -- propose, of course. Don't tell me that you don't know what I mean. I have no patience with such nonsense. Only think how rich he is. You know as well as I that it would be the making of you and the whole family; and I can tell you, Helen, that, if you are not a positive fool, in my opinion, he will pop, for there was quite a particular expression upon his face when he asked for you."

"But I fancy, mother, there is always a particular expression upon his face -- a particularly ugly one, I mean; for, beyond all question, he is the most ordinary man I ever saw in my life."

"Now, really, Helen, you are enough to vex a saint. What can a man's looks have to do with his property?"

"But what's his property to me, mother?"

"Oh! good gracious! Have I lived to hear a child of mine ask what a man's property is to her, when he begins to be attentive! I did not expect it -- I will confess, I did not expect it. I did think there would be a little consideration on the part of a child of my own, when she knows I have to strive, and strive, and stretch our means like a thin piece of Indian rubber, to make both ends meet."

"But, mother, if I cannot love this man, wherefore should I for one moment entertain the thought of making him my husband?"

"Self, self!" exclaimed Mrs. Williams, lifting up her hands; "nothing but self."

"I cannot suppose, mother, that it is an extraordinary act to decline sacrificing one's whole existence for the sake of marrying a man with money, who can not only not love, but who is an object of positive aversion as this man is to me."



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"Yes," exclaimed Mrs. Williams; "that's right. See me dragged to prison, and see us all without shoes to our feet. That's what you would do, rather than give up your nonsensical notion about people's looks."

"But, why," said Helen, "should these calamities, which have never yet appeared, all suddenly come over us, because I do not feel inclined to marry the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh?"

"And as for the man's looks," added Mrs. Williams, rather adroitly shifting the argument, and declining to answer the rather home question put by Helen — "as for the man's looks, I am quite ashamed of any daughter of mine talking about men's looks — it's indelicate, positively indelicate."

"I cannot see your argument, mother, and I implore you not to persecute me about this man, whom I really cannot love."

"Persecute, indeed! but I tell you what it is, Helen, you don't seem to be at all aware, first of all, that I am drowned in debt; secondly, that I shall have to bring your brother Charles home from college to make him a tailor, or a shoemaker, or something of that sort, and you will have to go out as a daily governess, while I rot away by slow degrees in a prison."

"But, mother, if these evils are all about to fall upon us, cannot some fair means be adopted of extrication from them. Your income, I always understood, was a certain one, and surely it almost amounts to criminalty to live far beyond it."

"Not at all, when you expect your daughter to be a reasonable Christian, and to marry decently and respectably. Really, my dear, I must say that I little expected such remarks as you make, from a child of mine, I can tell you."

Mrs. Williams was right enough there, for it was a wonder that such remarks should come from a child of her's, who could not be supposed to have heard any such sentiments, but who must have, from the mere force of a just and admirable disposition, given utterance to them.

"Mother," she said, after a pause, "do not fancy that I would not do much to relieve you from any burthens you may have; and, if difficulties have arisen, they are to be remedied in the best way we can, as well as regretted. But I pray you not to ask me to wed this man, whom I cannot love."

"Well, well. I'm sure you make a terrible fuss, and I don't know what about, for my part. It's nothing, I rather suppose; and, after all, the baron may not be going to propose at all for you, and I may be wrong."

As Mrs. Williams thus admitted the possibility that she might be wrong, she looked with an expression of countenance, as much as to say, "Did you ever, in all your life, hear of such virtue as that, or such self-denial?"

"Then what do you wish for me to do, mother?"

"To see him. You cannot put such a slight — indeed, I might almost say, an insult upon him, as not to see him when he actually calls and asks for you. He is, you know, after all, a gentleman."

Helen found it difficult to say that she would not see the baron, so, although it was done with great reluctance, she followed her mother to the room in which that lady had left him, and where he did most anxiously expect her. He felt that his cause was not quite so good as it had been, and that the non-appearance of Helen got up some serious doubts as to the complying disposition he thought she had.

When, however, he at length saw her, some of those fears were dispelled, and he began to imagine that his suit did not look quite so desperate.

There was certainly about the baron a rather courtly air and manner, which, as Mrs. Williams said, shewed that he lived in the best society; and Helen would not allow her aversion to the man to carry her so far as not to behave to him with politeness, so that for some moments that the conversation proceeded, any one would have thought that those three persons were upon the most amicable of terms with each other.

But Mrs. Williams, like some skilful old general, was well versed in matrimonial tactics, and, after making a few remarks, she deliberately left the room, to poor Helen's great chagrin; for, although she had consented out of ordinary civility to see the baron, she had by no means intended to have a *tete-a-tete* with him.

That was quite another affair, and one may well suppose what a degree of indignation she felt at being forced into such circumstances, and by her mother, too, who, of all persons in the world, ought to have protected her, and to whom she ought to have looked certainly for very different things indeed.

It was a very awkward situation to be placed in for poor Helen, inasmuch as she now really could not leave the baron completely alone without great rudeness; and yet she much dreaded, in consequence of the hints that her mother had thrown out, what the interview would be that was about to ensue.

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How devoutly and particularly she hoped that, after all, the supposition of her mother that the baron had any matrimonial intentions towards her was a mistake, and she felt that the first words he might utter would be the means of chance letting her know if such really was the case, or if she was to be what she could not help styling, the victim of his addresses.

Of course the baron knew perfectly well that Mrs. Williams had taken her departure for the express purpose of giving him an opportunity of pressing his suit to her daughter, if he felt so disposed, and as he did feel so disposed, he was not at all likely to neglect the opportunity.

None but a man of great tact and discretion, however, could have made so good use of such an opportunity as the baron; for although he certainly did not succeed in removing from the mind of Helen Williams a strong feeling that he was an uncommonly disagreeable man, he did not add to that impression.

"Miss Williams," he said, "I have not until now had an opportunity of thanking you for the very great favour you did me, by making one at the party at Anderbury House."

"The obligation," said Helen, "was on my side, sir, and I beg that you will not pay me so empty a compliment as to endeavour to make it otherwise."

"You do yourself a great injustice. The grace which you lent to my entertainment was to my mind its greatest charm. I feel, I assure you, compelled to say so much, because it is the genuine truth, and not for the purpose of paying to you an empty compliment, which I have too much respect for you to do."

Helen was silent, for she knew not very well what to reply to this speech, inasmuch as it was one of those general ones that require no reply, unless the persons to whom they are uttered choose to enter at length into a civil complimentary kind of warfare, for the express purpose of so doing.

The baron waited for some reply to be made, and then, as none came, he spoke himself, saying, after at least two minutes' pause, —

"Miss Williams, you may, or you may not, have heard that my principal intention in settling in this neighbourhood — which I was informed, and I find correctly so, is celebrated for the respectability of its inhabitants — was to marry."

"Sir," said Helen, "I know nothing of that matter, nor do I think it is one with which I ought to be in any way troubled."

"Without explanation, certainly not, Miss Williams; but will you allow me to add, that unless my speech had contained certainly something more than a mere compliment, or a mere desire to give you a piece of gossiping information, I should not have uttered it on any account; but I have something to add to it, which does concern your private ear most particularly, and which I do hope will meet with your favourable consideration."

He paused again, and, as Helen returned no answer, he after a time continued, saying, in a still lower tone, —

"May I venture to hope that no preconceived prejudice will have the effect of diminishing any expectations and hopes with which I have pleased myself?"

It is said, and said most truly too, that there are none so blind as those who won't see, and the same rule may be most unquestionably applied to those who won't hear or understand; and although it was, of course, impossible that Helen Williams could have any doubt as to what the baron meant, she was resolved that he should speak out plainly, in order that she might, without giving room for any ambiguity, likewise speak as plainly to him, in answer to the proposition that was upon his lips.

Perhaps the baron was wise enough to see that much, for he proceeded now with much more clearness to declare what he meant, when he said, —

"I told you, Miss Williams, that my object in coming here was to contract a matrimonial alliance, being tired of the solitary life I had been leading for some years. I should not have troubled you with such a communication, had it not been in my power to add to it another, that will explain why I did so."

Helen merely inclined her head, to signify that she heard him.

"That other communication," he continued, "is to the effect that I have found the person on whom I feel convinced that I can fix my affections, without the possibility of their ever wandering again from the dear object. Amid all the rank, beauty, and intelligence that graced my halls on that occasion which will ever be hallowed in my imagination, I had eyes but for one form, and ears but for one voice."

Still Helen was silent.

"There may be many who, in the possession of much attraction and much virtue, may make many happy

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homes; but the heart culls its own flower, and will think that it presents the most delicate and most beautiful tints to the eye. That flower, from amidst all the galaxy of beauty, I think — nay, I know, that I have selected. Can you not now guess the purport of my simple words, Helen?"

It was tolerably familiar to call her Helen upon so short an acquaintance, and she drew back, looking some astonishment, which he perceiving, and divining the cause — for no one could accuse the baron of want of tact — replied to.

"Forgive me, if, in conversing with you, my heart seems to forget the distance that is between us, and I think of you by that name which, certainly, is presumptuous on my part to call you by; but there are persons in whose thoughts and feelings we so deeply sympathize, and who, from the first moment that we see them, become bound to us by so many mysterious links of feeling, that we seem as if we had known them for ages, and as if, from that moment, we could be as familiar — ay, much more so — than with many whom we may have met often in the great world."

This was true, and, what is more, it happened to be a truth that touched a right chord in the breast of Helen Williams; for she felt what he said recall recollections of the past, when there was one whom she had seen, and, from the first moment that she had seen him, had felt that time and circumstances could effect no change in those first dear and delightful impressions which had swept across her heart.

The baron saw the contemplative aspect of her face, and he added, —

"You feel the truth of what I utter?"

She started, for she had indeed felt the truth of the sentiment, although her heart was far away, and for a moment she had completely forgotten the existence of the baron, or that it was from his lips she had heard the sentiment expressed.

It was a mortification to him to see this — for he did see it — and he said, —

"Miss Williams, I hope I have said enough, at all events, to convince you that I am not one of those cold, worldly-minded spirits who have none of what may be truly called the higher and the nobler feelings of humanity; but who can, and who do feel and think that there is much of beauty and much of innocence in life, and that both are the dearest and best gifts of Heaven."

"I have nothing to say in contradiction to what you have uttered," said Helen; "but you will, I trust, now excuse me, sir, from continuing a conversation which can have no good result, and which, between persons who are nearly perfect strangers, is scarcely desirable."

This was a speech which, if anything would, was calculated to bring the baron to the point at once; and, as she rose while she uttered it; as with an intention of leaving the room, he at once said, —

"Nay, as I am here, allow me to utter that which I came to speak, and do not, I pray you, hastily decide upon a question of more importance to yourself and to me than any which can be ordinarily asked. Let me beg of you, Miss Williams, to be seated, and to believe that, in my manner of putting this question to you, there shall be nothing which can, in the slightest degree, prove offensive to you."

Thus urged, it would have been something savouring of ill-manners, if Helen Williams had refused to accede to his request; and, although there was nothing she so devoutly wished as that that interview should be over, and over quickly, she felt that perhaps the surest way of accomplishing that object, was to listen quietly to what he had to say; and accordingly she did so, reseating herself again on the chair she had so recently occupied, and determined in her own mind to give him a decisive answer. He then seemed rather in doubt as to how he should commence, and, as he spoke, there was an air of hesitation and doubt about him such as he, indeed, very seldom wore.

Probably, he felt that it was rather a climax that he had arrived at, and that if he was to accomplish anything in the matrimonial way, it was a very doubtful case as regarded his present application.

"I cannot but feel," he said, "that what I am about to say sounds hasty and premature, considering that we have known each other for so short a space of time. It is not for me to enlarge upon circumstances which, I fear, will have but little weight with you; but still it is my duty to mention that I have a large fortune, and consequently can afford to place the object of my affections in such a position in life as that she shall feel surrounded with everything that can make her existence pleasant and desirable."

"Go on, sir," said Helen; "I am staying to hear you, in order that I might clearly and distinctly answer you."

This was by no means encouraging; but still the baron proceeded: —

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"I wish to make you an offer of my hand and heart; and, as the Baroness Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh, I am quite certain that you will add a dignity to that title, instead of receiving one from it."

"Sir," said Helen, "an offer of this kind from any gentleman is a compliment which ought always to be appreciated, and I assure you it is one which I feel highly; but as one's future happiness in a marriage is by far too important an affair to be trifled with, I must beg to decline the honour you intend me."

"Decline!" said the baron.

"Yes, sir, I said decline; and I trust that the justice of the Baron Stolmuyer will effectually preserve me from anything in the shape of a persecution for so declining."

At this moment, and before the baron could make any answer to what was said to him by Helen in this firm and determined manner, the door was flung open, and Mrs. Williams rushed into the room.

"My dear sir," she cried to the baron, "of course you understand these matters perfectly well. Girls, you know, are always so very unreasonable, that you can't expect anything from them but a refusal at first, although they may really mean quite the reverse."

"Mother, is this just or fair?" said Helen, reproachfully.

"Oh, stuff — stuff! don't speak to me about justice and fairness, indeed, when you are so absurd as to behave in this dreadful manner towards the baron."

"But, madam," said the baron, "I fear— —"

"Fear nothing, my lord; but if you will have the kindness to step into the next apartment for a few minutes, I will join you, and we can talk this matter over."

Mrs. Williams did not think it at all necessary to make any excuse for having listened to the baron's overtures; and perhaps, indeed, she thought that it was not necessary to do so, and that her interest in the affair was a sufficient extenuation of what certainly was a most abominable proceeding.

Shame and disgust at her mother's conduct now kept Helen silent; and as the baron was perfectly willing to give himself all the chances he could, he made a low bow, and left the apartment, in conformity with the desires of Mrs. Williams, wondering much in his own mind by what miracle she purposed influencing her daughter's decision after the extremely positive negative she had given to his proposal.

He waited with much impatience, as well as curiosity, and as our readers may, as well as the baron, be a little curious to know what arguments Mrs. Williams used, we shall proceed to give them a brief outline of what she said.

"Are you mad?" was the first ejaculation. "Are you thoroughly and entirely out of your senses, that you behave yourself in this extraordinary manner?"

"In what extraordinary manner? A man asks me if I can wed him and love him, and, as he asks me politely, I tell him as politely that I cannot, which is the whole of the affair. Is there anything so very extraordinary in such behaviour as that?"

"Indeed, I think there is something very extraordinary in it. I tell you what it is, Helen, Mr. Leek is firmly of opinion that the baron's income must be at least ten thousand pounds a-year."

"I do not think I shall marry a man for his income, if it were ten times that amount."

"This is insanity — positive insanity. Have you really the least idea of what you are talking about? But I know what it is well enough; I know very well what it is; of course it's that fellow, James Anderson, that comes between you and your wits. That's the scamp that prevents you from exercising a proper control over yourself, and you know it is; but he is gone to sea, and it is to be hoped we shall never look upon him again. I don't wish to see him, and I am quite sure you need not, so you had better make up your mind to marry the baron at once."

"This is too cruel — much too cruel; and but that I see it with my own eyes, I would not have believed it possible."

She burst into tears as she spoke, and then for a brief moment — but it was only for a moment — the heart of the mother was a little touched. The love of money again assumed its sway, and the happiness of her child sunk into insignificance compared with that worst of passions.

"Listen to me, Helen," she said: "it's all very well to make choice of who you like, and to refuse who you like, when it can be done; but I tell you that, in this case, it cannot be done, for we are all of us on the brink of ruin, and, if you will not by this marriage rescue us from that state, destruction must come upon us all. You can save me, you can save your sisters, and you can save your brother, if you will. If course, if you will not, I cannot make

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you; and you will have the consolation of knowing that, although you had it in your power to save us all from destruction, you did not do it."

"But why should I be placed in so cruel a situation as to be called upon to sacrifice myself completely for my family? Would it not be nobler to meet difficulties, if they have arisen, with a good spirit?"

"As you please -- as you please; I can say no more."

Mrs. Williams moved towards the door; but Helen called to her, saying, --

"Give me time to think -- I only ask you to give me time to think."

This was a grand concession, and Mrs. Williams at once acceded to the proposition, that it was prudent to leave well enough alone in such a case, and that, having once seen that persecution would do something, it was highly desirable to leave it to work its way.

She accordingly at once left the room, and proceeded into the adjoining apartment, to which the baron had retired; and where, from his attitude, it seemed highly probable that he had taken example by Mrs. Williams; and, as she had listened to his conversation with her daughter, he had, in like manner, listened to her.

"I have the pleasure to inform you, baron," she said, "that my daughter, although at first taken a little by surprise as regards your offer, now accepts it; and I can only add, for my own part, that it is with great pleasure I contemplate having so handsome and distinguished a son-in-law."

"Madam, I highly esteem your compliment; and I must beg of you as a favour, that you will fix the wedding-day as quickly as you please or can; and that, as it must put you to some expense as well as your other daughters, and as it would be very unjust that, on my account, you should expend one penny piece, you will do me the favour of accepting from me a 500 pound note to cover those expenses."

Mrs. Williams quite instinctively held out her hand, but the baron added, with a bow that damped her expectations a little --

"A sum which I shall have the pleasure of handing to you as soon as the wedding-day is fixed."

It would be doing great injustice to the acuteness of Mrs. Williams, if we did not say she quite understood this to be a bribe for expediting proceedings; and if anything was likely to clench the matter, and to place the marriage of the baron with Helen beyond the shadow of a doubt, it certainly was this fact, that 500 pounds was offered to the mother for what we cannot help calling the sale of her child.

But these kind of things are much more common in society than people are at all aware; and one half the marriages that take place at all, are most unquestionably matters of barter. When the highest bidder obtains the prize, if prize that can be called, which generally consists of a shallow, conceited heart, nurtured in all kinds of selfishness, and full of feelings, not one of which can be considered great or estimable.

It is sad, indeed, when, as in the case of Helen Williams, the victim is made a victim on account of her better and nobler feelings, and where it is not her own selfishness, but the selfishness of others, which she is condemned to be victimized to. Whether she will or will not consent, under the circumstances we have narrated, to become the bride of the Baron Stelmuyer of Saltzburgh, we shall shortly discover; but certain it is that he entertained a strong notion she would, and that Mrs. Williams thoroughly made up her mind that she should.

Nothing can save Helen but a determination of character, which we fear we cannot say she possesses.

Her correct reason makes her say things which, if she could carry them out, would be as proper and as decisive as possible; but the great fault of her character consists in a weakness of purpose, which effectually prevents her from carrying out the suggestion presented to her by her own superior intellect.

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## Chapter CVI. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE BARON'S MARRIAGE. -- THE YOUNG LOVER, AND THE REMONSTRANCE

So it appeared that the baron was right, and that with all his disqualifications he had succeeded in obtaining the promise of a wife, because he had the one great qualification which outshone everything to his disadvantage, namely, wealth.

And he was not so blind, or so foolish, as not fully to understand, and to know, that it was to the relatives of the bride, and not to the bride herself, that he was indebted for an answer in the affirmative to his proposition.

Well he knew that although he had dazzled their eyes and awakened their cupidity, he had produced no such an effect upon the young and beautiful being who was about thus to be sacrificed upon the altar of Mammon; and probably if anything could have added to his earnest desire to make her his, it was that he saw she was untouched by the power of his gold, and therefore he could not but respect, as well as admire her; and he much preferred taking to his arms one for whom he entertained a supreme and sovereign contempt.

She felt that she was a victim, and that if she consented to become his, she must look upon herself as blighted and sacrificed for ever.

But he was too selfish to hesitate on such a ground as that. His feelings were far from being so human as to stop short, because he knew the alliance was viewed by her with hatred and horror. And that she did view it with those feelings, spared him, at all events, as he told himself, some trouble, for it took away from the necessity of keeping up the constant shew and glitter of wealth, for that shew and glitter affected her not, and therefore would have been presented to her imagination in vain.

But far different was it regarded her friends and connections, who had arrogated to themselves the power of deciding upon this matter of life and death to her.

To them he felt that he must shew all the glitter of display that belonged to his extensive means, or they would be disappointed, for they not only wanted riches themselves, but they wanted the worldly reputation contingent upon having so rich a relative.

Therefore was it that he determined that nothing should be wanting at his approaching nuptials to make them most magnificent, and he racked his imagination to discover a mode by which he could spend a large sum of money, so as to get for it the greatest amount of display. This was a matter which a man such as he was eminently calculated to achieve; and, as he succeeded in fixing his nuptials to take place in a fortnight from that time, he had ample time to make all such preparations as he might consider requisite.

It so happened that on the following evening to that on which he had obtained so strange a consent, through another party, to his matrimonial speculation, that the sun sunk upon the coast with every appearance of approaching stormy weather.

Scarcely had its disc sunk below the western horizon, when a furious gale arose, and, for the first time since his residence at Anderbury Hall, he felt what it was to hold an estate so near to the sea-coast.

The sea rose tempestuously, appearing to shake the mansion to its very foundation, and more than one half of the excavation leading from the grounds to the sea-coast was filled with water. The gale blew off the sea, and one or two trees upon the Anderbury estate were torn up by their roots, spreading destruction around them among the numerous shrubs and flowers.

Some of the windows of the mansion were dashed in, and the wind came roaring into the house, whistling up the staircases, opening and shutting doors, and altogether producing a scene of devastation and uproar which would have terrified most persons.

The baron, however, on the contrary, notwithstanding whatever damage was done was of course done to his property, took the matter with the greatest ease and composure in the world; and, in fact, rather seemed to enjoy the fury of the elements than to be awed by them.

He remained out of doors the whole time and although the rain now and then fell in torrents, and drenched him to the skin, he seemed scarcely conscious of that circumstance, or, if he were, he evidently thought it too trivial to take any notice of.

The servants looked at him in amazement, scarcely believing it possible that any one in his senses could be so

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indifferent to the rage of the elements that was proceeding; but they little knew the real character of the man whom they had for a master, or they would have wondered at nothing, and been surprised at nothing that they saw of him or heard of him.

The storm continued until the night completely set in, and still it showed no signs whatever of anything in the shape of an end; and it seemed but too evident that it was likely to continue in all its wild and ungovernable fury for many an hour to come.

He got as close as he could to the beach, so as not to leave his own estate, and from there he listened attentively to the howling of the blast, seeming rather pleased with the idea than otherwise, that much mischief was being done by that most terrific storm.

A servant brought him a telescope, so that he could look out upon the waste of waters, and see some of the struggling vessels that, with might and main, were endeavouring to keep off the shore, but which, despite all their efforts, were being hurried to destruction — a destruction which they could not avoid, and which must present itself in the most serious aspect, because it appears inevitable, and is invested with all the misery of a protracted execution.

And in particular he remarked one vessel which was drifting onward to certain and inevitable destruction.

He could see the rockets and the blue lights that they burnt now and then through the storm; while, ever and anon, with a booming strange sound over the waste of waters there would come the signal gun of distress, with its awful reverberations, awakening feelings of sympathy in the breast of every one but the baron, and he seemed impenetrable to all human feeling, for he looked on with a strange calmness, a calmness that one might suppose would set upon some man who had nothing to do with human hopes, human thoughts, or human feelings, but not by any means that calmness of a pure spirit looking upon things which it would aid, if it could, but which are beyond its power of action.

He saw the anxious throng of persons on the beach precisely below his own estate.

He saw them launch a boat, and, with a grim smile, he saw it swamped in the surge, and the brave bold men, who had made the gallant endeavour to save their fellows, met themselves, with but one exception, a watery grave.

And then even the baron smiled, and muttered to himself, —

"What is all this to me? what have I to do with human hopes and feelings? What is it to me whether they live or die, or whether yon ship, that I now see struggling through the waste of waters, reaches its destination, or is engulfed for ever in the foaming surge? What is it to me, I repeat, whether these bold brave men live or die? Will they not be the very persons to hunt me from the face of society? Will they not be the very persons who would declare that I was unfit to live? And shall I trouble myself with one thought as to whether they live or die? Ah! they come nearer, nearer, nearer still, and I shall see such a sight as may not often be observed by one such as I am, and on such a coast as this."

There was a strange, wild, wailing cry, and the ship, which was a large one, struck heavily upon a rock about a mile distant from the shore, and very close, indeed, to where the Anderbury estates commenced.

Now, as if seized with a sudden impulse, although we cannot and do not think it was one of humanity, the baron descended by a large fissure in the rock to the beach. This took him some time to accomplish, for he had to walk completely through the grounds of Anderbury Hall, and half-a-mile beyond, before he reached it, and then it took him some time to walk down, because he had to do so with extreme caution, inasmuch as the heavy rain that had fallen had made the ground so slippery that it was with great difficulty he could at all keep his feet.

When he arrived in sight of the beach, the ship was gone, but a life boat was being launched, amid the hurrahs of the multitude, for the purpose of picking up some of the survivors of the wreck who were noticed drifting upon portions of its hulk.

The baron had brought his telescope with him, and he placed it to his eye, and took a long and steady look at the boat.

A muttered malediction came from his lips, and, having shut the telescope, he turned, and hastily pursued his path again to Anderbury House. \* \* \* \* \*

After the wedding, Jack Pringle really felt himself so upset by the quantity of healths he had drunk, and the general manner in which he had disposed of a quantity of rum, that he told the admiral he found himself not quite so well as he ought to be, and that he thought it was all owing to having been out of sight of water for so many

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months.

This was a plea which sounded very reasonable to the admiral, and when Jack said, —

"You know it ain't possible to live very long without a glimpse, at least, of an arm of the sea, or something of that sort."

The old man assented to the proposition at once, and replied, —

"Why, that's true enough, Jack, and I shall have to go somewhere myself soon, or else get musty; for, you may depend, it never was intended that human beings should live all their lives on land."

"I should think not," said Jack, and I what I was going to say was, that you must try and take care of yourself, you old baby, for a day or two, while I take a run to the coast. It ain't above twenty-five miles; and mind you don't get into any mischief till I come back."

"Confound your impudence! It's a very odd thing that you can't come into my presence without a lie in your mouth. You know you have been as much trouble to me as a cargo of monkeys in a storm. Be off with ye, and if I never see your face again, it will be a good job."

Jack considered that he had quite sufficiently announced his departure, so he set off at once, and made his way towards the coast, not a little pleased, as he neared it, to fancy that, every now and then, he kept snuffing the sea air; and when the coach in which he went put him down within about four miles of a little village inhabited by fishermen, he walked that distance, although, sailor-like, it was an exercise he was by no means fond of, and, to his great joy, once more stood upon a sandy beach, and heard the murmur of the ocean, and saw the waves curling at his feet.

He was quite delighted, and really felt, or fancied that he felt, which was the same thing, wonderfully invigorated by the change, and quite another thing to what he had been.

Under such circumstances, Jack was sure not to be long in picking up a companion, so, in one of the cottages into which, with all the free and easy manner of a sailor, he strolled, he found an old man-of-war's man, retired there to spend the remainder of his days along with his son and daughter.

We feel that it would be quite impossible for us to do justice to the meeting between those two worthies, for they soon found out the capabilities of each.

Some grog, which Jack thought the sweetest he had tasted for a long time, because it was drunk within sight of the ocean, was produced, and then the tales they set to telling each other of their adventures afloat, would have been enough to stun any one.

We have rather a fear, likewise, that in some cases, they were not so strictly particular as they might have been had they been upon their oaths, as regards truth; but they seemed to be upon the principle of mutual forbearance, and the implied understanding of "You believe me, and I'll believe you."

Whenever this kind of rivalry, however, commences between inveterate story-tellers, there is no saying to what length they will go, and Jack certainly related some extraordinary things.

They happened both to have been to the same latitude, but, of course, they had not both seen the same sights exactly, or enjoyed the same adventures; so what one did not know or could not invent, the other pretty soon did; so that between them they made up a most entertaining conversation, and one which really would, to any one who was willing to be amused and not very particular about veracity, have had great charms.

"Ah," said the old sailor, "when I was on the coast of Ingee, the hair melted off my head."

"Did it," said Jack. "Oh! that's nothing at all; we had a couple of men roasted at the wheel with the heat, and they didn't know it, till they were both done brown."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, I does, and, what's more, we always had our meat cooked over again upon one of the gun slides; and, after that, when we were a long way southward, it was so cold not one of the crew shut his eyes for a week."

"Indeed! But you spoke of a man as you called Safety Jack; who was he? I should like all for to know."

"When I was on board the Fame, our captain was a know-nothing sort of shore-going lubber, who had been guved a pair of swabs over better men's heads, and uncommon afeared he was of getting into any danger. He'd always come on deck on a morning, and guving a kind of a hurry skurry skeared look all round him, he'd say, if so be as he seed no land, —

"Where are we? Is there any danger?"

"Then our first luff he'd say, —



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"No danger, sir; only a little fear.'

"Then the captain he'd say, all the while looking as skeared as a marine in a squall, --

"Let us be safe -- let us be safe, that's all.'

"So we called him Safety Jack, in consekense o' that peculiarity. Well, you must know as we were running for the Cape, and Safety Jack he wouldn't be persuaded, but insisted upon hugging the coast of Africa all the way, cos, as he said, it looked safer to see the land. So, as it happened, when we neared the Cape, we got into a regular north-westerly current, that set clear away south-east, or it might be a few points more southerly. The wind, too, blew in the same direction, and it seemed a bad job altogether. Our luff then says, says he to the captain -- that's Safety Jack, you must understand, --

"It will take us some time to work into the bay with this wind and current, but we can do it.'

"Is it safe?' said Safety Jack.

"Oh, yes,' said 'tother; 'though I have known a vessel of small draught to be capsised hereaway.'

"Safety Jack at this turns very pale, and he says, --

"Well, run before the wind a few leagues to the south; it's safer -- and -- and the gale may go down, and we may get out of the current -- and -- and -- besides, it's safer.'

"Well, everybody grumbled, but Safety Jack would have his own way, and we went spanking along with the wind and current nearly due south.

"But instead of getting out of the current we got further into it, and the gale increased to a hurricane. We went through the water at such a rate that the men who stood facing the wind could not button their jackets, or shut their eyes, and there was the mate and five able-bodied men holding the captain's hair on his head. The men's teeth, too, were all blown out of their mouths, and kept rattling among the rigging like half-a-dozen old shot in a locker. On we went, faster and faster, till all of a sudden we saw the sails flapping against the masts, and the ship was evidently turning round in spite of the helm.

"We're out of it now,' mumbles Safety Jack.

"I think we're in for it,' cried the mate. 'This is a whirlpool!'

"And so it was; round and round we flew like lightning, coming nearer to one point at each turn. The men all fell down on the deck as giddy as geese, and Safety Jack he begins screaming. Just to give you an idea of how we went round, there was two of the crew as had a squabble about a bottle of rum, and one on 'em says -- 'If I can't have it you sha'n't, and there it goes,' shicing it behind him. Well, you'll hardly believe it -- but the ship was going round so fast in a circle of about a mile, that afore the bottle could drop the man as threw it was brought round to it again, and it knocked his eye out. Well, presently the ship gives a kind of shivering and stops for half a moment, and Safety Jack he screams again. Then the water opened like a well-hole, and just for a moment we could see it bubbling and lashing like a boiling cauldron. Then down we went into the foaming surge like a lump of lead."

"You don't mean to swear to that?"

"Yes, I do; at any time and any day; I should think so, and rather think I ought to know, as I was there."

"And how did you get saved? That's the question, my boy."

"You ought to be satisfied about that, I should think," said Jack, "by seeing me here. If I had not escaped, I rather suppose I shouldn't have been here to have told you about it."

"That's all very well; but I ask you how you escaped?"

"Oh, that's quite another thing. I floated about for eight weeks upon an empty tar barrel."

"Eight weeks, did you say?"

"Yes; eight weeks, two days, four hours, and three-quarters."

"The deuce you did! How came you to be so mighty particular as to the three-quarters?"

"Because I thought some fool would be sure to ask me."

"Oh, that indeed; but the most odd thing that happened to me, I will say, was when I was once wrecked on an island that we called Flee Island."

"Flee Island; what a rum name! What made you call it that, I should like to know?"

"Oh, a trifling circumstance -- there was nothing in it but flees, and they were as big as elephants."

"Very good," said Jack; "I can believe that, because there is nothing outrageous about it. I don't consider myself at all difficult to please, and so long as you stick to such things as that nobody can doubt you will find it all

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right with me."

"I am very much obliged -- but should you happen ever to come across that captain of yours again -- "

"Yes, but it were a good while afterwards I was on board a whaler, and I saw something floating that looked like a great lump of chalk, and when we picked it up, who should it turn out to be but Safety Jack, what they call putrified, and turned to something like white coral."

"You don't mean that."

"Yes, I do; we keep him out of curiosity for about a week lashed up to the mainmast, but the men of the night watch were scared at him, and threw him overboard, because they said, when the moonlight fell upon him, he for all the world looked like a ghost, and they couldn't keep their eyes off him, which I dare say was somewhere about the truth."

"You certainly have seen a little service; but mix yourself another glass of grog, and I shall do the same, for I don't mean to turn into hammock to-night."

"What for?"

"Because there is going to be a storm. I have not been looking at the weather for so many years without being able to tell that before it comes. There will be a storm before twenty-four hours are over, and I think it will blow off the sea, so that there will be no end of mischief."

Jack Pringle went to the door of the fisherman's hut, and, although the evening had set in, he cast a scrutinizing glance at the heavens, looked earnestly in the direction from whence the wind proceeded, and when he came back again and sat down by the side of the old sailor, he said, --

"You are right; there will not only be a storm, but such a one too as they hav'n't seen for some time; so I shall no more think of turning in than you do. Who knows but that some vessel may be drifted in shore, and then we who are seamen will be able to do more good than a score of your shore-going fellows, who are afraid if the saltwater gets above their ankles."

"That's true enough; when the wind does rise in this way, and blows a strong gale, it is pretty clear that there will be something in the shape of wreck to look at."

The prognostications of Jack and the old sailor turned out, as we know, to be tolerably correct, for the storm which they anticipated was precisely that severe one which roused the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh from his lethargy, and induced him to go down to the beach, to see what was likely to be the fate of the vessel from which the signals of distress had proceeded.

So soon as the wind began to howl, and the waves to dash upon the shore, Jack Pringle and the old sailor left the cottage, and stood with great anxiety upon the beach, anxious to render what assistance they could to those who were suffering from the fury of the storm.

We have before mentioned that a boat that the Baron Stolmuyer saw swamped, had ventured out to the assistance of the crew.

In that boat had been Jack Pringle; and he had refused to allow the old sailor to accompany him, on account of his age.

"No, no," said Jack: "this is a work for youngsters, and they and they only ought to set about it. You remain where you are. We know well enough that your will is good, and let that be sufficient; and now, my lads, who will go with me?"

Jack soon got a few good volunteers, and started out on his chivalrous expedition, to see what could be done towards rescuing some of the crew of the distressed ship.

But, alas! what the baron had said about the fate of that boat was true, although he was incorrect as regarded the consequences of its swamping to all on board; for Jack Pringle, in consequence of being a first-rate swimmer, and possessed likewise as he was of great coolness and presence of mind, contrived to reach shore again, although he was the only one of the ill-fated crew who really did so.

But, as Jack himself said, they died in a noble cause, and as everybody must die some time in some sort of way, he didn't see that they had anything very particular to complain of in that respect.

It was on the second occasion, however, that Jack was going out with a life-boat, that the baron reached the beach, and then, as if indignant that such daring attempts should be made to save what he evidently thought so little of, namely, human life, he retired in indignation again to his home.

But not all the barons in the world would have stopped Jack in his chivalrous enterprize, and so he proceeded

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at once to carry it out to the best of his ability; and he did pick up a man who was nearly exhausted, and clinging, with but a faint hope of deliverance, to a portion of wreck.

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## Chapter CVII. THE YOUNG SAILOR SAVED BY JACK PRINGLE TURNS OUT TO BE AN IMPORTANT PERSONAGE.

It was not the least gratifying part by any means of Jack Pringle's, going to the sea-side, that, in consequence of that occurrence, he had been instrumental in saving the life of a fellow-creature; and when he returned to the cottage of the fisherman, bearing in his arms the apparently lifeless remains of a young man, who had been clinging to a portion of the wreck, the cheer that greeted him from the bystanders was certainly the most grateful music that had ever greeted his ears.

He had a strong impression on his own mind, that the young man whom he had removed from the wreck would recover, and that impression he was wonderfully well pleased to find verified by the fact.

The care and assiduity of the family, upon whose hospitality the young stranger was thus by the fury of the elements thrown, succeeded shortly in restoring him to perfect consciousness.

He showed a disposition, then, to arise, but this Jack Pringle and the old fisherman would not permit, for they both knew from experience in such cases, how essential rest was; so they darkened the room in which he lay, and left him to himself.

"Well," said Jack, as they sat together; "what do you think of that young fellow? I cannot, for my own part, make out very well what he is, although I can say what he is not, and that's a seaman."

"No, he is no sailor, certainly; and he is more likely to have been a passenger on board the merchantman, than anything else; and if so, it's an odd thing that he should have been the only one saved out of the ship's crew, when there much have been men used to such disasters, and one would think capable of taking care of themselves."

"It is an odd thing; but there is no accounting for it; we shall hear all about it, though, when he recovers sufficiently to speak to us without doing himself any mischief."

"Certainly; and that will be after he has had a sleep, for then he will be all right; for, mind you, I don't think he was insensible on account of having been in the water so much, as because he was so thoroughly tired out, that he didn't know what he was about."

The stranger slept for about four hours; and then he awakened, greatly refreshed by the slumber, and quite able to give some account of himself without fatigue.

After expressing his most grateful thanks for the service that had been rendered to him, to which Jack listened with great impatience, because he really did not consider it a service at all, but one of the most natural things in the world for a man to do, who saw another in distress, he said, —

"I was captain's clerk on board a king's ship called the Undine, and we had a smart affair with a nest of pirates on the African coast. We were absolutely attacked by four or five of their vessels at once, and, having sunk three and captured the remainder, during which, however, we lost some officers and a number of men, our captain determined upon sending home a dispatch of the transaction, which he entrusted to my care."

"Hang pirates!" said Jack. "They ought all to be hung up at the yard-arm, without judge or jury; but, I suppose, they are by this time pretty well settled."

"I have no doubt of it, for it was the captain's intention to steer to the nearest port, and there be evidence against them, and get them in due course executed. He put me on board a merchant vessel with my dispatches, and a more prosperous and pleasant voyage we could not have, until the storm which arose off the coast here, and proved the destruction of our vessel."

"Ah!" said Jack, "it's always the case, if anything happens, it's within sight almost of the port you are bound to."

"So it is," said the old fisherman. "All is safe out in the blue waters; but, when you least expect it, and things are looking quite pleasant, and people a-brushing themselves up to go on shore, then, all of a sudden, something will occur, and you will find yourselves a wreck."

"It would seem so," said the young stranger; "and, at all events, that was our evil fortune, whatever it may be any one else's, for we were, indeed, just congratulating ourselves upon being at home, or nearly so, when this terrific storm arose, and, I suppose, I am the only survivor out a crew of twenty-eight men."

"The only one," said Jack, "I am sorry to say. All had sunk before the life-boat had reached you, and, what's

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more, several brave fellows lost their lives in the first attempt to pick up some of the crew; so it has been a most disastrous matter altogether."

"But cheer up," said the fisherman; "it might have been worse, for I have known cases when a ship has gone down, and not left one survivor to say who or what she was; or tell the tale of her destruction."

"And I too," said Jack.

"On what part of the coast," said the stranger, "am I? for, during the night, we have drifted so far, and been so beaten about by the gale, that whether we came twenty miles or a hundred I cannot tell."

"Why, the town close at hand here is called Anderbury."

"Anderbury!" exclaimed the young man. "Is it possible that my faculties have been so confused by the danger I have been in, as not to know this coast. This is the very place to which I should have proceeded post-haste, directly I concluded my business in London at the Admiralty."

"Indeed. Then you had better stay here at once, and go to the Admiralty afterwards; for, I dare say, that will answer the purpose just as well, at all events. And, I suppose, you have lost your dispatches."

"I have, indeed; but yet it is my duty to report myself, as soon as possible. But, now that I am in Anderbury, I cannot resist the opportunity of calling upon a dear friend, who resides in this town. Do you happen to know a family of the name of Williams?"

"No," said Jack; "I never heard of them, except you mean a Bill Williams, that was once on board the Ocean frigate, as cook."

"No, no. I mean a family residing here, one of the members of which is dearer to me than life itself."

"Well," said Jack, "it's good fortune that has cast you here, since that is the case. It is not likely that I should know anything of the people you speak of, because I am a stranger in the place myself, and have come a distance of twenty-five miles, just to have a look at the sea, and nothing else, and good fortune brought me here in time, it appears, to save your life, and I only hope you will find your sweetheart true to you."

"I can have no doubt of that."

"Well, it is a good thing to be confident; but, for my part, I always had very serious doubts, and, when I came off a voyage, I frequently found that my sweetheart had picked up with somebody else, in the course of about a week after I was gone."

"But, in this case," said the young stranger, "I would stake my life upon the fidelity of her whom I wish so much now to see."

"Well," said Jack, "of course you please yourself; but, before you make a fool of yourself, by calling upon her, just satisfy yourself upon the subject, that's all, and get some friend to make an inquiry for you, or else, perhaps, you will be served as I was once."

"How was that?"

"Why, the fact is, when I was younger than I am now, I took a fancy to a nice little creature, of the name of Jemima West, whom I fully intended to marry, and so I told her, before I started upon one voyage that I meant to be my last; for, you see, I had a pretty good stock of prize money, and I meant to set up a public-house at Liverpool."

"And did she prove false to you?"

"A little. When I came home, of course I walked off straight to where she lived. Her father and mother were very respectable people, and amused themselves with selling coals and potatoes. So, in I walked, as I used to do, into the shop, and so on, bang into the parlour, and there sat Jemima, much as usual, neither very clean, and neither very dirty. Well, on the other side of the fire-place was a fellow smoking a pipe, and, when I caught hold of her, and gave her half-a-dozen regular kisses, he takes his pipe out of his mouth, and opens his eyes like an old crocodile."

"Well, my girl,' I said; 'how are you?'"

"'Oh, I don't know,' she said; 'I didn't expect to see you any more.'"

"'No,' said the fellow, with the pipe, 'and I'm d — d if ever I expected to see you at all. Who the devil are you?'"

"'Who the devil are you?' says I; 'but, however, that don't much matter, for be you whom you may, if you don't pretty quick take yourself off, I'll kick you out.'"

"'That's a good joke,' says he, 'to talk of kicking a man out of his own house, after coming in and kissing his

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wife like a steam-engine. A very good joke.'

"Wife!" says I. 'Do you say you are this fellow's wife?'

"Yes," says she, and she pretended to wipe something out of the corner of her eye with her apron. 'Yes,' says she; 'I thought you were drowned long ago, and so I thought I might as well be Mrs. Juggles.'

"Now you may guess, messmate, what a d — d fool I looked after that, and how glad I was to back out; so, you see, I advise you to make some inquiries just before you take upon yourself to be so positive about your sweetheart."

The young man laughed, as he said, —

"I think I'll chance it; and, notwithstanding your misadventure, I have some reason to believe that I shall not be so unfortunate; but at all events I will take your advice and make some previous inquiries. It shall not be said that I fell into any misadventure of that nature for want of ordinary caution."

"That's right, don't be above taking advice; and, do you know, I sha'n't be at all surprised, that you will find your sweetheart going to be Mrs. Somebody else; but come, here's dinner will be ready directly."

"Yes," said the old man; "it will as soon as my son returns from Anderbury, where he has gone to buy a bit of fresh meat for you, for I thought you would be tired of fish, and we had nothing else in the house."

"I regret much giving you so much trouble; but I shall have my pay to receive when I reach London, and will take care that you are amply recompensed."

"Oh, don't mention that; and, by—the—bye, here he comes. Well, Tom, what have you brought?"

"A leg of mutton," said Tom; "I ain't a judge of nothing else, but I thought I might venture upon that, at all events. I think somebody told me it was very good with shrimp sauce."

"Rather an odd mixture, that, Tom, and not quite usual I should say."

"Well, the fellow was on the grin that told me, on account of an old woman that had been to them to ask for some more credit for a month or two, because her daughter was going to be married to a baron somebody, who they say has taken Anderbury—on—the—Mount, and is immensely rich."

"Did you hear her name, Tom?"

"Oh, yes; I have seen her before in the town. It's old Mother Williams, and it's her daughter Helen as is going to be married."

"Well, I never!" cried Jack; "I say, messmate, didn't I tell you? The murder is out, now; that's your sweetheart, ain't it?"

The young man turned very pale, and for a few moments he did not speak; but when he did so, he said, —

"There must be some mistake; I could stake my life upon her constancy."

"Then a precious goose you would be," said Jack, "to do any such thing, for I wouldn't stake my little finger upon any woman. Why, man, it's just what you ought to have expected. It's the way with them all, out of sight out of mind, and I am only surprised at a fellow of your sense not knowing that, for you seem to be up to a thing or two."

"It cannot be — it cannot be — I must go myself to seek Helen, and at once put a stop to these rumours, which, I am convinced, arise from some misconstruction, and probably a confusion of names. I know that Mrs. Williams is a selfish woman, and it is possible that she might not hesitate in sacrificing one of her daughters to gold, but that one cannot be Helen, who has pledged her faith to me."

"Well," said Jack, "take advantage of any doubt you can, but it would be very absurd for you to go interfering in the matter yourself. You leave it to me to make the necessary inquiries, whilst you remain here snug and unknown, and I promise you, on the word of a British seaman, that I'll bring you exact news all about it."

"I accept your offer gratefully, for if she be faithless to me, I wish never to encounter her again, but to leave her to enjoy what happiness she can with that other for whom she has broken her faith with me."

"Good," said Jack; "that's the wisest plan, for, after all, you see, in these affairs who's to blame but the girl herself? and you can't very well give her a thrashing, you know; for, as regards the fellow, of course, she don't say anything to him about you, and he can't tell but what she is a regular free trader."

"True — true — and the best thing, therefore, I can do, to make certain of controlling my temper in the transaction, is not to see her, unless I can make certain that she is faithful to the vows she has plighted to me; but let me beg of you, as quickly as possible, to end my state of suspense and doubt."

"I believe you," said Jack; "I'll go at once to find it all out. You sha'n't be in doubt much longer, and, of

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course, I hope that things will turn out to your satisfaction; although I can't say I expect they will."

"The hope that they will, is life itself to me, and I shall wait here with an impatience bordering upon positive agony for your report."

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## Chapter CVIII. THE DECISION AGAINST THE DOCTOR, AND MORE NEWS OF VARNEY, THE VAMPYRE.

It will be remembered that Dr. Chillingworth, although he had, without doubt, ascertained that Varney had proceeded to London, hesitated about following him there without the full connivance and consent of the Bannerworths; and now, at the very first opportunity he had, when he found the admiral and Henry together, he introduced the subject.

He detailed what he had already done in the way of tracing Varney from place to place, and ended by declaring his conviction that he was to be found in London.

"It is not only of importance," he said, "to discover Varney on account of the property which I think he has taken with him, but it really amounts almost to a public duty to do so, when we consider the evil he has succeeded in bringing upon us, and that some other family may be soon suffering from similar machinations."

"But, doctor," said Henry, "I presume you have no disinclination to admit that the principal view you take of this subject, is as regards its connexion with the supposed sum of money which Varney has taken with him?"

"I freely own," said the doctor, "that I should like to place that money in your hands, because I think you are entitled to it; and, perhaps, that is my principal motive, but it certainly is not my only one; for, as I consider Varney quite a curiosity in a medical point of view, I certainly wish to follow him up, and should be extremely sorry to lose sight of him altogether."

"But you must be aware, doctor," said Henry, "that there really is something like positive danger in following such a man up; and, although he feels himself under such great obligations to you, that I do not think he would willingly do you an injury, yet there is no knowing what so strange and irascible a temper might not be goaded to."

"I have no dread of danger."

"I dare say you have not," said the admiral; "but I give my vote against having anything further to do with Varney."

"And," said Henry, "although I cannot withhold an expression of admiration for the doctor's perseverance, I beg him to think that we oppose his pilgrimage in search of the vampyre, because we feel more for his personal safety than we fear any of the machinations of Varney."

"Well, gentlemen," said the doctor, "since I am in a minority, of course I must give in, and say no more about it. I should certainly have liked to find the fellow; for it is my impression that he certainly has a good many thousands of your money in his possession. But, as it is, I will say no more about it; although I shall retain my opinion that you are ill-advised in not following him up."

"Oh," said the admiral, "it wouldn't do to follow people up always."

"I don't know that. There's that Quaker, for instance, who has got possession of Dearbrook."

"The Quaker!" shouted the admiral. "D — n the Quaker! I'll follow him up while I have a guinea left, or a leg to stand on. What the deuce made you mention him? for you know the very sound of his name is enough to put me in a fever. The Quaker be hanged, an infernal thief as he is!"

It was well known to both Henry and the doctor, and, in fact, to all the family now, that the mention of the Quaker was always enough to drive the admiral nearly frantic; so that we are inclined to think Dr. Chillingworth was actuated by a little spirit of vengeance when he made that remark, and that, on the whole, he was so vexed at the non-participation of the Bannerworths and the admiral in his views concerning Sir Francis Varney, that, on the irritation of the moment, he did not scruple to say something which he thought would be annoying; but his downright good feeling so got the better of anything of that sort, that, turning to the admiral, he said, —

"I do apologise — I ought to apologise for my calling to your attention anything of a disagreeable character; for I have no right whatever to do so; and it was only upon the impulse of a moment, I assure you, that I uttered the words."

"Doctor," said the admiral, "I know all that as well as you can tell me; so just say no more about it, if you please, for I don't want to hear one word upon such a subject."

"Well, then," said the doctor, "now that I stand acquitted of doing or saying anything of a doubtful or



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disagreeable character, I can only tell you that I shall persevere in my opinion, and that it is just possible, though not very likely, that I may, upon my own account, do something in the matter."

"All of which," said Henry, "I am very sorry to hear you say, doctor."

"But why are you sorry?"

"Because I cannot help anticipating danger. I feel almost certain that it will ensue, and, in that case, no one will more bitterly regret that you mixed yourself up in the affair than I shall."

"Oh, do not presume any such thing," said the doctor, jestingly. "You may depend Varney and I understand each other too well for there to be much danger in my intercourse with him. There is something about the fellow yet that will not permit him to do any deliberate wrong to me; and, strange as the feeling may appear, I cannot help acknowledging that I like him in some things, and that, having been the means of restoring him to life, I feel, somehow or another, as if I were bound to look after him."

"Well, that is rather absurd," said the admiral, "I must confess. But, however, doctor, if you have any such feeling, by all means carry it out — I won't say nay; but by any means find him out, if you like, and if you can make him a decent member of society, in Heaven's name do so."

"I do not expect that," said the doctor; "and if I only keep him out of mischief, I shall be sufficiently satisfied, for that would be accomplishing a great deal with such a man."

"Promise me one thing," said Henry, "in connection with this affair."

"What may that be?"

"It is that you will not take any step in the matter without letting us know. Of course, you are a free-agent in the transaction, and have as much right as anybody to say or to do anything as regards Varney, the vampyre; but still, knowing so much of him as we do, I, for one, certainly would be glad to be made aware of anything you were attempting concerning him."

"That I will promise you, so you need be under no possible apprehension on such a score, but feel completely at your ease that nothing is being done unless you know of it."

At this juncture, a servant entered the room with a letter, which was addressed to Henry Bannerworth, and, upon opening it, he uttered a sudden exclamation of surprise.

"What is it?" said the admiral; "you seem astonished, Henry."

"I am, indeed, astonished, and I may be. Who do you suppose, admiral, this letter is from?"

"I can't possibly take upon myself to say."

"Why, from no other person than Varney, the vampyre."

"Indeed!" cried Dr. Chillingworth; "and does he offer restitution? — does he offer to return the money he so wrongfully has got possession of? — tell me that."

"I cannot answer you, for I have not read one word of the epistle; I only see by the signature that it is his; but as it is impossible that there can be any secrets between myself and Varney, I shall read it to you aloud, and you shall both of you be able to judge concerning it."

The admiral and the doctor assumed attitudes of attention, while Henry, after glancing his eyes slightly down the contents of the letter, commenced reading it as follows: —

"To Henry Bannerworth.

"Sir, — Probably the last person in the world from whom you might expect to receive a communication, is he who now pens this epistle; but as it is penned with a good feeling towards you and yours, I hope and trust it will be received in a kindly spirit.

"Admitting that the circumstances under which I left the protection of your house were such as to require some explanation from me, it is that explanation which I now proceed to give.

"Circumstances made it imperatively necessary that I should adopt a course of conduct that should no longer make me a burden to those who had more cause to wish me dead, than to assist me in maintaining existence.

"Without, then, the least sinister motive towards you or any one belonging to you, I left your home secretly, and at once, not being willing to listen to remonstrances that I knew would be spoken kindly, but which I knew at the same time could not be very serious, inasmuch as my presence cannot possibly be otherwise than a severe tax upon your kindness and your patience.

"I cannot be so besotted as to think for a moment, that you can forget, although a generosity of temper, for which I give you full credit, might enable you to forgive, the injuries you have received from me; but I could not

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make up my mind to reside under your roof on such terms; and since my recovery from the violence of a lawless mob, the question in my mind has been, not whether I should leave you or not, but how I should leave you, and where I should betake myself to.

"At length, finding it impossible to come to any rational conclusion upon these points, and that time was rapidly wearing, so that it became necessary, if I came to a conclusion at all, I should come to it quickly, I resolved to leave without giving you any notice of the fact, and set up my staff, as it were, in the wilderness, and proceed in whatever direction chance might point out to me.

"This, I say, was my resolve, and I have carried it into execution. All I ask of you is, to forget me, and not to waste any thought upon the man who will never do any injury to you, or to any one belonging to you, and who hopes you will make no inquiry for him; but, should you meet him ever, you will pass him by as if you knew him not.

"These few words come from him who was

"VARNEY, THE VAMPYRE."

There was a dead silence when this epistle was concluded, and all seemed busy with their own opinions as regarded this communication, which certainly was one of a singular nature, and highly calculated to excite their surprise.

Upon the whole, though, there was one extremely evident conclusion to be drawn from it, and that was, that Varney was extremely anxious not to be interfered with.

"Can anything be more transparent?" exclaimed the doctor; "it is just as I say, Varney wants to try some new scheme, and is very much afraid that he may come across us in some way, and be baulked in it, by our exposing what his real character is; and, if anything could give me a stronger impulse than another to follow him and see what he is about, it would certainly be that letter."

"I do not think you need be afraid," said Henry; "for the letter, bearing as it does that signification, is such a one as induces me to believe he is fearful that some circumstances may throw him in our way, and in that case, that we may spoil his sport; and of the likelihood of such a thing occurring, he is, of course, a much better judge than we can be. So I should say, let him alone, and see if anything really turns up concerning him; if it does, we have a fair principle action before us, for we have no occasion, merely because he has asked us, to be quiet and peaceable, if we find him playing any pranks, or attempting to play any pranks."

"That's my opinion, too," said the admiral; "be quiet and take no notice, and it will be an odd thing to me, then, if you don't soon hear something of Master Varney, and that may be a something, too, that may astonish us."

"It that all the letter?" said Dr. Chillingworth.

"Yes, with the exception of these words in a postscript, --

"Any communication addressed to V. V., General Post-office, London, will reach my hands promptly."

"Ah! then there's the gist of the matter," said the doctor; "the vagabond wants to be assured that we shall not interfere with him; and then he has got some rascality in hand, you may depend, which he would set to work about in real earnest."

"I shall not write to him," said Henry, "but shall pursue quite a different course of policy, and wait patiently for what may happen, for I am convinced that is the only plan to pursue with any chance of benefit or success."

"And you will bear in mind, doctor," said the admiral, "that the fellow in this letter talks of giving us an explanation, and yet not one word does he say about jumping upon your back from the garden-wall. The deuce a bit does he explain that."

"No," said the doctor; "nor did I expect he would. Such a man as Varney is not likely to criminate himself; and, while there is a doubt about whether he is that person or not, you may depend he will not be the man to take any pains to dispel it."

"Of course not -- of course not."

"Well," said the doctor, "I can only tell you all one thing, and that is, that, whatever you may think or flatter yourselves, this affair is very far indeed from being over, and sooner or later, something yet very serious will occur in connection with Varney, the vampyre. Do not fancy that you have got rid of him, for, most certainly, you have not."

The doctor spoke these words so oracularly, that they sounded extremely like one of those predictions founded upon such a firm basis, that they are sure to be carried out by future facts, and both Henry and the admiral felt as

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if they had heard truth from some one who knew well what he was uttering, and was not likely to be mistaken.

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## Chapter CIX. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDING OF THE BARON STOLMUYER OF SALZBURGH.

There is a common adage which inculcates the necessity of striking while the iron is hot, and this was an adage which, to judge from her conduct, seemed to have made a great impression upon the mind of Mrs. Williams, and she thought that, as regarded her daughter's feelings, the iron was hot, and that, if she struck now, she might be able to wring from her a consent, no matter how reluctant, to call the Baron Stolmuyer her husband.

The objects which Mrs. Williams felt certain she should succeed in achieving by such an union in her family, were far too weighty to be easily dispensed with. They not only comprehended the five hundred pounds which the baron had so judiciously promised her upon the wedding day being fixed, but she had an eye to after circumstances, and considered that the son-in-law who could spare five hundred pounds, as a mere bribe to her, would be an endless source, from whence she could draw her pecuniary supplies.

"And then," thought Mrs. Williams, "there are the other girls to get off, too, and what a famous opportunity it will be to do that, when they can be at all the grand parties the baron will give at Anderbury House."

To an intriguing woman, such as Mrs. Williams was in reality, all these advantages appeared in full force; and, if ever she made up her mind thoroughly and entirely about anything in the world, she certainly did that her daughter Helen should be the Baroness Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh.

She certainly wished, in her own heart, that the baron had chosen one of her other daughters, because then she knew that she would not have had to encounter the opposition she had done, and, perhaps, had still to encounter, in the case of Helen; but, as it was, that part of the business could not be helped, and she, Helen, was to be sacrificed.

If the baron had thought for twelve-months over the matter, he could not have come to a better conclusion, as to the best means of making Mrs. Williams a zealous partisan of his, than by distinctly naming a sum of money that she should have, and when she should have it, for now she considered that each moment's delay was a piece of actual criminality on the part of Helen, inasmuch as it was keeping her, Mrs. Williams, out of a large sum of money.

There was one thing, however, which she did at once; and that was to go to the different tradespeople who had had the awful insolence to stop the supplies, and tell them that her daughter Helen was about to become the Baroness Stolmuyer, and that, if they continued to execute orders, and to wait with patience, they would all get paid within one month.

This positive announcement staggered some of them, for they would hardly have thought it possible that she would have made it, if there had not been some great foundation for truth in it, of some sort, and it was one of these announcements which, as the reader is aware, had been overheard by Tom, the son of the old sailor, and which, when reported, had created so much consternation in the mind of the young man who had been saved by Jack Pringle from the wreck.

On the following morning, the lady received a laconic note from the baron, in which were the words: --

"Madam, -- Have you settled with your daughter the day and hour of my nuptials with her? I have drawn a cheque in your favour, and only wait your further proceeding in the affair to sign it, and send it to you.

"I have the honour to be, madam, yours truly, "STOLMUYER.

"Mrs. Williams."

This note put Mrs. Williams into a perfect fury of impatience. The idea, that actually a cheque for five hundred pounds should be drawn in her favour, and only awaiting the signature of the baron, and that, by one word, her daughter Helen could procure that signature, was absolutely maddening.

She rushed, at once, to Helen's room. \* \* \* \*

Poor Helen knew enough of her mother to feel convinced, from the first, that no possible exertion would be spared for the purpose of forcing her into that marriage, which had no charms, alas, for her, but which, on the contrary, presented itself to her in the most hideous of all possible aspects.

From the first moment that her mother had broached it, it had seemed in its remembrance to lie at her heart like a lump of lead. She seemed already to feel that, after an unavailing resistance, she would have to yield, and

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then that her future existence would involve in it all the pangs of despair and regret.

"Alas — alas!" she said; "under what fatal planet was I born, that I should be so unhappy as I now am? What will become of me, and how shall I gather resolution enough either to bear with seeming patience the fate that afflicts me, or to resist the machinations of my mother, who would force me to wed this man whom I cannot love."

The long absence of her lover was so perplexing a source of woe and reflection to her, that already it had sapped much of the joy of her young existence.

"He surely ought," she said, "and might have found some means of communicating to me long ere this. He might well know, and must know, that suspense is, of all feelings, the worst to bear. Oh! why am I thus deserted by all, and left to the mercy of the worst of circumstances?"

With her sisters, poor Helen could have no sympathies in common; either of them would have been delighted to change places with her, as regarded the fact of becoming the Baroness of Saltzburgh, and they had towards her a tolerably cordial ill-will, on account of her superior charms, which made her so much admired, while they were left to "pine in maiden meditation fancy free."

But to Helen Williams, this gift of beauty was what it truly has often been described — a most dangerous one, and she would have given the world to have been able to wear an appearance that would have repelled, instead of attracted, the Baron Stolmuyer.

She was in this desponding state of mind, revolving in her mind her dismal prospects, if she should consent to wed the baron, and her equally dismal ones if she should refuse — for well she knew how painful a position with her family such a refusal would place her in — when her mother entered the room.

Mrs. Williams had so thoroughly determined that this marriage should take place, that she could not be said to have now sought her daughter to persuade her to it; but, on the contrary, to insist upon it. The sisters, too, with whom this unnatural mother — or rather, perhaps, we ought to say, too natural, but too common mother — had held a conversation upon the subject, were anxious, despite their jealousy upon the occasion, that the affair should proceed, because certainly the next best thing to themselves making such an alliance was to succeed in getting it made by some other of the family, and they fully intended making Anderbury-on-the-Mount their home.

"What, Helen!" exclaimed Mrs. Williams — "in tears as usual!"

"Have I not cause for weeping, mother?"

"Well, well; I cannot say much to you beyond the few words I have come to say. I have, I fear, as regarded this affair of the offer that was made to you by the Baron Stolmuyer, behaved precipitately."

"Oh, mother," cried Helen, with renewed hope, "I am rejoiced to hear you say so. Then you will not now ask me to sacrifice myself to a man whom I can never love? Say no more of the past. It is sufficient that you have awakened to better resolves now, dear mother, and I shall be happy."

Such words as these ought to have softened the mother's heart; but such a woman had no heart to soften; and, after a pause, she proceeded in her plan of operations.

"Well my dear, perhaps it is all for the best."

"It must be for the best, mother, because it never can be for good that I should have consented to plight my vows to one whom, of all others, I cannot look upon with the least affectionate regard. Indeed, mother, so much as I can absolutely dislike any one, I dislike that man."

"There's no occasion to say anything more about it, my dear. I have come to bid you farewell, and Heaven only knows when we may meet again."

"What do you mean, mother?"

"I mean, my dear, just what I say; I am going now at once to a prison."

"A prison?"

"Yes. It certainly is not an agreeable idea; but, as I told you, I was too sanguine, and built too much upon your consenting to marry the baron, so I borrowed a sum of money to pay some pressing debts; but as I have not been able to repay it, I am arrested, and have now only persuaded the man to go away upon giving him my solemn promise that I will, in half-an-hour's time, be at the gates of the town gaol."

Helen heard this declaration with a feeling of perfect horror. She was too little acquainted with the usages of society to see what a transparent lie it really was, and, to her mind, it did not appear improbable that a man who came to arrest anybody should take their word to come to the gaol in half-an-hour.

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"Oh! mother, mother," she sobbed, "can this be?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Williams, "if it can be or not. All I know is, that it is so, and that I am perfectly willing to pass the remainder of my days in a dungeon."

Helen's ideas of prisons were all procured from romances, and she was not at all surprised, consequently, to hear her mother talk of a dungeon; and if she had added something about chains, and bread and water, and a heap of straw merely for a bed, it would have found a ready credence with poor Helen.

No wonder, therefore, that the idea of such a catastrophe presented itself to her in the most terrific colours; and she saw at once all her recent congratulations upon an escape from a marriage with the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh scattered to the winds of Heaven.

She was so petrified with astonishment and grief, that for some moments she could not speak, and Mrs. Williams took care to improve upon that silence by adding, —

"I am sure I should be the last person in the world to ask any daughter of mine to make a sacrifice; but as I have been so foolish, because I took a pride in my family, as to go into expenses I cannot stand, why, of course, I must take the consequences."

"Oh! no, no."

"Oh! it's all very well to say, 'Oh! no, no,' but it's oh! yes, yes; and all I have to ask of you now is, to say that business has compelled me to leave this part of the country, and after that, the best way will be to say that I am dead."

"Heaven help me!"

"And then, of course," continued Mrs. Williams, in the most martyr-like and self-denying tone in all the world; "and then, of course, people will leave off making any inquiries about me, and you may all of you in time manage to forget me likewise."

"Mother, mother, is not this cruel?"

"My dear, I really cannot say that I think it is. I am, and have been, mistaken, and perhaps I did push the affair of your marriage with the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh a little too far, and too much counted upon it. I know I am apt to be too sanguine — I am well aware of that. It's a little peculiarity of mine, but I cannot help it; and when we have those little peculiarities, all we can do, is to put up with it as best we may."

"But, mother — — ."

"Oh! it's no use talking."

"Is the creditor so very inexorable?"

"Yes, and only on one account; he thinks I have deceived him, that's the fact; and having asked me to give a decided answer if the wedding-day was fixed between you and the baron, for nothing else would satisfy him, and as of course I could not say that, he got quite furious, and at once threatened me with law proceedings, which I did not think he really meant; but it appears he did, for here I am arrested."

"But can nothing be done?"

"Not that I see. The baron, when he made the proposal, was anxious for an immediate reply, and then he would have made some very handsome settlement, which would have been soon known, and anybody would have trusted me. But as it is, the only thing that can save you all, will be for me to go to prison at once, and so disappear."

Helen wept bitterly.

"And therefore, my dear, I beg you won't think anything of it. I am quite willing to go at once, without any more fuss about it. But I have not yet said anything to your sisters, because I thought that the first explanation was due to you in the affair, since you were the most mixed up with it."

"Oh! this is too dreadful — much too dreadful!"

"Farewell — farewell. We may meet again, or we may not. I wish you all manner of happiness."

Mrs. Williams moved towards the door, but before she reached it, Helen sprung after her, and detaining her, cried, —

"No, no. It must not be. If there is an imperative necessity for some victim, let me be it. Oh! let me be it."

"What do you mean, Helen?" asked Mrs. Williams, in pretended surprise.

"I — I mean, mother, that — that I will, to save you, give up all hopes of happiness in this world, and that although I would far rather go at once to my grave, I will, since my destiny seems to point out that it must be so,

consent."

"Consent to become the Baroness Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh, .Do I hear aright?"

"Yes, yes. Heaven help me! I feel that I have no other hope. The dreadful alternative that is presented to me, leaves me no other course to pursue. I must, and I do consent, if it will at once save you from the prison."

"It will, my dear, if I can succeed in convincing my importunate creditor that you have really consented, and that it is not a scheme of mine merely to escape a prison. But if you write a few words signifying your consent, that will be quite sufficient."

This was an artful proceeding on the part of Mrs. Williams, for although she by no means intended to put the baron in possession of such a document, yet she considered that by having it, she completely protected herself from any reproaches which he might otherwise cast upon her, should any hitch arise in the proceedings, or anything go wrong with the affair, even at the last moment.

The few words in writing, which sufficed, as Mrs. Williams thought, fully to commit poor Helen to the marriage, were freely written, for there was no duplicity in the character of Helen, and what she said she would consent to, she was quite willing to write.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Williams, "although you don't feel happy just now about the marriage, you may depend upon it you will enjoy your existence very much; for when you get a little older, you will find that it is, after all, the possession of ample means that is the most important thing to look to."

Helen shook her head, but she made no reply. She did not at all agree with what her mother said, but she felt by far too much depressed to argue the point with her just then.

"You will all your life," added Mrs. Williams, as she left the room, "have the great consolation of knowing that you saved me from a prison, and in so doing, absolutely saved my life, for although I did not say before, I am quite sure I should have died."

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## Chapter CX. JACK PRINGLE CALLS UPON MRS. WILLIAMS, AND TELLS HER A PIECE OF HIS MIND UPON AFFAIRS IN GENERAL.

Jack Pringle never promised anything without an intention of performing it, whether he could succeed or not; and accordingly, when he promised that he would make due and dilligent inquiry, for the purpose of ascertaining if Helen Williams was indeed faithless, he proceeded at once to do so in the most direct manner in the world, viz. by calling upon no less a personage than Mrs. Williams herself, and popping the question to her in a manner which almost precluded the possibility of her returning anything but a direct answer.

This was a measure which few persons would have attempted; but having, as it had, all the characteristics of boldness about it, it was not one that he was likely to fail in, but, upon the contrary, calculated in every respect to be eminently successful.

He proceeded to the town in perfect ignorance of its locality, or even of the abode of Mrs. Williams, except so far as a very involved description had been given to him of the route to her house by the old sailor's son, Tom, who certainly was not the best hand in the world at a direction.

But Jack was never at a loss, for, some how or another, by the force of a good-tempered manner that he had, he contrived to make friends wherever he went, and among them he soon found one who was willing in every respect to take pains with him, and to walk with him to the door of Mrs. Williams.

"Thank ye, messmate," said Jack; "and if ever I meet you again you may make up your mind that you have met a friend. And so this is Mrs. Williams's is it?"

"Yes," said the man; "this is Mrs. Williams's."

"And what sort of a creature is she?"

"Oh, why, as to that, she is not the sort of woman I like; but there is no accounting for tastes, you know, and other people might like her very well."

"You are a sensible fellow," said Jack; "and I should say you have quite wit enough about you, that if you fell into the fire you would get out again as soon as you could."

The man hardly knew whether to take this as a compliment or not; but at all events he bade Jack good-day civilly enough, and took no notice of it.

Jack then boldly knocked at the door, and when the one miserable servant of the Williamses made her appearance, and asked him what he wanted, he replied, —

"Why, I have principally called to tell you what a remarkably fine girl you are, and after that I should like to see mother Williams."

"Go along with ye," said the girl; "you are only joking, and I can tell you that missis would just as soon give you to a constable as look at you."

"Oh, no, she wouldn't," said Jack; "for good-looking fellows are scarce, and I dare say she knows that as well as possible, and she would much rather keep me herself than give me to anybody."

"Well, I'm sure!" said the girl. "You are like all the rest of the men, and have a pretty good opinion of yourself; but, if you really want to see missis, I may as well tell her at once."

"To be sure," said Jack.

Mrs. Williams, from a room on the ground floor, had heard that some sort of conversation was going on at the street door, and she called out —

"Susan, Susan; how dare you be talking there to anybody! Who is that, I say — tell me who that is immediately?"

"It is me, ma'am," cried Jack.

"And who is me?"

"Why, ma'am, I have come on a delicate mission; I have got something to say to you as is rather particular."

Mrs. Williams's curiosity was excited, and perhaps some of her fears, for when she had told Helen that she was drowned in debt, she had, hyperbolically speaking, not far exceeded the truth, and therefore she dreaded refusing seeing any one who came to ask for her, lest, smarting under the aggravation of such a proceeding, the party, be he whom he might, should leave some message that it would not be quite pleasant to her for Susan to



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hear.

This was the respect, then, which placed Mrs. Williams positively at the mercy of any one who chose to call upon her, and which induced her to give an audience even to Jack Pringle, who, under ordinary circumstances, she would, as Susan had correctly observed, have not scrupled to place in the hands of some guardian of the public peace as an intruder into her house.

When Jack was shown into the apartment where the lady waited to receive him, he made what he considered a highly fashionable and elegant bow, which consisted in laying hold of a lock of his hair in front, and giving it a jerking pull at the same moment that he kicked out his foot behind and upset a chair.

"How do you do, ma'am?" said Jack.

"You have the advantage of me," said Mrs. Williams.

"I rather think I have," said Jack, "and I mean to keep it, and an—out and out thing it would be if I hadn't, seeing the many voyages I have had, when I dare say you was never out of sight of land in all your life."

"I certainly never was," said Mrs. Williams; "and I hope I am speaking to some officer, and not to anybody common."

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said Jack; "I'm a rear—admiral of the green, and what I come to ask you, is, if there is going to be a marriage in your family?"

"Rather an eccentric character," thought Mrs. Williams; "but anybody may see in a moment he is a gentleman, or else he would not be an admiral of the green; I know there are admirals of all sorts of colours — and so I have no doubt he is quite correct. Yes, sir, there is going to be a marriage in my family, I am proud to say, for my daughter Helen is going to marry what might be called quite a foreign potentate."

"A foreign potato. None of your gammon — don't be poking your fun at me."

"A foreign potentate, I said, sir — a kind of monarch — a potentate, you know."

"Oh, I understands; I dare say them fellows lives on potatoes, and that's why they calls them such. But are you sure it's your daughter Helen, because I was thinking of proposing for her myself?"

"Really, then, Admiral Green, I am very sorry, but she is going to be married to the Baron Stolmuyer, of Saltzburgh."

"The baron what? did you say? Stonemason and Saltpot? What a d — —d odd name, to be sure."

"Dear me, what an eccentric character!" thought Mrs. Williams; "but quite the gentleman. Admiral Green, it's Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh is the baron's name."

"Oh, I knew it was something about salt; but, however, it don't matter; and when is the ceremony to come off, ma'am?"

"It is left to me, sir, to fix the day, and I shall do so, of course, at my convenience; and I can only express my great regret, Admiral Green, that you should have been too late; but, you see, the baron's offer was so unexceptionable, and he is really quite a wealthy individual — which his offering me a cheque for five hundred pounds, is a convincing proof — that I really could not think of refusing him."

"What! five hundred pounds?"

"Yes; I assure you, Admiral Green, that he had pressed upon my acceptance five hundred pounds."

"The stingy devil."

"Stingy!"

"Rather. Why, I meant to have asked you to accept of a couple of thousands, and a large estate that I have got, which brings in as much every year, and that I really don't want."

"Two thousand pounds and a estate! Gracious Providence! I don't know what to say to that; really Admiral Green, you are so very liberal, that, upon my word, I am quite puzzled. Two thousand pounds, and an estate worth two thousand pounds a year! — did you really mean that, Admiral Green?"

"To be sure I did. What else could I mean? but I don't want to interfere with a foreign potato and a Baron Saltbox."

"Well, but, my dear sir, stop a moment — let me think."

"No, ma'am," said Jack, "I ain't quite such a humbug as you takes me for. I say nothing, but it's very likely that your baron will turn out to be some half—starved swindler who is going to wind up his affairs by doing you, and sarves you right, too — I wishes you good morning, ma'am"

So saying, Jack, despite the remonstrances of Mrs. Williams, whose cupidity was so strongly excited by what

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he had said, that she would gladly have thrown overboard the baron, and who now began to look with something like contempt upon the five hundred pounds which she had before thought was quite a large sum.

"How odd it is," she exclaimed, when she was alone; "how odd it is, that after I have been looking about, I don't know how long, for a decent match for some of the girls, all the men should come at once, and want Helen — it's an extraordinary thing to me, very extraordinary. Dear me, if I could but have secured Admiral Green for Juliana, and so got her married on the same day with Helen, there would have been two thousand five hundred pounds for me at once. What a capital thing! I would not have spoken of it to anybody, but I would have paid all the tradespeople about here eightpence in the pound as a composition, and then I could have gone and lived in London quite comfortably.

Thus is it ever with such schemers as Mrs. Williams — success brings with it quite as many evils and distressful feelings as failure, and now the agony of what she thought she had lost, much more than counterbalanced any satisfaction she might have had in procuring her daughter's consent to the marriage with the baron.

This consent, although we know how it was wrung from Helen, we certainly much blame her for giving, because no human power could really force her to marry any one who was not her choice, and the mere fact that her mother represented how deeply she was in debt, ought not to have been sufficient to induce Helen to consent.

She might and ought to have taken a much higher view of the subject — a view which should have excluded a consideration of James Anderson: that view should have been a refusal to commit the perjury of solemnly vowing before Heaven to love and honour a man for whom she entertained such opposite feelings.

But Helen was not a close reasoner, and although all the argument was upon her side, and all the propriety, and all the justice, we grieve to say that she did not avail herself of either to the extent she ought to have done; but, on the contrary, gave up those moments to regret which should have been far better employed in resistance.

When the consent which we have recorded had been wrung from her, she gave herself up to the most melancholy reflections, weeping incessantly, and calling upon Heaven to help her from the pressure of circumstances which she was quite competent to relieve herself from, if she could have persuaded herself to make the necessary efforts.

At last it seemed to her that she had hit upon a plan which might afford her some relief, but in projecting it, she little knew the real character of the man she had to deal with.

This scheme was to tell the baron candidly that she loved another, and, whether that other was living or dead, his remembrance would so cling to her, that she could never love another, and that, in making her his wife, he, the baron, would be laying up for himself a source of regret and disquietude, in the feeling that he possessed one whose affections he could never hope to obtain.

"Surely," thought Helen, "if he be at all human, and if he have any of the natural pride of manhood about him, he will shrink from attempting to continue a suit that must be mortifying in every one of its stages, and which cannot confer upon him even the shadow of happiness."

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## Chapter CXI. THE WEDDING-DAY FIXED, AND THE GUESTS INVITED.

When she was to receive so handsome a reward for the intelligence that she had wrung a reluctant consent from Helen to be the baron's bride, it was not likely that Mrs. Williams would let a long time elapse before she communicated that fact to him, and, accordingly, she started to do so personally.

It would appear that the baron fully expected her, for he made no remark at all expressive of surprise, but received her with that courtly grace which Mrs. Williams attributed to his intercourse with the highest and the noblest.

He did not seem so impatient as any one would have supposed a very ardent lover would have been, and, before he would allow Mrs. Williams at all to enter into the object of her visit, he requested her to be seated, and would insist upon placing before her some of the very choicest refreshment.

Indeed, as often as she then attempted to enter into the subject-matter which had brought her there, he interrupted her with some remark of a different nature, so that she found it very difficult to say anything regarding it.

At length, however, when he had satisfied the claims of hospitality, he said, —

"I presume that I shall have the pleasure of listening to something particularly pleasant and delightful to me, inasmuch as it will convey to me the realization of my dearest hopes."

"Why, my lord baron, I must confess," said Mrs. Williams, "that notwithstanding the extremely liberal offers of Admiral Green — "

"Admiral Green, madam? This is the first moment I have heard of such a personage."

"No doubt — no doubt; but for all that, since we have had the honour of your offer for the hand of Helen, Admiral Green has made one, and such a liberal one that it's quite distressing to refuse him."

"Then allow me to say, madam, that I hope you won't distress yourself about it, but accept of Admiral Green at once. I should be very sorry indeed to stand in the way of any advantageous arrangement, and, therefore, I beg you will close with Admiral Green."

The adage about coming to the ground between two stools forcibly presented itself to the memory of Mrs. Williams, and she replied, in a great hurry, —

"Oh, no, baron, certainly not — certainly not. I have refused the admiral on your account. I told him, most distinctly, I could not think of entertaining his offer for a moment, and I refused him at once."

"Then why trouble me about him, madam?"

"Oh, I thought I would only merely mention it, because the admiral said he would have great pleasure — which, of course, was a very liberal thing of him — in handing me a cheque for two thousand pounds."

"Oh, now I understand," said the baron. "I give you credit, madam, for having a good reason for making this report to me. You think that I may be induced to emulate the munificence of Admiral Green; but when I assure you that I have not the remotest intention of so doing, probably you will think that it would have been just as well if the matter had never been mentioned."

The baron was right; for Mrs. Williams did think so; and she felt all that bitterness of disappointment which wonderfully clever people do feel when they find that some pet scheme has most signally failed, leaving behind it all the consequences of a failure: and, whatever people may say to the contrary, failures do always have bad consequences, and never leave the circumstances exactly where they were.

There was rather an awkward pause of some moments' duration, and then Mrs. Williams thought she would get over the baron completely, for she put on the most amiable smile she could, and said, —

"My dear baron, I am sure we shall all be the most happy and united family that can possibly be imagined; and it is the greatest pleasure to me to be able to give you the intelligence that my daughter has consented to become yours."

"Madam, I am much obliged."

"And, although Admiral Green did say that if I would bring him similar intelligence he would there and then, on the spot, without any further delay, hand me two thousand pounds, I said to him, — 'Admiral Green, I am only to get five hundred pounds from the Baron Stoltmeyer of Saltzburgh, and that five hundred pounds he has likewise

promised to pay me down.' Down — you understand, baron?"

"Madam, I am not deaf."

"But you understand — down?"

"Oh, I begin to see; you want the money. Why could you not say so at once? It's of no use hinting things to me; but if you had said to me at once, — 'Baron, I have brought you the consent to the marriage, and now I expect at once the five hundred pounds that I am to receive for so doing,' I should have understood you, and said at once, — 'Oh, certainly, madam; here is the money,' — as I do now. You will find that check drawn for the amount."

"What a charming thing it is," said Mrs. Williams; "what a charming thing it is to do business in such a real business sort of way; but there are so few people, baron, with your habits, and upon whom one can so thoroughly depend, as one can upon you."

"Madam, you do me too much honour. Of course, having promised you this insignificant sum of money, it was not likely that I should but keep my word; and now let me ask, when is to be the happy day?"

"If this day week will suit you, baron."

"Wonderfully well, madam — wonderfully well."

"Then, we will consider that as settled. I suppose you will have a public marriage?"

"No — no, strictly private. I am resolved, madam, not to have more than one hundred and fifty people, and to keep the expenses within in a thousand pounds; so you see, I am going to do it in the plainest possible manner, and make no fuss at all about it."

"Gracious Providence!" thought Mrs. Williams; "what would he call a public marriage, if he considers a thousand pounds expense, and one hundred and fifty guests, a private one, and making no fuss about it."

"On one of my former marriages — " said the baron, with an air of abstraction.

"One of them?" said Mrs. Williams; "may I presume to ask how often you have been married, my lord?"

"Oh, certainly. Let me see; I think eleven times."

"Eleven! and pray, sir, what became of your wives?"

"Why, really, madam, I cannot say. I hope the majority of them went to Heaven; but there were one or two I most heartily wished at the other place."

"My gracious!" thought Mrs. Williams, "he is quite a bluebeard; but, however, things have gone too far now; and I am not going to give up my cheque if he had twenty wives; and, after all, it shows he must be a man of great experience, and of great wealth, too, or so many women would not have had him; but, if that little fact about all his wives should come to the ears of Helen, I am really afraid she wouldn't have him, so I must caution him about it."

"My lord baron."

"Yes, madam."

"I think, between you and I, my lord baron, that it would be quite as well to say nothing to my daughter about her being the twelfth wife; but just let her quietly think she is the first, because, you know, my lord, young people have prejudices upon those subjects, and she might not exactly like the idea."

"Oh, certainly, madam, I shall not mention the little affairs that have preceded her's. I assure you I am quite aware that it is likely there should be a prejudice against a man who has had eleven wives; and people will think that he smothered a few of them."

"Good gracious!" said Mrs. Williams; "you don't mean that, my lord baron. I hope that nobody ever accused you of such a thing."

"Nay," said the baron; "how are the best of us to escape censure? You know as well as I, Mrs. Williams, what a bad world it is we live in; and how dreadfully selfish people are."

"Yes," said Mrs. Williams, "that's remarkably true; but it ain't often, my lord baron, that one man has eleven wives."

"No; and it ain't often that such a man would exactly like to venture upon a twelfth."

"Well, no, there is something in that; but I will now, my lord, take my leave, entertaining no doubt whatever, but that this will be an extremely happy marriage, and in every respect just what we might all of us desire."

Mrs. Williams left the baron with these words; but, to say that she believed them, would be to make by far too powerful an experiment upon the credulity of our readers.

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

When he was alone, the baron smiled a strange and ghastly smile.

"That woman," he said, "is so fond of gold, that she sells her child without hesitation to me. If, upon hearing of my pretended marriages, she had given me back my money, I should have thought some good of her; but no, that she could not do. Money is her idol, and when once in her possession, she could not dream of parting with it. But what is it to me? Have I not made up my mind to this affair, let the consequences be what they may? Have I not resolved upon it in every possible shape? Henceforward I will cast aside all feelings of regret, and live for myself alone; for what have I now to hope, and what have I now to fear, from mankind?"

"Hope! did I say I had nothing to hope? I was wrong; I have something to hope; and it is a something I will have — it is revenge. Yes, it is revenge — revenge! which I must and will have against society, that has made me what I am; and the time shall yet come when my name shall be a greater terror than it is, and that to some were needless, for it is such a terror already, that but to mention it, would cause a commotion of frightful inquietude."

He looked from one of the windows of his house, and he saw Mrs. Williams, as she proceeded down one of the garden walks, take his cheque from out her reticule, where she had placed it, and look at it attentively.

"Ah!" he said, "now she is worshipping her divinity, gold. She knows that that piece of paper carries weight with it, and that, flimsy as it looks, it is sufficient to purchase her. Fool! fool! and she thinks she is buying contentment."

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## Chapter CXII. THE SINGULAR INVITATION TO THE BARON'S WEDDING.

About three days after the transactions which we have just recorded, the admiral received a call from his friend, the attorney, and that call had a double object.

In the first place, the man of law wanted to tell him how he was proceeding, as regarded the Quaker, and there they had a great tussel about what was to be done, for, when the attorney said to him,

"Now, admiral, as regards this assault upon Mr. Shepperd, all that can be done is to let him prove his case, and then come up for judgment, and move in the court in mitigation. I dare say, you will dragged up to Westminster Hall for judgment, and I should not at all wonder, but you will get off with a fine of six—and-eightpence."

"What do you mean," said the admiral, "by letting him do what he likes?"

"In effect, it is the same thing as pleading guilty, you know, to a charge brought against you, and, by so doing, you, to a great extent, disarm justice."

"Guilty!" roared the admiral; "guilty! You will be a long time, indeed, in convincing me that there is any guilt in kicking a Quaker, and especially such a Quaker as Mr. Shepperd. Why, I'll do it again, and think it, as I do now, a meritorious action."

"Yes; but you misunderstand me. It's called guilt, you know, in law, to do anything contrary to law; and, by pleading guilty, you do no more than just admit the fact that you have kicked the Quaker."

"That's quite another thing. I have no objection to the fact, whatever, but don't call it being guilty, for that's all moonshine, and I won't have it, at any price. Guilty be hanged! I think I see it. Guilty of kicking a Quaker, indeed; I have half a mind to go and kick him again, just on purpose; and I don't know but what I may do it yet."

"Well, well, admiral, now that we have settled that knotty point, I have got something else to tell you, of a more agreeable nature."

"Out with it — out with it."

"It is this. You recollect that, upon the marriage of Miss Flora Bannerworth with your nephew, Mr. Charles Holland — "

"The marriage feast, you mean, for, as far as the marriage was concerned, they all got the better of the old man."

"Yes; the marriage feast. You recollect that, upon that occasion, you gave me leave to invite a number of persons, all of whom were very grateful, and thought very highly of you and the honour of coming into your company."

"A devil of a sensible fellow this lawyer is," thought the admiral. "It's enough to make one take to lawyers, I'll be hanged if it ain't. Go on — go on; what of all that? I am sure I was as well pleased to see them all as they were to see me."

"Well, sir, it appears that some of these persons, and especially a family of the name of Clark, have been exceedingly anxious to bestow some civility upon you in return; and, as they have been invited to a wedding, they wish to prevail upon you to go with them, as it will be a very stylish affair."

"Well, I don't mind," said the admiral. "Where is it?"

"It's as far as twenty miles off, at a place called Anderbury, and it is wished that you should bring anybody you like with you, upon the occasion."

"Well, it's civil, at all events, and I don't mind, if Henry and Charles and Flora like it, going. But, when you mention Anderbury, I'll be hanged if I don't think it's the very place that Jack Pringle has gone to, to get a sight of the salt water, for the benefit of his health."

"Well, sir, it will have none the less recommendation to you, I dare say, that it is close to the sea."

"You are right there, and, I can tell you, I was thinking of going myself, because you know, what suits Jack, in those respects, is pretty well sure to suit me; and I thought, as that vagabound was enjoying himself down by the sea coast, I might as well go and do so likewise."

"Well, sir, then I may consider I have your full consent to the arrangement, and I am sure it will be received by the parties with a great deal of satisfaction, indeed."

"Well, well, somehow or another, you talk me over to things, so I'll go, without making any more fuss about

it; and I will take Henry with me, and Charles, and Flora, and I'd take old Varney, the Vampyre, too, if we had him here. It would be a good bit of fun to take such a fellow as that to a wedding."

"He would not be the most welcome guest in the world."

"No; I should think not. But who are our invitations to come from?"

"They will come from the bride's mother, as the people I have told you are so anxious to take you with them are friends of hers."

"Very good — very good; so, as it's all right, I will speak to Henry about it, and Flora, and, I dare say, we shall all manage to get there comfortably enough. Let me see; it's just two stages for post-horses. Well, well, lawyer, you may look upon it as decided; it is to be, and there is an end of it."

In due course, on the following day, there came a note to Admiral Bell, enclosing a card, on which was said, "Mrs. Williams requests the honour of Admiral Bell's company, with his party, to breakfast, on the 10th instant, at two o'clock, on the occasion of the celebration of the nuptials of Miss Helen Fedora Williams with the Baron Stolumyer of Saltzburgh, &c., &c., at Anderbury-on-the-Mount."

"The devil!" said the admiral. "This is an odd affair — something slashing, and out of the way, I should say. Breakfast at two o'clock! that's the d — dest piece of humbug in the whole affair. Who the devil is to wait for their breakfast till two o'clock? I never heard anything better than that; but I suppose there will be something to eat, so I shall take the liberty of having my breakfast at seven in the morning, and calling that my dinner, and my lunch I will manage to get at some inn on the road."

With this card of invitation in his hand, the admiral went to Flora, and laid it before her, saying, —

"Here will be fine fun, Flora, for you. This is the invitation I spoke to you of, and they are going to have breakfast at two o'clock, lunch, I suppose, at five, dinner at nine, a cup of coffee at about twelve, supper at four o'clock in the morning, and I suppose they will get to bed at about daybreak."

Flora laughed as she perused the card, and then she said, —

"It certainly promises to be quite a fine affair, uncle; and, at all events, as we are only guests, we shall be able fully to enter into the amusement of the affair, if there be any, and I am inclined to think there will be, by the rather pompous reading of the card of invitation which has been so civilly sent to us."

"If they are ridiculous people," said the admiral, "we will laugh at them, and they cannot expect but that we should; and if they should turn out to be otherwise, they may become very pleasant acquaintances, you know."

"Assuredly; and it will not do to judge of people always by such a trivial piece of evidence as a card of invitation can afford to one; so I will endeavour to go to the wedding with an impression that they are agreeable people — an impression which, considering the complimentary manner in which they have invited us, we ought to cultivate."

"Very good; and do you speak to Charles about it, for I have not had an opportunity of so doing; and as the people have invited us handsomely, I think we ought to go in a manner so as to do them as much credit as possible; and, therefore, I should say that a coach and four, with postilions, will be the plan, and look rather stylish."

"Oh, uncle, you will be mistaken for the bridegroom."

"Shall I? Very well, I am quite willing that I should be, always provided I may chance to admire the bride; but if I do not, you may be sure that I shall take pretty good care to explain the error."

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## Chapter CXIII. JAMES ANDERSON SEEKS AND OBTAINS AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. WILLIAMS.

The report which, in accordance with what he had heard from Mrs. Williams, Jack Pringle felt himself compelled to make to the young man whom he had saved from the wreck, but too surely convinced him that all his hopes were dashed to the ground, and that it was indeed but too true that Helen had consented to become the wife of another.

There could be no mistake in the affair, or the slightest loophole for escaping an entire and complete conviction of the faithlessness of her in whom he had so deeply confided for his future happiness.

The blow appeared to fall upon him with a stunning effect, and for some time he seemed to be quite incapable of thought or action. But Jack Pringle rallied him upon this state of things, and tried hard to induce him to view the matter with the same kind of philosophy that he would have brought to bear upon it.

"Come, come," he said, "don't be downhearted about a woman. Cheer up, my lad; there's many a better fish in the sea than has ever yet been got out of it, you may depend upon that."

"I could have staked my life upon her good faith."

"Likely enough, and so can we all upon the good faith of the woman we happen to love and admire; but what is there in the whole world so common as being jilted by a wench, and when it does happen, a man should whistle her down the wind, and forget her all at once, and for ever."

"I have no doubt," said James Anderson, "that such is good philosophy; but it's a hard thing to tear away from the heart at once an image that has lain enshrined in its inmost recesses for many a month."

"Perhaps it is. But the best remedy in all the world, is to look about for another, I know that from experience in these matters. You do so, and you will soon be able to forget the girl who has jilted you."

James Anderson shook his head, and smiled faintly, as he said, --

"I fear I should never love another as I have loved her. The heart, when once it has loved as I have loved, can never know another feeling. I cannot with any hopes of success undertake such a mode of cure as that which you point out to me."

"Oh! you will think differently in a little while, I can tell you. Time does wonders in these cases, and before you are a month older, you will be in quite a different frame of mind to what you are now."

"I must confess I should not like to be all my life the subject of never-ending regret; but at the same time I do feel, that let what chances may befall me, I shall never feel another disappointment so bitter as this."

James Anderson, upon making these few remarks, shewed a disposition to drop the subject, and as it was one which certainly concerned himself more than any one else, Jack Pringle and the fisherman both agreed to say no more about it, and it rested.

But although he said nothing, the matter was far indeed from being absent from the mind of James Anderson, for it occupied him wholly, and engaged his attention to that extent, that all other thoughts were excluded therefrom most entirely and completely.

Those who had afforded him so kindly a shelter, were not unobservant spectators of this state of his mind, and Jack Pringle strove to move him from it, by calling his attention to his obligations and duties in other respects.

"Come, messmate," he said, "ain't it time you should think of going to London to make your report of how you lost the dispatches that your captain committed to your care?"

"It is so," said James Anderson, "and I shall start this evening."

"That's right, and the best thing you can possibly do, I can tell you. You will get some new appointment, and in the bustle of life you will soon forget all disappointments whatever. If you go regularly into the service, you are young enough yet to rise in it, and you may yet live to have a pair of swabs upon your shoulders, I can tell you."

"At all events," said Anderson, "I can have the comfort of knowing that I have, by being wrecked here, made some acquaintance, which I hope I may always have the pleasure to retain. I feel myself now quite well enough to walk, and I will go into the town and make some preparations for getting on to London, which I am, by your liberality, Mr. Pringle, enabled to do."

Jack made a wry face, as he said, --



## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"Whatever you do, messmate, don't call me Mr. Pringle — my name's Jack Pringle. It always has been Jack Pringle, and it always will be. I begin to think as something must be the matter when anybody calls me Mr. Pringle, and I don't like it a bit."

"I won't again then offend you by calling you Mr., but you shall be Jack Pringle, if you like, to me; and I can only say that a more esteemed friend than yourself, it is not likely I shall ever encounter in this world."

Jack was always much more easy under censure, let it come from where it might, than under praise, and consequently he fidgetted about in a most alarming manner, while James Anderson was professing to him his grateful feeling, and at length he said, —

"Belay there, belay there, old fellow — that will do. I don't want any more of that, I can tell you. It's a d — d hard thing that a man cannot save a fellow man's life, without it being at all sorts of odd times thrown in his teeth in this way. Don't say any more about it, I ain't used to being parsecuted."

This was no affectation in Jack Pringle. On the contrary, it really was to him a positive persecution to be praised; and, as James Anderson now felt fully convinced that such was the case, he determined upon avoiding such for the future.

Towards the dusk of the evening, having attired himself as respectably as the wardrobe of the old seaman and his son would permit him, for his own clothing had been completely spoiled by the salt water, he proceeded to the town of Anderbury.

By so proceeding, Jack Pringle considered that his principal business would be to get some means of quick conveyance to London; but James Anderson had another motive in his walk to the town, which he communicated to no one.

That motive was a strong desire to see Helen Williams, if he possibly could, before he left, in order that he might hear from her own lips what it was that prevented her continuing her plighted faith towards him; for he could not, from all he knew of her character, bring himself to believe that it was the wealth of her new suitor that had had any effect upon her.

"No, no," he said; "I know her far better than for one half instant to do her such an injustice; she must have been imposed upon with some account of my death; or some artful and well-arranged tale of, perhaps, faithlessness upon my part has hurried her into the acceptance of the first offer that has been made to her. If I could but obtain an interview with her for a few brief moments, I should know all, and either be able to take her to my heart again, or to find ample reason for forgetting her."

He knew the way well to that house where he had frequently watched Helen enter and emerge from; but how to send any message to her was a matter which required great consideration.

He had been absent long enough, no doubt, for some changes to have been made in Mrs. Williams's household; so that, although there had been in old times a servant who was favourable to him, and who would not only have taken his message to Helen, but would have told him all the news of the family, she, no doubt, had long since left.

After thinking over the matter for some time, so as to come to a conclusion that the difficulty about getting any message or note delivered to Helen almost amounted to an impossibility, he saw a boy come out of the house, apparently to go on some errand, and with a feeling more of desperation than reflection, he spoke to him, saying,

—

"I think you came out of Mrs. Williams's house, my lad."

"Yes, I did," said the boy; "what of that — hit one of your own size; I haven't done nothing to you."

"You mistake altogether, my boy; I am not going to touch you, you may depend; but, on the contrary, I will reward you if you will answer me what questions I shall propose to you, and I assure you they are all such as you may honestly answer."

"Well, I don't know. How much?"

"One shilling for every question."

"That's a rum way of doing business, but it ain't so bad either. Ask away, and you'll soon see how I'll earn the shillings."

"Is Miss Helen going to be married?"

"Yes — a shilling."

"Who to?"

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"To the Baron Stollandmare and a Salt Bug — two shillings."

"Will you take a note from me to her if I reward you extra for so doing."

"Oh, I begin to smell a rat. Yes, I will. You is some other lover, you is — three shillings."

"I am — one shilling."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, my young friend, if I pay you a shilling a question, I don't see why I should not charge you at the same rate; so don't ask me anything, and then you will get all the shillings to yourself, you understand."

"Oh, I doesn't see any joke in that; I don't want to ask any questions — not I. — What will you give me for taking the note? I think I ought to have half-a-crown, between you and me and the post; because, you see, if old Mother Williams was to catch me, she would serve me out pretty tidy."

"You shall have your own price of half-a-crown, and here is the note, which I charge you mind to deliver into no hands but those of Helen herself."

"Oh, I'll do it; and what shall I get if I bring you an answer back?"

"Another half-crown; so, you see, you will make a very good evening's work of it, indeed, if you are clever and faithful."

"Give me the note; I'll do it. You may always trust me, when there's anything to be got by it. My father brought me up to get my living, and he used to say to me, 'Caleb,' says he, 'always do your duty, Caleb, to those who employ you when you go out to service in a family, unless somebody offers you something more not to do it.'"

"Quite a philosophical maxim," said James Anderson; "I suppose you are in the service of Mrs. Williams?"

"Yes, I am page of all work, I am; I do a little of everything, and make myself generally useful. Where will you wait for me?"

"At this corner; and, with a due regard to performing your part well, be as quick as you can on your mission, for I am rather impatient to see its results."

Caleb, the page of all work, duly promised to be quick, and after completing an errand that he had been sent upon by Mrs. Williams, he returned to that lady's house.

We cannot help thinking that after the principles in which Caleb had announced he had been brought up, it was rather an indiscreet thing of Anderson to trust him with the note that he had already prepared for Helen, in case an opportunity should present itself of getting it delivered to her; but he was desperate, and, perhaps, did not so accurately weigh the pros and cons of the affair, as he undoubtedly ought to have done.

As it was, however, he had a faith in his messenger, which we are sorry to say was most decidedly misplaced, for Caleb did shew that he had not forgotten the lessons of his paternal relative, but that, on the contrary, he was disposed to carry them out with great tuck and perseverance.

Whether or not he would, of his own accord, have set about scheming in the matter we cannot say, but, at all events he was spared that trouble, for Mrs. Williams had seen, from one of the windows of her own house, his interview with one who was a stranger to her; for, although she had once, before he went to sea, seen James Anderson, he was much altered, and she did not recognize him; and when Caleb came in she called him into the parlour and shut the door.

"Caleb," she said, "I insist upon knowing immediately who you were talking to just now in the street, and who gave you a note."

Caleb was rather staggered at this home question, for he did not think that Mrs. Williams had seen him, and, after a moment's pause, he said, —

"What will you give, missus, to know?"

"Give — give! How dare you ask me such a question?"

"It's no use, missus, getting in a passion about it. I've got an opportunity of earning eight shillings snugly and comfortably. If you will give me sixteen shillings I will tell you all about it; and I don't mind saying, beforehand, that I know, missus, as you won't think it dear at that price; no, nor at three times as much, if you could only guess what it was."

"Sixteen shillings! It must be something wonderful, in the way of news, that I would give you such a sum for."

"That's just what it is, missus. Come, now, is it a bargain? because I'm in a hurry, and have got never such a load of things to do."

## Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood, Volume II

"Well, well, Caleb; tell me what it is, and give me the note."

"Not till I haves the money, missus. Oh, no; I knows better than that. I've got a hold on the fellow as you saw me with, but I haven't on you. Oh, no; the deuce a bit. I must have the cash first, and then you shall have the information; and, I tell you again, that it ain't dear at the price, as you will own yourself."

The curiosity, as well as the suspicions, of Mrs. Williams were strongly excited; for she began to suspect that something or another was going on in which her interests were involved; inasmuch as, upon mature consideration, she had come to a conclusion, that there was more in the visit of Admiral Green than quite met the eye.

"Well, well," she said, "I have only gold in my purse; but you shall have the amount, you may depend, Caleb, if I promise you."

"I haven't a doubt in the world," said Caleb; "but there is nothing like ready money, missus; so just hand us a sovereign, and here is four shillings change; which will be right, you know, all the world over."

This was vexatious; but, as it was quite clear that Caleb had thoroughly made up his mind not to part with his information without the cash, Mrs. Williams was compelled to hand the amount to him, which she did not do with the best grace in the world, and then she said, --

"Now, I expect you to tell me all."

"So I means, missus. You don't suppose I'd take sixteen shillings of you, and not tell you all as I have to tell you. No, missus; I'd scorn the action."

"Well, well, don't keep me in suspense; but go on at once."

"I will. There's a chap at the corner of the street, as wants me to give this here letter to Miss Helen, and bring him back an answer."

"A letter to Helen! This is news, indeed. And who was he?"

"That I don't know. I was going to ask him, but, somehow or another, I found out it was a great deal better left alone. But I should not wonder, missus, but you will find out who he his, if you read the note. People, you know, usually put their blessed names at the end of their letters, unless they sends what is called a synonymous one."

This was a good suggestion of Caleb's, and Mrs. Williams, without the smallest scruple as to the fact of opening a letter addressed to another person, tore asunder the envelope that covered young Anderson's epistle, and read as follows, in a sufficiently audible tone to enable Caleb to hear every word of it; for, in her intense eagerness, she forgot the fact of his presence: --

"Dearest Helen, -- I can still address you as such, because I have not yet heard from your own lips, although I have from the lips of others, that you have forgotten me. Can it be true, that you are about, in the face of Heaven, to plight those vows to another which were to be mine, and mine only?"

"I ask of you but to meet me, and tell me yourself that such is the case, and you will meet with neither persecutions or reproaches from me. Tell me that you are oppressed, and you know well that in me you have a defender. Name your own time and place of meeting me; and by the boy who will deliver this to you, let me beg of you, by the memory of our old affection, to send me an answer. "Yours ever, "JAMES ANDERSON."

"I say, missus, that's pitching it rather strong," said Caleb.

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## Chapter CXIV. MRS. WILLIAMS'S MANOEUVRE TO GET RID OF ANDERSON.

This exclamation from Caleb informed Mrs. Williams of the fact of his presence; and duly indignant was she at that circumstance; for, in her anger, she immediately rose to execute upon him some vengeance; and, had he not adroitly eluded her, by leaving the room, there is no doubt she would have well made him remember indulging in such a piece of impertinent curiosity.

"That wretch," she exclaimed, "has overheard me; and who knows, now, that he may actually go and tell the other. If he would betray him, he would betray me; and what redress should I get for such a circumstance?"

This was a mental suggestion which made it necessary Mrs. Williams should not only look over the fact of Caleb having stayed to listen to the letter, but likewise see him, and hold out some other inducements to him to be faithful to her, however he might chose to behave himself to other persons.

"Caleb," she said, when she had summoned him again into her presence; "Caleb, you may depend I will make it well worth your while to attend to me in this affair, and to no one else. I can, and will, pay you well; and, when the baron marries Miss Helen, I dare say, if you would like it, I should be able to get you some great place at Anderbury House."

"Well, missus," said Caleb, "I looks upon myself as put up to auction, and the highest bidder always has me. I don't mean to say but what you have done the right thing, as regards the sixteen shillings; so what would you like me to do next, missus?"

"I want you to take a note back, in answer to that which you have brought me; but, of course, the young man who gave it must suppose that it came from my daughter Helen."

"How much?"

"What do you mean by how much?"

"How much am I to get, I mean."

"Oh, I understand you. How much do you expect for such a piece of service?"

"Something handsome, I should say. What do you think of ten shillings and sixpence, missus?"

"I think it rather high, Caleb; but, nevertheless, I shall not stop at a trifle in rewarding you, provided always I may depend upon you."

"Money down," said Caleb; "you know, short reckonings make long friends, missus; besides, it's always better not to let these things accumulate; for, if we goes on doing business in this here sort of way, it would come to a good bit in a short time, and then you would think it was too much, and wouldn't like to pay it."

With a bad grace -- for Mrs. Williams never liked parting with her money -- she produced the sum which Caleb required for this new service, remarking, as she did, --

"Well, Caleb, you will soon grow rich, if you go on this way."

"Likely enough, ma'am," said Caleb; "I likes to be paid, and I don't see why I shouldn't."

Mrs. Williams soon handed him the note, which merely contained the words,

"Come at eight o'clock, and ring the door bell."

These words she wrote as much as possible in her daughter Helen's hand, and, having sealed up this extremely laconic epistle, she handed it to Caleb, directing him to go at once and deliver it to the party who was expecting him, and we must say, that this lad appeared to be one of the most thoroughly selfish rascals the world had ever produced, for he was now quite willing for money to betray Mrs. Williams to James Anderson, if there was any likelihood of his accomplishing such a purpose with safety.

But here some difficulties presented themselves, which Caleb's natural acuteness enabled him very well to see. In the first place, James Anderson, he shrewdly suspected, was not the sort of individual to be trafficked with, as Mrs. Williams was, and, considering that he had already committed an immense breach of trust, in giving the letter to Mrs. Williams, instead of to Helen, he thought, and, we are inclined to think, correctly enough, that it would be rather a hazardous thing to say anything to him about it.

"No, no," he said; "I'll just give him missus's letter, and then back out of the whole affair, for I don't half begin to like it. That young fellow looks a chap that wouldn't mind wringing one's neck for one -- for half a pin; so I'll

just leave him alone, and say nothing more about it."

James Anderson waited round the corner with considerable impatience, for, in consequence of the proceedings that had taken place at Mrs. Williams's, Caleb had been considerably delayed.

When, however, he saw him coming, hope again sprung up in his bosom, and he felt all the agitation of extreme pleasure, as he saw that Caleb had in his hand what was undoubtedly a letter.

When the boy reached him, he advanced to meet him, eagerly exclaiming, as he did so, —

"You have the letter — you have seen her, and you have her answer?"

Now, as Caleb had made up his mind to commit himself but as little as he possibly could with the young stranger, he went upon the good old adage of the least said being the soonest mended, and, accordingly, instead of making any remark which might, at a future occasion, be thrown at his teeth, he satisfied himself by placing his finger by the side of his nose and nodding his head sagaciously.

He then handed to James Anderson the letter, in the contents of which that individual became too much absorbed, short as they were, to pay any further attention to the messenger.

Caleb thought this a good opportunity of being off at once, before any troublesome questions should be asked him, so he made a retreat, with all the expedition that was in his power.

James Anderson, when he looked up from the perusal of the one sentence which the letter contained, was astonished to find his messenger gone, considering how very eager he had before been on the subject of the reward which he was to get for that service.

"What can have become of the boy?" he said; "I had a hundred questions to ask him."

So well had Mrs. Williams succeeded in imitating the handwriting of her daughter Helen, that James Anderson was fully convinced the letter was written by the chosen object of his heart.

He certainly did think that it was cold and distant, and that there might have been a word or two of affection, at all events, in it, especially considering how long he had been absent, and with what an untiring affection he had ever thought of her.

"She might have told me that her heart was the same," he murmured to himself, "or else she should have let me know at once that it was so altered I should not know it for the same. But still it is something to look forward to an interview with her. She may not have had the time to write more, or, perhaps, she may have doubted the messenger, and thought it unsafe to utter anything concerning her real feelings in this epistle."

Thus hoping, and trying to persuade himself of the best, did James Anderson anxiously expect the hour when, by the note that had been sent him, he expected once again to look upon the face of her, the remembrance of whom had cheered him in many a solitary hour, and enabled him to bear up against evils and misfortunes which otherwise had been insurmountable.

It wanted but a very short time to eight o'clock, and, at five minutes before that hour, James Anderson walked, with trembling eagerness, up the steps of Mrs. Williams's house door. His hand shook, as he placed it upon the bell-handle, and told himself that the time was come when all his doubts would be resolved, and he should really know what he had to hope, or expect, or to fear.

There was certainly a something weighing heavily upon his heart, an undefined dread that all was not well, and, during the interval between his ringing and the opening of the door, he felt all that sickening sensation which is ever the accompaniment of intense anxiety, and which renders it so fearfully painful a feeling.

The door was opened by a female servant, who had received her instructions from Mrs. Williams, so that she knew exactly what to say, and, without waiting for the visitor to announce himself, she said,

"Are you Mr. Anderson, sir?"

"Yes — yes," he said.

"Then I am ordered to ask you to step into the back parlour."

"All is right," thought James Anderson; "she expects me, and has prepared for my reception."

He followed his guide implicitly, for he fully believed, as who would not, under the circumstances, that she was in Helen's confidence, and so could be safely trusted.

She led him into the back parlour, where there was no one, and then she said, —

"If you will be seated for a few minutes, sir, my mistress will come to you."

"Her young mistress, she means," thought James; and he prepared himself to wait, with what patience he could assume, and that, under the circumstances, was by no means a large amount; for he had been kept in such a

constant worry by what had occurred, that suspense became one of the most agonizing feelings that he could possibly endure, now that his fate was about so nearly to be decided.

It was no part of Mrs. Williams's plan to keep him waiting, for she certainly had no fancy for retaining such a customer in the house as James Anderson; for, playing the double part that she was, she knew not what sudden accident might happen to derange her plans, and, probably, render them completely abortive.

For all she could tell, Helen herself might actually descend the stairs, and enter that very room where she hoped a short conference would suffice to get rid of the troublesome claims of James Anderson for ever.

She was in the front parlour when he was shown into the back, for they communicated by folding doors. She had but to open these doors, and at once show herself to the astonished Anderson, who little expected on that occasion to behold the mother instead of the daughter.

He gave a sudden and violent start of surprise; but, as Mrs. Williams had determined to do the dignified, and to call herself quite an injured person, she took no notice of the evident agitation of his manner, but said, with an assurance that only she could have aspired to, —

"May I ask, sir, under what pretence you write notes to my daughter, at such a time as this? — notes which appear to me to be highly calculated to do her some serious injury, and, consequently, which I cannot but think are intended for that precise purpose."

"Mrs. Williams," said James Anderson, "since it appears that I have been betrayed, and that the messenger I perhaps foolishly trusted, has delivered to you, instead of your daughter, the note I addressed to her, I have only to say, — "

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mrs. Williams, interrupting him; "but as it was from my daughter I received your note, you may spare yourself the trouble of blaming the lad whom you had to seduce from his duty by bribes and corruption."

"From your daughter?"

"Yes, sir; from my daughter; and I flatter myself that there is too good an understanding between my daughter and me, for her to keep as a secret such a circumstance."

This was a very unexpected blow to James Anderson — a blow, indeed, which he was totally unprepared for; and yet, although he doubted, he had no means of disproving what Mrs. Williams chose to assert in the matter; and she quickly saw the victory she had gained over him, and the difficulty in which he found himself.

"Sir," she said, "if you have anything more to add to what you have already said, my daughter desires that you should inform me of it, and if it consists of such matter as she can properly take notice of, she will reply to it by letter; but she most unhesitatingly declines an interview, which she considers cannot be productive of anything but unpleasantness to all parties, and most of all to her, considering her peculiar situation, and that she is so soon about to alter her condition, and become the wife of the Baron Stolzmueller, of Saltzburgh."

"I'll not believe it," said James Anderson, "unless I hear it from her own lips."

"I suppose, sir, when you see it announced in the 'County Chronicle,' you will believe it?"

"That," said James Anderson, "it never will be; for I cannot, will not, dare not think that one whom I have loved so well could be so false."

"False, sir! What do you mean by that? I shall really have to speak to the baron, if you use such expressions towards his intended wife."

"I'll speak to the baron," said James, "and that in a language he shall understand, too, if I come across him."

"If you threaten, it will be my duty to inform the baron, so that he may take such legal steps as he may be advised."

"I repeat to you, Mrs. Williams, that I will not believe it; and since you force me to such a declaration, I have no hesitation in saying that I think you are quite capable of selling your daughter to the highest bidder, and that the baron you mention probably occupies that unenviable position — a position which no gentleman would, for a moment, wish to occupy, and which he perhaps is not fully aware of. I will see him, and explain to him that there are prior claims to the hand as well as to the affections of your daughter."

This threat rather alarmed Mrs. Williams; for she thought it possible that, if the baron really found there had been a former lover in the case, probably much encouraged by the lady, he might think his chances of happiness rather slender, and decline keeping the engagement which she considered was so suspiciously commenced.

This might or might not be the result; but at all events it was worth consideration, and placed the matter in

rather a serious light.

Therefore was it, then, that Mrs. Williams determined to have recourse to her last expedient, and that was the production of the written promise to marry the baron, which it will be recollected, in the excitement and impulse of the moment, she had succeeded in procuring from Helen.

"Well, sir," she said, "since you will not be convinced by any ordinary arguments, and since you doubt my word in this matter, I shall be under the necessity of adopting some means of explaining to you the matter fully, and of showing you that there is abundance of proof of what I have asserted."

"Proof, madam! Nothing but an assurance from Helen herself can come to me in the character of proof in such an affair as this. Let me see her; for the mere fact that you sedulously keep her from me, involves the affair in a general aspect of suspicion."

"Read that, sir, and if you know anything of the handwriting of her whom you affect so much to admire, it ought to resolve your doubts."

James Anderson took the paper in his hand, and glanced upon it, and by the sudden change that came across his countenance as he did so, Mrs. Williams saw that it was having all its effect.

He could not doubt it. He knew that signature too well. He had it to some affectionate documents, which he felt would remain by him to the latest day of his existence.

It was indeed a horrible confirmation of all that had been told him — such a confirmation as he had never expected to see, and which, at one blow, dashed all doubt to the ground.

"Now, sir," said Mrs. Williams, with a triumphant air, "I trust that you are satisfied — at all events, of one fact, and that is, that my daughter had consented to become the Baroness Stolzmueller, of Saltzburgh; and without at all entering into the question of anything which may have passed between you and her upon other occasions, I think you ought, as a gentleman, to perceive that the sooner you go away the better."

"It is enough," said James Anderson. "Falsehood, thy name is woman."

"I really can't see, sir, what you have got to complain of, for people have a right to alter their minds upon the little affairs of life, and I don't see, then, wherefore they should not have a similar privilege as regards things of more importance."

"Enough, madam — enough. What steps I may hereafter take, upon a due consideration of these affairs, I know not; but now I bid you farewell."

Mrs. Williams was very glad to hear these words, or rather the last of them, because she was in perpetual dread, during the whole of the interview, that something would occur by which a meeting would take place between James Anderson and Helen herself, at which some very disagreeable explanation might take place.

It was a wonderful relief to her when he had left the house, and she heard the streetdoor close behind him, and she drew a long breath when such was the case, as she said to herself, —

"Well, thank the fates, that job is over, and a good thing it is. There is no knowing what mischief might have been the end of it, if it hadn't been stopped as it has. He is not a bad-looking young man, and if he had had a few thousands a year, I certainly should not have made any objections to his being my son-in-law; but I possibly cannot, and will not, have poor people in the family. There is no end of trouble and bother with them; and instead of getting your daughters off hand, it's just taking on hand, in addition, some man for their amusement."

James Anderson went sorrowfully enough back to the fisherman's cottage, where he related to the sympathising old seaman what had occurred; for Jack Pringle was not there, and if he had been, James Anderson knew very well he would have got no sympathy from him on account of the circumstance; for the frailties of the softer sex did not seem to have any material effect upon Jack Pringle or his sympathies, since, by his own account, he had been jilted so often, that he now thought nothing at all of it.

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## Chapter CXV. THE RETURN OF THE RESUSCITATED MAN, AND THE ROBBERY AT ANDERBURY HOUSE.

The morning after the occurrences that took place in the bone-house of Anderbury, broke dimly and obscurely over the ocean in the neighbourhood of that town. For leagues away, as far as the eye could reach, there was a haziness in the atmosphere which the fresh wind that blew did not dissipate.

There was a white light rising in the horizon, which did not cast the warm glow over the bosom of the ocean as it sometimes does; it was dull, cold, and cheerless; there was nothing that could be called beautiful.

The waves dashed about, and came tumbling over each other, their crests now and then covered with foam, which was swept off by the fresh breeze that blew over the ocean. It was just daylight.

There was nought in the landscape save the water and the sky -- nothing else to be seen for miles. Yes, there was one object, and that was a boat washed to and fro by the waves as it sat on the bosom of the sea, wafted hither and thither, as the waves impelled the boat, which appeared to be empty, for no oar was used, and no human form was visible.

But that boat, so lonely, and left to its own guidance, or rather that of the waves, contained a living being; it was he who had striven so hard to escape from the baron on the preceding evening.

He sat alone in the bottom of the boat; he was fatigued -- he was shivering from the cold. The great exertions he had undergone were followed by a reaction; but he knew not where he was, or in which direction to pull, or where the shore lay.

How long he lay in this helpless condition it is not known; but he occasionally lifted his eyes upwards and across the sea, to watch which way the vessels sailed, and if any should come in sight.

The scene was one of singular desolation and dreariness, in which nothing could be seen that could cheer the eye or gladden the mind of man. Now and then, to be sure, a gleam of sunlight would cross the dreary water, but it seemed to enliven only a small spot, and that but for a very short time, for it soon again became obscure.

There was the dreary ocean with its leaden-coloured sky, and then the boat at the mercy and direction of the wind and waves, both of which seemed in no placid humour, though not absolutely squally. \*\*\*\*

A vessel from Cherbourg, with brandies, for the port of London, was sailing direct for the mouth of the Thames, making for the Foreland, where it would have to round the point, and then enter the mouth of the river.

There were three or four men and a couple of boys on board; when they came near the boat, --

"Boat, ahoy!" shouted the man on the look out; "boat ahoy!"

No answer was returned to the shout, and the men on board shouted too, and crowded to the side of the vessel to see what was going on, and who was in the boat. The captain came up; he had been in the cabin, but hearing the shout, he came on deck to see what was the matter.

"What is the matter?" inquired the captain, looking around.

"Boat on the starboard," said one of the men; "nobody in it, I think; she seems to be drifting."

The captain looked at the boat for some minutes attentively, when one of the men said, --

"Perhaps some wreck, and the boat has been swept away by the waves, or the crew hadn't time to get into her, or something of the sort."

"No," said the captain, "she's not a ship's boat -- a shore boat, that's what it is, lads. She's got washed out, or somebody's drowned, upset, or rolled out."

"Something of the sort, I dare say, sir."

"Well, we needn't heave to for her -- she's no service to us, and we can't spare time."

"I think there's some one in her."

"But the boat's drifting," said the captain; "but she's coming this way, and that will be the easiest way to ascertain the truth of our conjectures."

They steered the vessel so as to meet the boat, which the sea was beating towards them; and in about twenty minutes or half an hour, they came within a couple of score yards of the boat, when they could plainly perceive that some one was sitting in the bottom of the boat.

"Hilloa!" shouted the captain; "boat ahoy! -- ahoy!"



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The man who was in the boat looked up, and seeing the vessel, he answered the cheer.

"Throw him a rope," said the captain to one of the men who were standing by.

A rope was made fast to the vessel, and then it was thrown by a strong arm to the boat, and came right athwart it, and was immediately made fast by the man who was in it.

He then began immediately to haul up the rope, and so draw his boat up alongside of the vessel, and then he came on deck.

"How now, shipmate, what do you do out at sea in such a cockle-shell as that?"

"Nothing," replied the other.

"Nothing! Well, you have come a long way to do that. What induced you to come to sea, or were you driven out, or how was it you came here?"

"I was driven out against my will," replied the man; "I was rowing about shore, when I fell asleep, thinking myself safe, having secured the boat, as I believed, safely enough."

"Ay, ay," said the captain; "and so you found out, when you awoke, your mistake?"

"I did. My moorings had broken away, which was only a boat-hook and a rope; the tide coming up, lifted the boat hook out, and I have been out to sea ever since, and don't know where I am."

"Why that must have been last night," said the captain.

"Last night it was," said the stranger.

"You have been to sea all night then?" added the captain, taking a long gaze at the stranger.

"Indeed, I have, and I am quite cold and hungry. I had nothing with me. I rowed some time in hopes of getting in shore again, but unfortunately didn't succeed. I suppose I got further out to sea, rather than nearer in shore."

"Well, that is about the fact; you must be about fifteen miles out at sea," said the captain; "you are a long pull away from shore, I can tell you, and how you will get get back again, I don't know; but, at all events, you are a very queer-looking fish, and I suppose your being out at sea all night, and no stores, makes you look as you do; though, upon my soul, I don't know what to make of you; but you mustn't starve. Here, lad, bring up some coffee and boiled pork. Can you eat any?"

"Thank you," said the unfortunate being, "I can. I have been out for many hours."

"Well, sit down, or rather go below, and eat; when you have done, come up, and we will tell you where the land lies, though I don't know how you will keep it in sight for the life of me."

The man then went below, where there was some coffee royal made for him -- that is, coffee and brandy -- and some salt pork was given to him, of which he partook most plentifully, apparently, while the captain muttered to himself, --

"Well, of all the odd-complexioned shore-going sharks as ever I saw, you are the oddest! D -- d if I should think he was wholesome -- there's a great deal of the churchyard about him."

"There isn't a very agreeable look about him," said one of the men; "but I suppose he has been so much frightened, that he looks more like a vampyre than anything else."

"Aye; or a revived corpse."

"Yes, sir."

"But that arises from his being so terrified and starved, as well as fatigued; exposure all night, all added together, has almost changed the current of his blood."

The man came up now, having had sufficient provisions below, and had expressed himself much gratified with the coffee-royal to the cook, who, in his own mind, thereupon declared that he must be a Christian after all, though he had obtained by some means the complexion of a white negro.

"And now," said the captain, "if you like to go with us to London, you shall go with us, for, as I said before, we cannot run into any port before we get there, for the wind is favourable and strong."

"I would sooner get back by means of my boat," replied the man, "if I were sure of making land."

"You might, if you could keep in a straight course, but there is the difficulty; you cannot do so very well without a compass, and that you have not got."

"No, indeed, I have not -- though with it I have no doubt of being able to reach the land."

"I have," said the captain, "a small one below, a pocket compass; you shall have that, and see what can be done; and if you get ashore, it will have done some service at all events."

"I shall be greatly obliged to you for your kindness," said the stranger; "but I am wholly at a loss to know how

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I shall ever be able to repay your kindness."

"Say nothing about that; we who get our bread upon the sea, know well the risks we all run, and therefore do not mind lending a hand to each other when in distress and trouble."

"I will endeavour to save some one else in your line of life, if I cannot you," replied the stranger, "and so, if it be possible, make some return."

"Aye, that will do mate; do a Christian's charity to any one whom you may cross, and I shall be well paid for my trouble."

The boat was now brought up alongside the vessel, and, before the stranger embarked, the captain said to him, as he held the compass in his hand, --

"You must place this compass on one of the thwarts of your boat, shipmate."

"I will."

"A precious vessel she is, for a voyage out of sight of land; but, never mind, you are safe enough, unless a sea was to come and roll over you -- but that's neither here nor there. Mind you keep your boat's head to the north-west, and, by so doing, you'll make land at the nearest point from where we are now."

"Thank you," said the man.

"Moreover, you must pull so as to keep her head in the direction I tell you. It will be too long a pull for you to get there by rowing -- you would get too tired to keep your seat, and you are unused to it, too,"

"I am obliged to you," said the man; "if I get to shore safe, I shall be under great obligations to you. You will have saved my life."

"I have ordered enough biscuit, and grog, and cold beef, to last you till night -- you will get to shore before that time, I have every reason to believe. In five or six hours you ought to get there; but, in case of accidents, there is enough to last till night."

"You have loaded me with obligations."

"Say no more; be off with you and pull away from the vessel as quickly as you can; for we have slackened our speed for you."

"Farewell; a pleasant voyage to you," said the man.

"Good bye, and good luck go with you," replied the captain. "Keep to the northwest, and all will be well; push off, and keep your eye on the compass."

The man did as he was desired; laid the compass on one of the thwarts; took the oars in his hands, and began to row away with good will.

The crew of the vessel crowded to the side and witnessed the departure of the boat, and when she was a few hundred yards off, the sails were spread, and the vessel ploughed through the waves, leaving the boat behind, a mere speck on the sea, diminishing each moment.

But yet while the boat was within hailing distance, the captain said to the crew, --

"Give him a cheer -- he may meet with a score of accidents before he reaches shore, any one of which will be sufficient to destroy him."

The crew obeyed, and gave a loud shout to the boat, and the captain added his own voice; the cheering huzza reached the boat, for the occupant elevated his oar, and returned it. The solitary cheer was borne to the vessel faintly but distinctly; however, they gave him one cheer more, and then pursued their way over the trackless waters. \*\*\*\*\*

The boat pursued its course for some distance, until it was too far from the vessel to be seen, and then, slackening his pace, he contented himself with merely keeping the boat's head in the direction which he had been told, and in which he knew the land lay.

There was no hurry and desire to reach the land, but merely to keep where he was; and when any vessel hove in sight, he pulled so as to keep clear of her and out of hail; and there were a great many who passed near him, and would have aided him had he required any; but that did not seem to be his object.

Midday was passed, and the sun began to decline towards the west, when the boat was gradually brought nearer and nearer in shore.

Not only was the shore visible, but the very houses might be counted, and yet he would not come ashore, but appeared to be awaiting the sinking of the sun before the boat chose to seek the protection of the land.

It was about sun-set that the provisions, which were given by the captain of the vessel, were now consumed,

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and that while they were being eaten, the occupant of the boat sat still with his eyes fixed upon the town, which was every moment becoming hidden in the approaching denseness of the night; and, at length, could not be distinguished, save by the existence of numerous lights, that shewed the precise position in which it lay.

Darkness now came on, and nothing was to be seen on the ocean whatever, and he remained yet longer at sea; but at length there was no danger of being noticed; he gradually rowed his boat in shore and secured it.

Then jumping ashore, he wandered about the town from one place to another, and, finally, he determined to make his way to Anderbury House.

"There is, at least, plenty of everything there," he muttered; "and, though there are plenty of servants, yet, in so large a place, there is ample room to secret oneself, and plenty to be had for the trouble of taking it."

He came to a small public-house, which he entered, with the view of resting a short time, and of ascertaining what was going on in the town.

There were several people seated in the public-room, and he now seated himself up in one corner of the room, unobserved by anybody.

"Well, well," said one; "there is more than one strange thing of late that has happened. The baron has given some very handsome entertainments."

"Aye, so he has," said one.

"And more than that, they say he's going to keep 'em up till he gets a wife; though I cannot tell why he should leave them off then, because women like that sort of thing too well to make any objection to its being carried on after marriage."

"The baron is very right; if he carried it on then, he would be watched by his wife, who would take good care to rate him for any attention he might pay to any of the ladies; and, therefore, it would only be keeping up the means for being scolded to keep up the balls."

"Ay, it would only be getting into hot water, and keeping the kettle boiling on purpose."

"He would," said another man, "merely be keeping the entertainments on for the purpose of showing off his wife and her self-will, as well as her power over him, and showing them all how she could rule a man -- a very favourite pastime with married women, who, when they have a partner who don't like fighting and quarrelling, and who does love peace and quietness, know how to give it him."

"I think better of the baron, who, I think, is a man who wouldn't stand much of that."

"Ah, you don't know what an upas-tree a woman can become, when she pleases."

"Well," said another, "the strangest thing that I know of is the loss of Bill Wright's boat."

"Oh! what was that? I have heard something about it, though I can't say I have heard the rights of it yet. What was it all about, eh?"

"Why, he says, when he went to bed, he left his boat safe enough moored to other boats and afloat. Bill says he'll swear she couldn't get clear without help; but she did get clear, and there is nothing to be seen of it now, at all events, and poor Bill is in a devil of a way about it, too, I can tell you, and good reason enough."

"Yes. Bill will scarce be able to get another boat, unless some good friend should give him one, and that is scarce likely, I think as times go."

"There's no ball at Anderbury House, to-night, I believe," said one of the visitors.

"None, that I know of."

"No, there is none," said another, "because I know of several who have got leave of absence; so they are short-handed there, and they would not be so if they had anything particular going on, for the baron does the thing handsomely."

"So he does."

The stranger listened to all this conversation very quietly, for some time, muttering to himself, --

"That is well. It will suit my purpose very well. I will go and see how the land lies in that quarter. I have objects in view, and some of the valuables to be found there, at all events, will aid my projects, and assist in my comfort, and I may as well have them from there as anywhere else; besides, I know more of that place. It suits my taste to do so, and will be somewhat in the shape of revenge." \*\*\*\*\*

Calling for his reckoning, which he paid, he left the house, and proceeded towards Anderbury House.

It was now nine o'clock or a little later. No one was about, or scarcely any, and those few the moving figure endeavoured to avoid. He turned out of the usual paths, and walked over the fields and unfrequented ways,

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keeping near the hedgerows, until he came to the bounds of the grounds of Anderbury House.

Here he paused, and bethought himself of the best means of entering the house unseen and unsuspected by any one, else his object would be defeated.

However, after a few moments' thought, he determined to proceed, and, for that purpose, he made for a spot where the fence was low, and ran by some trees that had been cut down and grew bushy.

Having reached there, he, by aid of the branches, contrived to get over into the grounds, and then made his way swiftly towards a plantation that ran up close to the house, and by means of which he hoped to reach the house, and perhaps to enter it.

Silently he made his way into the plantation, and just as he reached it, he saw the moon rise in the east; it was just rising above the horizon.

"Thanks," he muttered, looking towards the luminary, "thanks you did not appear before; but now you are welcome, for I can keep under cover of the trees, and the deeper the shadow, the safer I am from observation."

This was right enough.

The moon rose full, but not bright, for some clouds seemed to intervene, or rather some thin vapours, which gave her a strange colour, and, at the same time, increased her apparent size; but she rose rapidly, and as she rose that would wear off, and she would resume her silvery appearance and usual diameter.

He was now safe in the plantation, but, at the same time, it would require some caution not to be discovered, for, at times, even the plantations formed beautiful evening walks, in which many of the inhabitants of Anderbury House had indulged at various times, and especially when there was what was termed a family party.

On a moonlight night, when there were several members of the family who knew the grounds well, then they would find ample amusement in wandering about.

However, there was no such parties on this evening, and as it followed, he ran no danger. Lightly, therefore, he crept forward, making no sounds save such as it was impossible to avoid.

The foot-fall upon dried leaves -- the cracking of sticks, and the rustling of the smaller under-growth, when he came in contact with it.

"How I shall be able to pass the open spaces, I know not," he muttered; "but I have passed worse spots than this, and I may be pretty confident I shall succeed in escaping detection on this occasion; however, it shall be tried. There are few who are about -- all is quiet and still -- the very watch dogs are quiet and asleep."

He crept onward now until he came within some hundred and fifty yards of the house itself, when he paused and listened, but hearing nothing, he again came forward and approached to within a few score yards of the house, when he was suddenly arrested by the sound of voices.

He paused and listened; it was a female voice spoke near; she was evidently speaking to a man.

"Now, William," she said, "do you really believe you can get in without making any noise?"

"I am sure of it, providing you leave the window open, and the rope there."

"Yes, yes, I will. Well, that room is empty; pull off your shoes, and creep out of the door; don't let it bang together, or it may alarm some one."

"Yes, yes; I'll take care."

"Well, then, remain in the passage or room until I come to you; but should you be disturbed, you can hide yourself in any of the closets, or go up stairs, which will bring you to the floor on which is my room."

"I'll take care; but don't forget the rope, and to leave the window open."

"I'll not forget. I'll throw the rope on one side, so as to hang among the vine leaves, so that it will not be detected by any one accidentally coming this way, though that is very unlike, indeed."

"I understand; for the matter of that, I think the vine is strong enough to bear me without the rope."

"I would not have you make the attempt lest you fall, and are killed, William; be sure you do not make the trial; what a thing it would be if you were discovered, and all were to come out -- I should be ruined."

"Never fear that; I will take care, both for your sake as well as my own."

"Then good bye."

Some words were then uttered in a whisper, the import of which he did not hear, but it continued for a minute or two, and then the female said, --

"Wait here a few minutes, and you will see me come to yon window, and let down the rope; and then begone as quickly as you can."

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"Never fear for me; I will wait here until I see you at the window, and then I will leave."

The female figure he saw glide quickly away, and he watched it until she was out of sight, and then he watched for the signal also. He could see the form of the male figure, who stood within about three or four yards from the spot where he was concealed.

Then, after a time, he saw the female figure come to the window indicated by her, and then throw the rope out of it, and cause it to hang down by the side, or among the leaves of the vine, so that it could not be seen, except it were looked for.

When this was done, and the figure saw the female had withdrawn, he turned from the spot, and walked hastily away further in the plantation, and when he was quite out of hearing, and the stranger could no longer hear his footsteps among the dried rubbish in the wood, he walked cautiously forward to the edge of the grounds, and then gazed up at the house, and listened carefully to ascertain if there was any sound at all indicative of the vicinity of any human being.

Hearing none, he assumed another attitude, and prepared to make a dart forward to the window, as he muttered, --

"The coast is clear, and it will be hard, indeed, if I do not now succeed. Once in the house, I will soon secure myself, and the contents of some of the baron's drawers -- some of his gold will be mine."

Again taking a cautious survey, and, being perfectly satisfied that he was unobserved, he dashed across towards the root of the vine, and, in a moment more, he had seized the end of the rope; but he heard the sound of footsteps. What to do he could not tell, but sprang up a few feet, and buried himself among the leaves of the vine, which were very luxuriant.

The footsteps were heard closer and closer, until he could perceive the very female who had thrown the rope out of the window stop within a few inches of him, and then seize hold of the very rope he had been about to seize.

Her object was to ascertain if the rope was low enough to be reached; and, when she had adjusted it to her mind, she exclaimed, in a low voice, to herself, --

"Ah! that will do; he will easily find it, I dare say; and it will be all right. Nobody will see it."

Having satisfied herself of that, she left the spot, and returned the same way she came. It was an awkward situation as anyone could well indulge in without discovery.

"It was a very narrow escape," he muttered. "I had no idea of her coming back in that way; I never dreamed of such a thing. But no matter; I believe I am quite safe now; if not, I shall have some other escape. She must have been next to blind not to see me."

However, he got down, and then pulled down the rope straight; and, by the help of that and the vine, he then pulled himself up to the window, into which he speedily got, and found himself in an empty room.

Here he paused, to ascertain if he could hear any one moving about; but he heard nothing, and at once proceeded to feel his way, cautiously, along to the door, which he approached with a cat-like step.

Opening the door, he paused to listen, before he ventured into the landing to which it opened; but, finding the coast clear, he went through that, and then into the next room, which was apparently a store room, being filled with a variety of things of a miscellaneous character, and which were only of occasional use in the house.

This he closed, and went up stairs, where he came to a suite of servants' bed-rooms, and thence he walked about from room to room, until he came to a portion of the house he recognised, and then he made direct for the baron's own room.

"There," he muttered, "I am likely to meet with what I want; and the carpets are soft, and give no noise. I can sleep for a short time, if I will."

He made at once for the baron's sleeping room, which he opened and entered. It was empty, and he at once closed the door; then he made an instant search about for a place of concealment; and, having found one, he began to make a search for some other matters, that were not of the same, but a more valuable character in the market.

However, he found out the drawers and depositories; but he was unable to open them, because they were locked; and he must wait until the baron had gone to sleep, and then, taking his keys, he would be able to help himself, without any difficulty, to what he most desired.

He had scarcely made this determination, before he was alarmed by the footsteps of the baron, as he ascended the stairs. This produced a necessity for instant concealment; and he immediately flew to the spot which he had

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chosen; and, scarcely had he done so, before the room-door was opened, and in walked the baron himself, who brought in a light with him.

He remained walking about some time, examining a variety of matters, but appeared as though he never intended to go to sleep. There was every probability of his discovering the place of concealment; which was easily done, had he but turned his head, or moved his hand, under certain circumstances; but, as fortune willed it, the baron did not.

It was near an hour before the baron sought the repose he might have taken, but for the dominion of the spirit of restlessness; and it was even then some time before he fell into a sound slumber, apparently being engaged in deep thought.

However, he did fall asleep, and the tongue of Morpheus spoke loudly — like some human beings, through the nose; and then it was the hero of Anderbury church-yard stole from his concealment, and began to examine the chamber.

"Where are his keys, I wonder?" he thought. "He must carry them about him; but he must have left them somewhere in his clothes; and if I can obtain, and use them, without making any noise, it will be fortunate."

He found the keys, though not without making a slight jingle with them, but that caused no motion on the part of the baron, who lay snoring in his bed.

He stole to the drawers, and the key fitted; he quietly unlocked it and drew it open.

"Fortune befriends me," he muttered.

At that moment the baron turned in his bed and heaved a deep sigh, and appeared for a minute or two restless, and as if on the point of waking up.

The intruder, however, stopped short in his depredations, and paused, and then crouched down, lest the sleeper might open his eyes, and, by a momentary glance, detect him.

Suddenly he spoke, but indistinctly — very indistinctly, and yet loudly enough. The stranger started — he thought himself detected; but he found that the baron was only dreaming. He drew nearer to him, and listened to what he said.

"Ha!" sighed the baron; "she is very beautiful — very beautiful. Ha! her form and face are perfection!"

He paused, and again went on, but too indistinctly. A word or two was heard plain enough now and then, but it was impossible to form any sense of them — they had no connection with one another.

"She is a very beautiful," again muttered the baron in his sleep. "She is lovely — amiable — what a wife!"

Then he again fell into a train of half-mumblings, from which nothing could be gathered.

"Heavens, what a prize!" exclaimed the baron, and again he relapsed, but appeared more composed and quiet.

"I would he were nine fathoms deep below the level of the sea," muttered the robber; "and then I should not be bothered by him. Sleep, or let it alone," he exclaimed, between his teeth. "It would almost be safest to kill — and yet, one cry might bring the whole household upon me."

Turning to the door, he ascertained that it was locked. He turned the key, and, in doing so, made a noise with the lock which had the effect of causing the baron to start in his sleep.

"What was that?" he muttered, in sleepy accents. "I thought I heard the door go; but it can't. I locked it — I remember very well I locked it."

After this speech he fell fast asleep.

"Another escape," muttered the intruder, who rose from his crouching posture, and setting the door open, so that he could, in case of an accident, make his escape from the room.

Then he again turned towards the drawers, and began to help himself to the contents, when he accidentally struck the keys, which fell with a clash to the floor. In an instant the baron started up on his elbow, and pulled aside the curtain, to see what was the cause of the disturbance.

In a moment the light was put out, and the intruder had assumed a motionless posture; but it was too late to escape the quick eye of the baron, who instantly jumped up, exclaiming, as he laid his hand upon a pistol, which he had under his pillow, and cocked it, —

"Ah! robber — assassin! Stand, or I fire!"

The sound of the cocking of the pistol was quite enough. It came distinctly to the ear, and suggested the idea of more than ordinary danger with it; and he dashed past, heedless of the command of the baron, who called upon him to stand.

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The baron fired, and in an instant the house was filled with a stunning report, which echoed and re-echoed from room to room, filling the inmates with wonder and alarm.

The sensation produced by the sound was of that description that can hardly be described. To be awaked from a sound sleep by such a dreadful, stunning report, which carried such a sense of danger with it, that they remained in an alarming stupor for nearly the space of a minute, until, indeed, they were aroused by the shouts of the baron, was rather terrifying.

Hardly had the stunning and deafening report died away, when the baron leaped from his bed to ascertain if his shot had taken effect.

The intruder heeded not the commands or the shot of the baron, for he dashed out of the room at his utmost speed, making his way towards the lower portion of the house, that offering greater facilities for escape.

The baron, as soon as he had recovered from his first surprise, jumped out, and seizing a heavy cane that was lying across one of the chairs, he rushed after the flying figure, shouting and calling to his people to get up.

"Robbers! thieves!" he shouted. "Here, help -- help to secure the robbers who are in the house."

The intruder made for the lower stairs, but was closely followed by the baron, who could just see the dusky form of the object of his pursuit before him; but now, in the lower rooms, where there was no light at all, the shutters being up, he missed him.

The robber had taken advantage of the darkness, and doubled upon his pursuer, and hastened up stairs with the view of reaching the place where he entered.

In doing this, however, he was met by one of the men who was coming down. There was no time for deliberation, and he dashed up, regardless of the blow the man aimed at him, who said, --

"Here you are. Here goes for one on 'em."

As, however, the battle is said not always to be with the strong, so in this instance he was unable to accomplish his object, for the blow, by the agility of the robber, was evaded, and the result was, that the serving man was suddenly whirled down the stairs, and being once on the descent, he did not stop until he got to the bottom.

"Murder! murder!" shouted the unhappy individual, as he rolled down stair after stair, until his cries were stilled by a violent concussion of the head.

In the meantime the stranger rushed up stairs at a headlong speed, until he attained the landing which led to the room at the window of which he entered. Securing the door behind him, and then getting out of the window, and seizing the rope, he began to descend very rapidly, fearing he would be intercepted by those below.

He slipped down the rope rather than let himself down, and before he had got half way down, he met with an impediment, which, however, quickly gave way, and they both came down plump to the earth together.

"My God! my God!" exclaimed a man's voice, in great terror and tribulation. "What's that? what's that? Mercy -- mercy! I didn't mean to do any wrong."

The stranger heeded not the words of the terrified swain, who, it would appear, had begun to ascend to reach the dormitory of his fair but frail one, when his flame was so unceremoniously quenched in the way we have related, but dashed away from the spot, and was speedily lost in the plantation, whither the unfortunate individual when he had sufficiently recovered his senses, and released his head from the imprisonment of his hat, soon after betook himself, thankful the affair was no worse.

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## Chapter CXVI. JACK PRINGLE FALLS IN LOVE, AND HAS RATHER AN UNHAPPY ADVENTURE WITH A BOLD DRAGOON.

Jack Pringle, like other men, was subject to the vicissitudes of the passions, which placed him under a certain string of circumstances that produce results quite at variance with those which are usually anticipated when an individual enters upon the pursuits of the tender passion.

Indeed, Jack could see nothing at all unhappy, or in the least degree unfortunate, in the black eyes and rosy lips of Susan, who was most certainly the "maid of the inn," though not in precisely the same rank as the one alluded to by the song.

He had taken up his residence at the inn, had Jack. Indeed, he was partial to inns in general — there was usually a greater latitude permitted there than elsewhere; not only each one being allowed to accommodate himself as he pleased, but he could have what "baccy and grog he chose to order, as long as there was a shot in the locker.

This being the state of affairs, Jack found another inducement to stay where he was, and that was the existence of the before-mentioned Susan, who appeared to be as kind as she was good-natured.

She never refused to answer Jack's call; and when she came, she always said, —

"What did you please to want, Mr. Pringle?"

"Mr. Pringle," thought Jack. "Well, that sounds pretty from such a pair of lips."

Jack scratched his head, and turning his quid in his mouth, was often lost in admiration, and forgot all his wants at that moment, and it was not until the question was more than once repeated, that Jack was aware that he really did not want anything, especially as his grog was not all gone.

"Well," exclaimed Jack, looking at the glass, "I forgot; but never mind, Susan, I'll have another can while this is going — so I sha'n't hurry you. I wouln't hurry you, Susan — no, that I wouln't."

The course of true love never did run smooth — that is, we know, a rule that is as old as the hills — but then it is of constant recurrence, and one that it may fairly be presumed always will, to the end of the world, and possibly after.

However that may be, Jack was not without a rival, and one of a very formidable character; not that Jack valued him a piece of rotten yarn. No; he never did think anything of a landsman, especially a soldier, for it was to that class this rival belonged.

"Susan," said Jack, as he sat in the kitchen, watching the various evolutions to which the hands of Susan were applied, in the performance of her multitudinous duties.

"Well, Mr. Pringle," said Susan.

"Ah!" said Jack; and then there was a pause, during which Jack forgot even to chew his quid, and was quite abstracted in manner and thought. He had intended to say something, but it had quite escaped him; and it was difficult for Jack to hold his thoughts, as it is for countrymen to hold a pig by the tail when this latter member was well greased, and when it was of that description usually denominated a "bob-tail," a common occurrence.

"What did you say, Mr. Pringle?" said Susan, bustling about. "I am sure you were about to say something."

"Well, I suppose I was," said Jack; "but I don't know what it was now; but perhaps you do."

"How should I know? I can't tell what you are thinking about. What made you think that?"

"Because your black eyes seems to go through me, Susan, like a forty-two pounder. I tell you what, you ought to know what I want to say, because I'm always thinking of you."

"Are you, though?"

"Yes, I am," said Jack; "you're a light craft — a rare pretty figure-head you'd make."

"Lor! Mr. Pringle," said Susan.

"Well, you would, though; and I'll take three dozen and never wink, if there's one to be found half as handsome in the whole British navy, or in any other."

"To think," said Susan, "that I should be called a figure-head! Well, I declare, I never heard the like. Why, what will you not say next? I never thought that of you."

"Why," said Jack, who was very much bewildered, and didn't know precisely what to say — the turn the compliment had taken was one he couldn't understand — "why, you see, Susan, the figure-head is the



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beautifullest part of the ship, except may be her rigging, her port-holes, her sides, and her trim; but then, you see, them things ain't no manner of likeness to anything human, especially you, Susan."

"Ain't they, Mr. Pringle? Well, you know best; but I dare say it's all right, for you must know best. But my cousin says I am more like the Venus day Meditchy, than anything else."

Jack stared.

"Who?" he inquired, with his eyes opening very wide.

"The Venus day Meditchy," said Susan, speaking in a very slow, emphatic manner, for Jack's behoof.

"Don't know her," said Jack. "I'll go bail there ain't such a ship in the navy. There never was such a thing heard of, unless some of them d — d French craft; but your cousin ought to be well clobbered for saying you were like anything French. Why, you are true blue, and no French about you — is there, Susan?"

"I don't know; but I never heard there was, and I don't know if there is; but that's what he said, and he's been a long way."

"Who is he?" said Jack, laying emphasis upon the last word, to indicate that the sound was displeasing.

"Oh! my cousin."

"Well, but who is your cousin?" inquired Jack. "Have you see him very lately?"

"Yes, I saw him this morning; his regiment is quartered only a few miles from this place."

"Oh!" said Jack, "he's a soldier, then?"

"Yes, he is — a horse-soldier," added Susan.

"A horse-marine. Ah! I know 'em afore to-day; they are a rare lot to lie and gallop away. But lord bless you, they never lay alongside an enemy till you've beaten him. No — no — they can't do that."

"He'll be here to-night," said Susan. "You shall see him, Mr. Pringle; he's coming all this way to see me."

"To see you!" said Jack Pringle, who was much displeased with this piece of particular attention in the cousin, and he could not help saying so.

"But he is my cousin," said Susan; "and you know one cannot refuse to see one's friends and relations; besides, he has been at all times very kind and good-natured to me, so that I cannot do otherwise than receive him kindly."

"Oh, to be sure," said Jack; "by all manner of means; only we must understand each other, Susan; there can't be more than one captain aboard at a time."

"How very odd you do talk, Mr. Pringle. My cousin will ask you what you mean."

"Will he now?" said Jack. "Well, he may do so, if he like; but my lingo will be as good as his, I am sure; but we shall see him, however; but, Susan, you don't care anything about him, you know."

"Not a bit, Mr. Pringle; only as a cousin, you know."

"Oh! very well," said Jack; "I don't care about that a bit; but if so be you're going to carry on any games, you know, why, I won't stand it."

"Oh, honour," said Susan, looking tenderly at Jack; "honour, you know. Do you think I could be capable of doing so? No, I never do anything unbeknown to a person. No, I say, let all be fair and no preference."

"Well," said Jack, "but I want all fair, but I should have no objection to a little preference, too. Don't you give no preference to me over a soldier, Susan?"

"Don't know," said Susan; but she gave a look towards Jack that made him suspend the libation he was about to pour down his throat.

"Oh! I see how it is with you, Susy," said Jack, becoming more familiar and pleased, for Susan's black eye had a magical effect upon Jack, and he felt as if Susan must love him as much as he loved Susan; her eyes told him more than her tongue; Jack was quite sure of that.

"When is he coming?" said Jack.

"To-night," said Susan; "and you must promise me you will be very quiet and civil, and then you shall see him; only you won't take any notice of what he says or does."

"No, no," said Jack; "it's all right; I understand. I won't quarrel with him; no, not even if he were to — but splinter my mainmast, if I could stand that!"

"Stand what?" inquired Susan, demurely.

"Kissing of you," said Jack, striking the table with his fist, so as to make the glasses that happened to be there tremble; "I couldn't; I could stand the cat first."

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"Lor, Mr. Pringle! who asked you to do so? I am sure, I would not do such a thing."

"What?" said Jack.

"Why to let him kiss me, to be sure."

Jack looked, perhaps felt, electrified, and, after a moment's pause, took his quid out of his mouth, hitched up his trowsers, and then seized Susan by the waist, and gave her a kiss. It was a kiss; such a one only as a man-of-war's man could give; it went off like the report of a pistol.

"Lor, Mr. Pringle!" said Susan, "I thought you were quite another sort of a man. What would my cousin, the dragoon, have said, if he had seen you? Dear me! you must have alarmed the whole house; I didn't think you were going to make so much noise, though."

A footstep approached, and the landlady thrust her head in; but Susan was busy, and Jack was chewing his quid as grand as an admiral.

"Susan."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Susan.

"What's the matter?"

"Don't know, ma'am. Didn't know there was anything wrong at all, ma'am."

"I thought I heard a plate smash just now. Are you sure you haven't broken anything."

"Yes; quite, ma'am."

"Oh!" said the landlady. "I certainly thought I heard a smash; but, I suppose, it was a mistake altogether, However I am glad of it."

"There!" said Susan, when she had gone; "I told you how you had alarmed the place."

"Well," said Jack, who felt much abashed at what had happened, "I didn't make so much noise, either. But never mind; I'll take more care another time." \*\*\*\*\*

The evening came round, and with it came the dragoon, as fine a specimen of military dress, discipline, and riotism as can well be let loose upon a decent community, and Susan met him in the passage.

"Ah! my pretty Susan," said the son of Mars, "the star of my destiny, and the hope of my heart. While I wear spurs, I will love you, ever dearest."

"Oh! come, none of that nonsense, you know, Robert; it won't do; you say too many fine things, you know."

"Of course I do; but can I say them without occasion. No; as well might you want day without daylight — the moon without moonlight. You inspire me, you see, and without you I couldn't say anything."

"I dare say not," replied Susan; "you are such a man, that you make one believe what you say."

"You ought, since I speak the truth, and nothing else; but, come, come, we'll go in. I want to talk to you, Susan; I came on purpose to see you. There's the barmaid at the Plough and Gooseberry-bush, quite sulky because I didn't stop there; but I know I promised you I would come, and so I would be as good as my word."

"Are you sure she was sulky?"

"Certain, because she did would not say good bye."

"Well, but now I want to speak to you about something I want to explain."

"Explain, my dear. I'll explain anything that can be explained — I don't mind what it is. You'll never find me backward in coming forward with any amount of explanation that you can by any possibility require."

"That is not what I want. I have a cousin here."

"Aye; I'm not particular. I will pay her every kind of attention. I am sure you will acknowledge I am not wanting in any attentions to you."

"Oh! dear, no; but it is not a female cousin that I want to speak to you about."

"Indeed! I can't tolerate another."

"Yes, but you must. He's just come from sea, and is a very odd man, but an uncommonly good-hearted man, so don't take any particular notice of what he says or does."

"I don't mind him a bit — not the value of a pinch of snuff."

"Yes, but you must do that, only don't do anything to vex him. You can be pleasant company when you please, I know."

"And so I will."

"To please me you will; for though I don't care anything for him more than if he were my brother, yet he's very fond of me."

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"That's no recommendation to me," said the dragoon; "a spoony anchor buttons, I suppose."

"You must be civil to him, or I will never see you any more."

"Well, then, my charmer, I will say anything you like to this salt-water fish of yours; but he mustn't lay hands upon you; if he should do so, why, I should be obliged to chastise him."

"But he's a man-of-war's man."

"And I am a man of war myself, my dear."

"Lor!" said Susan.

Upon which she turned her eyes and face towards the dragoon, who could not let such an opportunity slip, and he immediately saluted her in true military style, but he did not commit the same offence that Jack Pringle did, for the former told no tale by the report — it was all quiet; and he followed Susan until they came to the room in which Jack was sitting.

"This is Mr. John Pringle," she said.

"Aye, aye," said Jack; "here am I — Jack Pringle — afloat or on shore, all the same."

"And this," continued Susan, "is Mr. Robert Swabbem."

"How d'ye do," said Jack, "Mr. Swabbem? I dare say it is so; but since we are to be shipmates, we may as well be friends — how d'ye do?"

"Pretty well, I thank you, Mr. Pringle — very well, indeed. Hope I see you quite well, and at home?"

"Yes, quite so — both ways; well, and at home."

"The devil!"

"Yes, we call him Davy Jones; but, then, I suppose, you have one on purpose, in your line?"

"Why, there's a little of the devil in us — that is pretty well admitted on all hands; and that's as much as we have any wish to have in the way of connection with the gentleman whom you name."

"Aye, aye; maybe you'll know more on him afore you are done; but no matter — sit down, messmate, we can discuss a can of grog, I reckon."

"Yes, easily. I can do my duty in any point, friend, you may best please. Facing an enemy, drinking a can, or kissing a lass. What more can you say?"

"I can do the same myself as some I know can testify, if they chose to speak," said Jack, who gave a sly look at Susan; but at the same time she nearly fell a laughing, when reminded of Jack's tremendous smack, which the landlady mistook for a smashing of crockery; "but, howsomever," cried Jack, who had relapsed into a grim smile, "we'll have a can together."

"Very well; Susan, will you do what is needful for us? If the landlady would allow me, I'd wait upon you and do all your work."

"And a pretty bobbery," said Susan, "she would make of it; you would soon get discharged for tasting the grog on its way from the bar to the parlour."

"Ah! well, I might get into trouble if I did that. What do you say, friend Jingle?"

"Pringle," said Jack.

"Oh, ah! Ringle. I have it now distinctly."

"Why, you swab," said Jack in a rage, "I ain't got no such kickshaw names as them — mine's quite different altogether, so say what you like."

"My name," said the soldier, "ain't Swab — but Swabbem, at your service."

"Ah," said Jack, "whether Swab or Swabbem, it don't much matter — we all must fill our place — some are luckier than other's, though they might be cousins."

"Cousins! curse cousins, say I."

"Same here," said Jack; and then they both stared at each other, believing each other cousins to Susan, though not to each other.

"I am glad you are here," said Susan; "I have the grog for you; it is extra strong. I know, because I put some more into it; I turned the tap on into each, and she didn't see me do it."

"Ah, Susan, I see you have a great regard for me; but it is not more than you ought, when you come to consider how I respect you," said the soldier.

"The same here," said Jack, who thought this pretty good for a cousin; "I admire Susan — she's got such eyes, and such cheeks — "

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"So she has — they are like diamonds set in roses; that they are."

"Yes," said Jack, "and as soft as velvet."

"Damme," said the soldier, "you beat me hollow. I say, messmate, where did you learn to fire your great guns off in that manner, eh?"

"Where!" said Jack, putting the can down; "why, where there were men to fire into us again. I'll warrant you it was none of your field days, where people are tearing their hearts out to look fine — no, no; the lee scuppers ran with blood, and every heart was a true British sailor's"

"Well, that was good; but when I served on foreign service, there was no getting out of the way of danger, behind a wall, stone, brick, or wooden."

"No, nor even laying on the ground — we had not even that; for as we fought, we destroyed the very building which supported us, and we had the spirits of the sea to contend against, as well as the dangers of the fight."

"Oh, it's all very well," said the soldier, "but danger's danger, and there's an end of the matter; only I wish there was no such thing as bad grog."

"That's a great evil. Why, what d'ye think we did at Portsmouth the day after we landed? The landlord gave us bad grog, and how do you think we served him? Why, we made him drink till he was so drunk he couldn't lay down without being afraid of falling, and then we cut his hair all off."

"Well, I recollect a place in Portugal where they brought us some wine which we couldn't drink. It was horribly thin and sour. We had in vain asked for better, but none was to be had at our bidding; indeed, we felt sure there was better, and we determined to have it.

"We called our landlord and told him we were resolved to ruin him if he didn't bring it up — we would have better wine; but he protested he had not got any.

"Now, we were resolved to search, and accordingly we did search until we came upon some beautiful wine — some of the best port ever I tasted, and we made free with it. At all events, we drank as much as we could drink, and then fell fast asleep, and forgot to punish our landlord for the rascality; but I suppose he was well aware of what he deserved, for he endeavoured to excite some of the peasantry about to murder us while we slept, and when we awoke, we found ourselves surrounded by a dozen men.

"There was but three of us, but we were armed, and the peasants had nothing but a miscellaneous description of weapons — old guns, swords, and clubs; but they were not the men we were.

"Well, it came to a hard fight; more blows were struck, however, than did any mischief, because we could make use of our tools, and fought so hard, that they were glad to leave us victors."

"Lor!" said Susan; "you don't mean that — do you?"

"I do, indeed; but that was nothing. I frightened a whole regiment of the enemy."

"Eh?" said Jack; "what, a whole ship's compliment, eh? Well, that will do; go a-head; you beat all the cousins as ever I heard of, if you don't never mind me, that is all about it; a good yarn, well spun, is worth a glass of grog at any time."

"Well, I'll tell you all about it; it's sooner told than done, I can tell you; but never mind, Susan, don't be frightened; it's all past now, though it was true; but the best things must have an end some time or other, and this had one too.

"I was serving in Spain. I fought against the French then; and though I say so, you may depend upon it I took my chance as well as another man. However, I had many inclinations to go a step or two beyond my strict duty, and do more than I was obliged; but what of it? If you succeed, you are sure to be rewarded; and I wanted, if I could, to capture a pair of colours, which would give me a step in my regiment.

"Charge, my brave boys!" shouted the colonel, as the enemy appeared coming down upon us.

"They were three or four to one, besides a reserve at a short distance. But we thought nothing of that; we had every reason to believe we were outnumbered; but that was all; and we drove hard at them.

"It was a glorious sight to see us full tear at the heavy-armed cavalry, in squadrons; but they had the advantage of weight and number of men; yet our shock was so great, that many of the enemy were thrown out of their saddles, and many more were killed; we hewed and hacked at each other for some time, until, in fact, the enemy began to give way.

"As soon as we began to find out that, we urged our horses on, and ourselves to strain our utmost, and we forced them back, and they began to turn about in right earnest, and show us their heels.

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"Unfortunately for us there were no other troops at hand to support us. I say unfortunately, for while we were engaged in beating a larger force than our own, and which even then outnumbered us, we were taken in the rear by the reserve, and many men were cut down before our men could be called off.

"Among those who were taken prisoners was myself. I had received one or two severe wounds, which were, indeed, considered mortal; but which were not so dangerous as they were believed.

"However, as I kept my saddle, I was taken prisoner; indeed, I was unable to offer any resistance; my eyes were filled with blood — "

"Lor! how dreadful," said Susan.

"It was dreadful to think of it, then; but I did not; I was too much occupied with my desire to do my duty, so heated and excited, to think anything about it. I was dragged away.

"Then what became of me, I don't know; but I have some recollection of having a cloak thrown over me; and I rode away in company with them. I know we went away very fast, for they dreaded another charge of our men; and they had succeeded in escaping and reforming, and they were hovering, reinforced, upon our march.

"Well, that night, as I was deemed too badly wounded to give them any trouble, or attempting to make an escape, they let me lie in a stable.

"I fainted away; and, after several attempts to restore me, they left me as a hopeless case; but it was no matter to them, they didn't grieve. I wondered in my own mind, as to the reason of their doing so much; but I suppose it was that prisoners were at a premium with them at that time; and they were anxious to return as large a number of prisoners as possible; and, upon the principle which induced the elderly dame to attempt emptying the sea with a tea-spoon, that every little was a help, they thought that if I lived I should be one more, and where the numbers were small, one was of importance.

"They gave me up as a bad job altogether, and after they had racked up their horses, they sat down for the evening to their meat and their wine. They had been all conversing together, but they were about to lie down and have some sleep, when suddenly I awoke from my trance, and walked out without at all knowing what I did.

"The men stared at me, and shook like so many aspens, but did not stir, till one of them said, —

"A ghost — a ghost!"

"This had the effect of clearing the place, for they all jumped up and ran away from the spot, leaving me master of the place; and judging that I was alone, I very soon made my way back to the quarters of the English, and got to the quarters of my old regiment, where I was kindly received, my comrades having given me up as lost."

"Well," said Jack Pringle, "you were very nearly gone certainly, though you warn't quite a ghost; but that ain't half so bad as a fire-ship — especially in towing a fire-ship among the enemy. I was once on an expedition of that sort when I was in the Mediterranean."

"Lor, a fire-ship! What's that?" inquired Susan.

"A ship-load of fire, with lots of combustibles," said Jack. "It's a thing that won't do for a plaything.

"Well, the enemy had several, and, as we came up to them, we found they had the wind in their favour, and the first thing they did was to put out several of these fire-ships. But the wind was not direct for them, it was shifting. Well, we were ordered to man the boats, and tow the fire-ships back again amongst the enemy.

"Well, you may be sure they didn't like that, especially when the fire-ships blew up. They did so with a dreadful explosion, setting fire to friend and enemy, and blowing them out of the water.

"This we did, and, as we towed the vessels along, we were fired at at a pretty smart rate, I can tell you; why, the very sea seemed to boil around us."

"Lor!" said Susan, "how dreadful! Why it's horrible here when the pot boils, and Heaven knows what it must have been there. Why, I am sure, I wonder how you escaped being scalded to death."

"Why, some on 'em did get killed," said Jack. "My starboard man was shot through the head, and one or two more went on an errand to Davy Jones."

"It was lucky for them," said Susan, "that they were sent out of the way when there was so much danger going on around you. I am sure I should have been glad."

"May be so," said Jack, turning his quid; "but I know this, them as was sent upon that errand never came back any more; they stayed away altogether; many of them becoming food for the sharks. However, we towed awayed, and, the breeze shifting, we got pretty well among them, and then we left the fire-ships where they ought to be,

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among the enemy.

"Well, we had a hard pull to get back, there being five or six ships firing broadside after broadside at us; but they never hit the boat. The other boat they did hit, and a shot went clean through her, and she went down in deep water."

"And what became of the poor men that were in it?" inquired Susan, horrified at the detail.

"Some on 'em were drowned, and some we saved," said Jack; "but we had scarcely reached our own vessel, when the fire-ships blew up, setting fire to and damaging several of the enemy, who were near at hand, and covering the sea with bits of burning timber, and many fell into the ships, setting fire to their rigging, and knocking men on the head, and doing a world of mischief besides."

"Goodness me!" said Susan, "what a dreadful thing, to be sure. I should not like to be near a fire-ship. At all events, missus is quite a fire-ship here."

There were but few observations to make. Jack thought he had quieted the dragoon, and had given him a dose of salt water; and, moreover, Jack ogled the "maid of the inn" in such a way that speedily brought the military hero to a sense of his danger, so, curling his moustache with his finger, he said, --

"Well, it's all very well talking of the dangers of the sea, but it's nothing to a storming party."

"A storming party! what's that?" inquired Susan.

"Why, I'll tell you, my dear, and then you'll know all about it. You see, we were at the siege of Bangpowder."

"Never heard of such a place," interposed Jack; "what's the bearing of that outlandish place?"

"Oh, never there, eh?" said the dragoon, contemptuously; "then you don't know it. Talk of danger, you should have been there, and you would have known what danger was. However, I'll enlighten your ignorance."

"You must see, Susan, my dear, that at Bangpowder we were very little use in the way of assisting the siege, except that we acted as outposts -- foraging parties -- and kept off the light troops of the enemy when they shewed themselves, while the infantry set to work in the trenches to work the guns."

"They did work them above a bit, too. For weeks together there was firing day and night, on our side and on theirs, so the air was never without a strong smell of gunpowder, which you might smell for twelve leagues quite strong."

"Lor!" said Susan.

"Smash my timbers," said Jack Pringle, "if you ain't a coming it strong this time."

"Well," continued the dragoon, taking no notice of what was said; "well, that was nothing -- that was a mere trifle. After some weeks' firing, we made a hole in the wall, which increased day after day until big enough for a man to enter."

"After that, a storming party was ordered; but, after more than one attempt, our men gave it up as a bad job. Our captain, being a dare-devil sort of fellow, and not liking to see men beaten back, said the breach was practicable, and could be entered."

"This was denied by the officers and men who had been defeated, and he said if his own troop would volunteer, he would undertake to enter the place."

"This was told us, and we all at once volunteered to follow him to the devil, if he chose to go."

"He at once informed the commander-in-chief, and we were ordered to mount the breach. To do this we of course dismounted, and went on foot."

"There was some little excitement upon this matter, but we were cheered as we passed, and when we arrived within a few yards of the walls, we were met by a tremendous fire of all arms."

"This, however, did not daunt us, though it thinned our ranks, and we were less in number; but up the breach we went, one man at a time. Six of them, one after another, were knocked over dead as herrings. Well, the men began to look blue over this; they wouldn't have minded rushing on in a body, and giving and taking till they all died; but to get on the top of a brick wall, one at a time, to be shot at, why it was more than they liked, especially as they had not struck one blow, or fired a single shot in return."

"Hurrah, lads!" said I; "I'll have a shy, now; come on, and follow me quick."

"I jumped up and cleared the wall, though a thousand bullets were fired, and got over clear without a shot, save one, that shaved some of my whisker off."

"We all got over, and soon after we were followed by some of the other regiments, and the place was our own; but we were nearly stripped naked."

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"Oh, lor! how was that?" inquired Susan, interested.

"Why, we had so many narrow escapes, that our clothes were all shot to shreds."

"Goodness!"

"Oh, but it is true," said the dragoon rising, and going out of the kitchen.

In a few moments afterwards Susan left it also, and Jack, after turning his quid, and squirting the tobacco juice on the floor, rose and hitching up his trowsers with a preliminary "damme!" left the kitchen also; but he hadn't got far, when, oh, horror! he perceived Susan in the arms of the dragoon, whose moustachoed lips more than once met hers.

"Sink the ship," muttered Jack, "here's a pretty go -- the black-looking piratical thief."

But Jack's peace was soon held, and he listened to an assignation which Jack was determined he would keep himself, to the discomfiture of the dragoon.

Having made up his mind upon this point, he returned to the kitchen, and Susan also in a very few moments; but Jack pretended to be asleep, and wouldn't speak to her, because he thought she hadn't behaved well in this affair of the dragoon; he was resolved, however, in substituting himself for the soldier, or, at all events, of making a row.

The time came and Jack stationed himself upon a position where he could with ease lift the dragoon into the water--butt below, in case he offered any opposition to the substitution before named.

The moment came round, and the dragoon was seen slowly and cautiously mounting the way to the window of Susan. It was a kind of leads just above the water--butt, accessible by means of some wooden steps.

"Avast, there," said Jack, when he got up to the level with the top. "What do you do there?"

"What is that to you?" inquired the dragoon.

"A great deal," replied Jack; "but you don't come here -- I heard all about it; but I tell you what, you ain't a coming here, at all events."

"But I am."

"Don't attempt, or I'll sink you. I will, by all that's good -- so keep back, and go away."

"I'll see you d -- d first," said the dragoon. "I have mounted a worse breach than this before to-day; but I suspect there isn't much danger here."

He ran up, and soon faced Jack, who seized him round the waist, would have lifted him up in his arms, and could have thrown him into the water--butt, only Jack's foot suddenly slipped, and he fell down, the soldier upon him, who in an instant regained his feet, and rolled Jack over and over, until he came to the water--butt.

Into this Jack went, head first, and kicked and floundered about; and if the water--butt had not been very rotten, and gave way, letting all the water escape, it is very doubtful if Jack would not have found a watery grave in the confined space of a water--butt.

As it was, he was more than blind and breathless, and sat down in the midst of the water on the stones, to recover himself from the immersion he had undergone.

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## Chapter CXVII. THE PROPOSAL OF JACK PRINGLE TO TAKE ANDERSON TO THE WEDDING.

A circumstance now occurred which soon enabled Jack Pringle to console himself for the misadventure he had had, which he was delighted to think was not known to any of those persons with whom he came ordinarily into contact.

The pleasant circumstance to which we allude, was the reception of a letter from the admiral, and by the mere fact of his writing such an epistle to Jack, it would seem to be perfectly true that he really felt unhappy without the companionship of that worthy.

The letter was to the following effect: —

"Jack, you mutinous rascal, your leave of absence has expired, and you know you ought to have a round dozen when you come back to your ship; but as it turns out you may stay where you are, for a reason that I am going to tell you.

"There is to be a wedding at the very place where you are staying, between some odd fish, a Baron Something, I don't know who; but as we have been all invited, we are coming down the whole lot of us, and shall arrive on Thursday, so that you may look out from the mast-head as soon as you like, and you will see us coming with all sails set.

"No more at present from, you vagabond, you know who."

"What an affectionate letter," said Jack; "I know the old fellow couldn't do without me long — he is quite an old baby, that's what he is; and if I wasn't to take a little notice of him, he would be as miserable as possible. Hilloa! What cheer? have you come back?"

These last words were addressed to James Anderson, who at that moment made his appearance in the cottage of the old seaman, he having just left the house of the Williamses, after the painful interview which we have recorded took place between him and Mrs. Williams, during which she had succeeded in convincing him that all his hopes, as regarded Helen, were crushed completely.

The appearance of deep dejection that was upon his countenance was such, as to convince Jack Pringle the nature of the business he had been upon, and he cried, —

"Come, come — cheer up, man. I guess, now, you have been looking after that sweetheart of yours, who is no better than she should be."

"I have, indeed," said James Anderson, "been to extinguish all hope — nothing now lives in my breast but despair. I shall proceed to London at once, to make my report to the Admiralty, as it is my duty to do so; and, after that, I care not what becomes of me."

"Stuff, stuff," said Jack; "I have got some news for you. My old admiral, that I take care of, has had an invitation to the very wedding, as I take it to be, of your old sweetheart."

"What! is it possible — do you mean an invitation to Helen Williams's wedding with the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh?"

"Yes, I do; that's just what I do mean, and no mistake. Here is his letter which he has written to me to go, and I think I shall let the old fellow, for it will amuse him. Just read that."

Jack handed the admiral's letter to James Anderson, which he read with a great deal of interest, and when he had concluded, he said, —

"Mr. Pringle, a sudden thought strikes me, — "

"About ship," said Jack, "and begin again. I told you before not to call me Mr. Pringle — I cannot stand it. Call me Jack, and then go on telling me what your sudden thought is."

"Well, then, Jack, my sudden thought is this, that your friend the admiral might be induced, upon your representation, to let me join his party, and I would take care to conceal my features and general appearance so that I should not be known, while I had the mournful satisfaction of taking a last look upon that occasion of her who I have loved, before she becomes irrecoverably the wife of another."

"If you wish it," said Jack, "it shall be done. I'll undertake there shall be no objection on the part of the admiral; and as for the Bannerworths, they are good sort of people, and would do all they can for anybody, I am



sure."

"I should take it as a peculiar favour; for although I feel now that my hopes are blasted, and I can have no possible expectation of beholding her with eyes of pleasure, I still wish to look upon her, that I may see if anything of regret is upon her countenance, of if she has quite forgotten the past."

"Say no more," said Jack, "but consider it as done. I'd take care though, if I were you, that she did not find me out; for I wouldn't let the finest woman that ever breathed — no, not if she was seven feet high, and as big as a hogshead — fancy that I cared so much for her as to go to her wedding after she had jilted me."

"She shall not see me," said James Anderson; "she shall not see me, you may depend; for, without doubt, the guests will be very numerous, so that I can easily keep myself in the back-ground, and look upon her face without her being at all aware of the presence of such a person at the ceremony."

"Yes, you can manage that; and, if I were you, just as I was going away, I'd give the baron a jolly good kick, and tell him you wished him joy of his bargain. I wouldn't do anything violent, you know, but a little quiet thing like that would just show them all what you thought of the business."

"A sense of my wrongs," said James Anderson, "should not extinguish a sense of justice; and I have no means of knowing that the baron is at all in fault in this matter."

"Oh, you are too nice by one half. If a fellow takes away my sweetheart, hang me if care who is at fault."

"Oh, but it is necessary that we should be just at all events; but still, Jack, accept my sincerest thanks for placing me in the way of looking upon Helen. I'd rather see that she was happy and contented with her lot, than I would observe evidences upon her face of any passionate regret. The former would reconcile me, by making me think I had made a great mistake in the object of my attachment; while the latter would leave in my heart a never ceasing pain."

"Gammon," said Jack.

"I fear I tax your patience, Jack Pringle, when I talk in such a strain as this."

"I'll be hanged if you don't. What do you mean by it? There is lots of women in the world. I have no patience with a fellow that, because one girl uses him ill, goes snivelling and crying about his feelings, and his agony, and his chest, and all that sort of thing. I should recommend a bottle of rum."

"Well, well, Jack, it may happen some day with even you, and then you may feel some of the mental agony of knowing that another has possessed himself of her whom you thought all your own."

This was hitting Jack rather hard, although James Anderson did not know it; so he said, —

"Ah, well, to be sure, there is something in that, after all, and I don't mean to say there ain't; but, however, keep up your heart, my boy, and there is no saying what may happen yet."

"Alas! there can nothing happen that can give me pleasure; all is lost now, and the only hope I can have, is to forget."

Jack would have written a letter back to the admiral in reply to the one which he had received, only that somehow or other he was not a first-rate penman; and as he said it was such a bother to know where to begin, and when you did begin, it was such a bother to know where to leave off, that, taking all things into consideration, he rather on the whole declined writing at all; and, as the appointed day was near at hand, on which the wedding was to take place, he thought it would do quite as well if he kept the look out which the admiral had suggested for the arrival of the Bannerworths.

As for the scheme of James Anderson to be present at the wedding, the more Jack thought of it, the more he liked it, because he considered that it afforded a chance, at all events, if not a good prospect, of as general a disturbance as any that had ever existed.

"Lor! what fun," he said, "if he would but kick the baron, and then if the baron would but fall foul of him, and the girl scream, and old mother Williams go into hysterics. That would be a lark, and no doubt about it; shouldn't I enjoy it above a bit. I'd give them a helping hand somehow or another; and then, who knows but the girl may have been regularly badgered by the old cat of a mother into the match, and may wish for all the world to get out of it."

There can be no doubt but that if Helen Williams, even at that last moment, chose to make any appeal, it would not be made in vain to Jack Pringle, who, with all his faults, and they were numerous enough, had in his heart a chivalrous love of right, and a hatred of anything in the shape of oppression, which nothing could subdue; and such qualities as these surely are amply sufficient to atone for a multitude of minor errors, which were more those of habit and defective education, than anything else.

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It very much delighted him to think that the admiral and the Bannerworths were coming down to Anderbury, because such a fact not only prolonged his stay there, which he was pleased it should do, because he was really very much delighted with the place, but it at the same time threw him again into the company he so much liked; and his attachment to the Bannerworth family had really become quite a strong feeling.

He waited quite with impatience until the Thursday came on which the admiral had announced his arrival; and instead of being in the town, or on the outskirts, to watch for him, which would have been but a tiresome operation, Jack walked boldly on to meet them by the high road, which he knew they must traverse.

After he had gone about four miles, he had the satisfaction of seeing, in the distance, a travelling-carriage, manned, as he called it, with four horses, rapidly approaching, and Jack immediately produced a large silk handkerchief that he had purchased, which was a representation of the national flag of Great Britain. This he fastened to the end of a stick, and commenced waving it about as a signal to the admiral of his presence in the road.

At this moment, too, it happened, fortunately for Jack Pringle, as he considered, that a man came across a stile in the immediate vicinity where he was with a gun in his hand.

"Hilloa, friend," said Jack Pringle, "just let me look at that gun a minute."

"I'll see you further first," said the man; "you seem to me as if you were out of your mind."

So saying, he levelled the piece at some birds which were flying over-head, and fired first one barrel and then the other in rapid succession.

"Thank ye," said Jack, "that was all I wanted; and it will answer my purpose exactly; there is nothing like, when you display your flag, firing a gun or two. It's all right --- he sees me, he sees me."

The admiral had actually been looking from the window of the carriage, although he had not expected to see Jack quite so soon; but the appearance of the handkerchief, which was made so much to resemble a flag, convinced him of the fact that Jack had come that distance to meet them; and when he heard the gun fired twice, he was quite delighted, and leaning back in the carriage, he cried, ---

"Ah, Flora, my dear, it is a great pity that Jack is so given to rum, for he is a remarkably clever fellow. You would hardly believe it, now, but he has contrived to hoist a flag just because he sees me coming."

"Indeed, uncle."

"Yes, my dear, he has; and didn't you hear that he actually managed to fire a couple of guns, some way or another?"

"I certainly did hear the report, but had no idea that we were indebted to Jack Pringle's management for them."

"Oh, yes, I can see him a short distance ahead. He is lying to, now; and, if the wind wasn't against us, we should be up to him in a few minutes, but don't you feel it blowing in your face?"

Notwithstanding the admiral considered, which he certainly did, that the wind was a real impediment to the progress of the carriage, they did in a few moments reach to where Jack Pringle was waiting, when the admiral called out from the window in a loud voice, ---

"Hilloa! what ship, and where are you bound to?"

"The Jack Pringle," was the reply, "from Anderbury, and to fall in with the Admiral Bell, convoy of the pretty Flora."

"There now," said the admiral; "didn't I tell you what a clever fellow Jack was? What shore-going humbug, who had never been to sea, would have thought of such a thing?"

"Well," said Jack, as he walked up to the coach window, for the postilions had been ordered to halt, or, as the admiral had expressed it, "to heave to," "well, here you are, all of you."

"Yes, Jack," said the admiral; "and I was just saying I thought you a very clever fellow."

"I am sorry I can't return the compliment, you poor old creature," said Jack; "I hope you haven't got yourself into any trouble since I have been away from you. What a miserable old hulk you do look, to be sure. There you go, again; now you are getting into a passion, as usual; what a dreadful thing temper is, to be sure, when you can't manage it."

Jack scrambled up behind into the rumble before the admiral could make any reply to him, for indignation stopped his utterance a moment or two; and, when he did speak, it was to Flora he addressed himself more particularly, saying, ---

"Now, did you ever know a more ungrateful son-of-a-gun than that? After I had just told him that I thought

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him a clever fellow, for him to burst out abusing me at that rate! Now I have done with him."

"Oh, you may depend, Admiral Bell," said Flora, "that he don't at all mean what he says; and I am convinced that he entertains for you the highest possible respect, and that he is only jesting when he uses those expressions which would seem as if it were otherwise."

"Let's just wait," said the admiral, "till the wedding is over, and then I'll let him know whether a boatswain is to make a joke of an admiral of the fleet."

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## Chapter CXVIII. THE BARON'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE MARRIAGE, AND THE WEDDING MORNING.

During this time neither Mrs. Williams nor the Baron Stolmuyer were idle spectators of the progress of the hours; but, on the contrary, they made the best possible use of the week which was to elapse before the marriage ceremony took place after Helen had given her consent to it.

Five hundred pounds in the hands of such a person as Mrs. Williams, will go a long way, and produce an amazing amount of show and glitter; so that she managed, before the day on which the ceremony was to be performed arrived, to make quite certain that herself and her daughters would present a most dazzling appearance; and she thought it not at all improbable that even at the very church some meritorious individual might be dazzled into thinking of matrimony with one of her other daughters, upon seeing what a brilliant appearance they managed to present upon the marriage of Helen.

"I am quite sure that no harm can come of it," she said, "if no good does; and, at all events if no good is done at the church, the baron will soon be giving parties enough to bring out the dear girls to perfection, particularly as I fully intend we shall all live at Anderbury House."

Mrs. Williams considered this as a settled point, whether the baron liked it or not; and, knowing as she did the gentle and quiet disposition of Helen, she did not doubt for a moment of being permitted to rule completely over the domestic affairs of her establishment. All this was amazingly satisfactory to such a lady as Mrs. Williams, and the very thing of all others she would have liked, had she been looking out for what would please her in the marriage of her daughter.

We shall shortly see how these views and opinions were verified by the fact.

All the other preparations were left to the baron; and when he wrote a letter to Mrs. Williams, saying, that he would be ready by ten o'clock on the morning which had been named for the nuptials, and would send one of his carriages for the bride, Mrs. Williams was perfectly satisfied that all was quite correct.

There was no very good excuse for calling at Anderbury House; but, if she had then called, she certainly would have been astonished at the preparations which the baron was making for that day which was so near at hand.

It was quite terrific the expense he went to; and the gorgeous manner in which he fitted up one of the largest apartments in the house for a dance looked really like expenditure of the most reckless character, and such as indeed it must have required an immense fortune to withstand.

The walls of that apartment were hung with crimson draperies of a rich texture, and such beauty of design that they were the admiration of the very workmen themselves who were employed upon the premises.

Then the magnificent order he gave for a feast upon the occasion, and the wines he laid in, really almost exceeded belief; and such proceedings were indeed highly calculated to give people most exaggerated versions regarding his wealth.

He had indeed mentioned to Mrs. Williams, that he had silver mines on some of his estates abroad; and that fact to her mind was quite sufficient to account for any amount of money he might possess, because, to her ideas of geology and mineralogy, the discovery of a silver mine meant, finding a hole of immense width and depth, crammed with the precious metal.

But be this as it may, and whether the Baron Stolmuyer, of Saltzburgh, owed his wealth to silver mines, or to other sources, one thing was quite clear, and that was, that he had it.

And that was the grand point; for in a highly civilized and evangelical country like this, the question of how a man got his money is not near so often asked, as, has he got it; and it is quite amazing what liberality of feeling and sentiment is immediately infused into people by the fact of successful speculation of any kind; while failure immediately incurs the greatest of opprobrium and contempt.

And now the day was so close at hand, that Mrs. Williams got into a terrible flutter of spirits, and began really to wish it over; for she was completely ready, and each minute became an hour of impatience to her.

She was continually bothering the baron with notes and messages upon different subjects, and he had the urbanity to answer two or three of them; but he soon left that off, and the last half dozen, at the least, were, to

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Mrs. Williams's great mortification, taken no notice of at all.

Some of these notes were upon the most nonsensical points, and several of them, although they did not actually ask it, pretty strongly hinted that more money would be a very desirable thing.

The baron would not understand any hint, however, upon the subject; so Mrs. Williams became fully convinced that she must make the best of it she could, and put up for the present with the five hundred pounds she had already received.

But when the day had actually dawned on when the suspicious event was to come off, and, upon looking around her, she found herself surrounded by gay apparel and jewellery, she almost dreaded that even yet it would turn out to be some delusion, or a dream, for she could scarcely believe in the reality of such glory and magnificence belonging to her.

But facts are stubborn things, and, whether for good or for evil, are not likely to be got over; so, when she looked out of the windows and saw that a bright morning's sun was shining, and that the life, animation, and bustle of the day was commencing, she told herself that it was, indeed, real, and that she had reached very nearly the summit of her desires and expectations.

"Yes," she exclaimed; "I shall be mother-in-law to a baron; and I dare say I shall have at least twenty servants in Anderbury House to command and control continually."

A more gratifying reflection than this could not possibly have presented itself to Mrs. Williams; for if any one thing could be more delightful than another, it certainly was that kind of petty power which gives an individual a control over a large establishment.

After she had arisen on that eventful morning, she did not allow her establishment many minutes' repose; but, in the course of half-an-hour, all was bustle, excitement, and no small share of confusion.

And while she was thus energetically pushing on her preparations, let us see what the Bannerworths are about, now that they have fairly arrived at Anderbury, and are in readiness, probably, to be present at the ceremony.

By Flora's intercession, a peace was established between Jack and the admiral; and the former took the latter down to the old seaman's cottage, in order to introduce him to James Anderson; and on the road he made him acquainted with the particulars of the young man's story; at the same time informing him of the wish that Anderson had expressed to be permitted to join their party.

"Oh, certainly," said the admiral, "certainly; let him come by all means, although I must say that he ought to leave for London, at once, with his despatches, or at all events with the news that he had lost them. However, I am not on active service; and, therefore, have no right to do anything more than advise him in the matter."

"Oh, he will go," said Jack, "as soon as he has seen his sweetheart, and perhaps kicked the baron; for though he said he wouldn't, I live in hopes yet that he will be aggravated enough to do it."

The admiral liked James Anderson so much, that he not only promised him he should go to the wedding under cover of the general invitation which he, the admiral, had received, but he proposed, likewise, that he should come home with him at once and be introduced to the Bannerworths; and by home he meant the inn at Anderbury, where they were staying.

The young man expressed himself highly gratified at this invitation, and at once accepted it, so that they walked towards the inn together, and began to make preparations for their appearance at Anderbury House.

Flora and the Bannerworths, as well as Charles, received young Anderson very graciously, and they each expressed to him their sympathy for the painful situation in which the baron's marriage was placing him.

Flora and Charles Holland, as may be well supposed, could both feel, and feel acutely too for any one crossed in his affection, as poor James Anderson was; and it certainly much damped the satisfaction they had in going to what everybody told them would certainly be the most brilliant wedding that had taken place in that part of the country for many a year.

"Let us hope," said Henry Bannerworth, "that you will find some other, Mr. Anderson, who will be more worthy of your esteem, than she who has treated so lightly your affection and her own faith."

"I know not," said Anderson, "whether to accuse her not; for who knows but after all she may be the victim of treachery, notwithstanding the apparent powerful evidence that has been given to me by her mother?"

The Bannerworth family were determined, and so was the admiral, that they would bestow what credit they could upon those who had so kindly invited them; and, accordingly, when they started for the Hall in the handsome carriage which had brought them down to Anderbury, they certainly presented a rather showy and

attractive appearance.

But still when they reached the entrance to Anderbury House, they found that their's was by no means the only equipage of the kind that was there to be seen; for although both the entrances were open for the reception of guests, they had to wait a considerable time before they could get up to either of them.

One hundred and fifty guests, sixty or eighty of whom kept equipages, were calculated to make some little degree of confusion; but when the Bannerworth family fairly got within the house, everything else was forgotten in their admiration of the brilliant arrangements within.

The richest carpets were laid down that money could purchase, and servants in gorgeous liveries ushered the guests into an immense hall, in which the marriage ceremony was to take place, and which was decorated with a splendour that was perfectly regal.

And here a new set of domestics glided noiselessly about with various refreshments upon silver salvers, and the place began rapidly to fill with such an assemblage of wealth, and beauty, and rank, as perhaps scarcely ever had been congregated in one place before.

But among those whose beauty attracted much attention, we may need well reckon our friend, Flora Bell, as she was now properly called, and whose sweet countenance was the cause of many a passing observation, couched in the most flattering terms.

It wanted yet an hour to the time of the ceremony being performed, and the Bannerworths, as they saw that their companion, young Anderson, was in a painful state of excitement, all sat down in the deep recess of a large window to wait the coming of the bride and bridegroom.

"I don't think, Mr. Anderson," said Henry, "that your coming here at all was a well advised step; but since you are here, you should muster up resolution enough not to betray any feeling."

"I will not betray it, although I feel it," said Anderson. "Rely upon it, that I shall look much firmer, and act much firmer when she whom I wish to see is actually here, than I do at present — I am enduring suspense now, and that is the worst of all."

"I do wish," interposed Flora, "that you had seen her whom you love before this ceremony, for in that case, although you might have endured the pang of finding that she was willing to call herself another's, you would have been spared the pain of this day's proceeding."

"I wish to Heaven I had seen her; but I knew not how to arrange such a meeting; and when I was shewn, in her own handwriting — which I knew too well to doubt — a consent to be the wife of another, I no longer had the spirit and the perseverance to ask to see her; and it was an afterthought that made me wish to look upon her face once more before I left her for ever."

"What," said Jack Pringle, suddenly making his appearance, "is he gammoning you with his feelings?"

"Oh! so you have got in, have you?" said the admiral.

"So I have got in — why, what do you mean by that? Of course I have got in; wasn't I invited? I do think you get a little stupider every day; and, in course of time, you won't know what you are about. I should not be surprised to see you take out your handkerchief to blow your eye instead of your nose."

Latterly, Jack, when he made one of these speeches, always walked away very quickly, leaving the admiral's anger to evaporate as best it might; so that he escaped the retort which otherwise he might have received.

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## Chapter CXIX. A RATHER STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCE AT THE BARON'S WEDDING.

At length, the hour came, so anxiously looked for and expected by all the Baron Stolmuyer's guests; and the great clock which was in one of the turrets of Anderbury House proclaimed that the minute had arrived when all was presumed to be ready for the union.

All eyes were directed to a large table that was placed at one extremity of the hall, and covered with crimson velvet, and at which the ceremony was to be performed.

The Bannerworths were a little forward, so that they commanded a good view of everything, and James Anderson was completely hidden from observation behind the bulky form of the admiral. Now, a small door opened, and an archdeacon somebody -- who had been engaged, as you would engage a celebrated performer, at some theatre, to perform the ceremony -- made his appearance, accompanied by several ladies and gentlemen, whom he had brought with him to partake of some of the baron's good things.

In a few moments, from another doorway, came the bride, accompanied by six bridesmaids, but she was covered with such a massive lace veil from her head to her feet, that not the slightest vestige of her countenance was visible.

But, still, Flora thought that, as the bride first came in, she heard from beneath that veil a deep and agonized sob; and she remarked the circumstance to Charles, who confirmed her opinion by at once saying, --

"It was so, and I don't think it at all likely that we should both be mistaken."

There was a slight murmur of applause and admiration among the assembled guests as the bride took her seat by the table; for although there were many there who had never seen her face, there were likewise many who had; and even those who had not, could not but perceive, by her graceful movements and the delicate outline of her figure, that they were looking upon a creature of rare beauty and worth.

It was astonishing that the bridegroom should be late, and the audience who were present began to be indignant at such a fact, and whispered together concerning it in language not very flattering to the baronet, who, had he heard it, would have found that he must mind what he was about, or his rapidly-acquired popularity would soon be at a discount.

Minute after minute thus passed, and Mrs. Williams, who was attired in a richly-flowing garment of white silk, embroidered with flowers, began to be in a most particular fidget.

"Where could be the baron -- good God! where is the baron?" and some one or two said, "D -- n the baron!" When suddenly the door at which the bride had entered was again flung open, and two servants in rich liveries made their appearance, one standing on each side of it. Then there was heard approaching a slow and measured footstep, and presently, attired in a court suit of rich velvet, the Baron Stolmuyer of Saltzburgh appeared in the hall, and marched up to the table.

He had but just time to execute half a bow to the assembled multitude, when Admiral Bell called out in a voice that awakened every echo in the place, --

"It's Varney, the vampyre, by G--d!" \* \* \* \*

Yes, it was Varney -- the bold, reckless, audacious Varney, who had thus come out in a new character, and, with vast pecuniary resources, acquired Heavens knows how or where, was seeking to ally himself to one so young and beautiful as Helen Williams.

We do absolutely and positively despair of giving an adequate idea to the reader of the scene that followed.

Ladies shrieked -- the bride fainted -- Mrs. Williams went into strong hysterics, and kicked everybody -- Jack Pringle shouted until he was hoarse; while Varney turned and made a dash to escape through the door at which he had just entered.

James Anderson, however, by springing over a table, succeeded in clutching him by the collar behind; but Varney turned on the instant, and lifting him from the ground as if he had been a child, he flung him among a tray of confectionary and wine, and from thence he rolled into Mrs. Williams's lap.

Following close, however, upon the footsteps of Anderson in pursuit of Varney had been Henry Bannerworth; but he accomplished nothing, except to strike his head violently against the door through which Varney escaped,

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and which was dashed in his face, and immediately bolted on the other side.

"He is a vampyre," shouted the admiral — "I tell you all he is a vampyre — Varney, the vampyre, and no more a baron than I am a broomstick. Stop that d — d old woman from making such a noise."

"It's the bride's mother," said somebody.

"What's that to me?" roared the admiral; "it don't make her a bit less of a nuisance. I offer a hundred pounds reward for Varney, the vampyre; and there must be some people here that know the house well enough to catch him."

"Do you mean a hundred pounds for master, sir?" said a great footman, with yellow plush breeches.

"Yes, I do, you hog in armour," said the admiral.

The footman rushed through another doorway in a moment, and then Jack Pringle jumped upon a chair, and, waving his hat, cried, —

"Hurra, hurra, hurra! Three cheers for old Varney! I'll tell you what it is, messmates, he is the meanest fellow as ever you see; and as for you ladies who have been disappointed of the marriage, I'll come and kiss you all in a minute, and we'll drink up old Varney's wine, and eat up his dinner like bricks. My eye, what a game we will have, to be sure. I am coming— — "

At this moment the admiral gave such a kick to one of the hind legs of the chair, that down came Jack as quickly as if he had disappeared through some trap-door.

"Hold your noise, will you," said the admiral, "you great brawling brute!"

"I'll settle him," said Mrs. Williams, who had suddenly recovered; and had not Jack suddenly made his escape, it is highly probable she would have made him a regular scape-goat in the affair, and that he alone — for Anderson had pretty quickly escaped her — would have felt the consequences of her deep disappointment.

The confusion now became, if anything, worse than at first, for many of the guests who had looked on apparently quite stunned and paralyzed at what had taken place, now recovered, and joined their voices to the general clamour.

Some, to rush out of the place, took the opportunity of going through the different rooms; while a number, who had heard of the wide-spread fame of Varney, the vampyre, and who were utterly astonished to find him and the baron one and the same person, joined in the pursuit, with the hope of taking prisoner so alarming a personage.

No one knew for some time what had become of the clergyman, until Jack Pringle saw a human foot sticking out from under the table, upon which he took hold of it, and with a pull dragged the archdeacon somebody fairly out, to the great horror of some very religious old ladies who were present, who considered that an arch-deacon must be somebody very wonderful indeed.

"Hilloa! Mr. Parson," said Jack; I suppose you thought it was your old friend the devil come for you before your time; but cheer up, I know him; it's only a vampyre, and that's nothing when you're used to it."

Jack did not seem at all to think that it was necessary he should assist in the capture of Varney, and probably the real fact was, he did not care whether Varney was captured or not, so he walked to one of the tables which were loaded with refreshments, and knocking the neck off a bottle of champagne, he gave a nod to Mrs. Williams, saying, —

"Come, old girl, take something to drink. That red nose of yours looks as if you knew something of the bottle. It's only me, so you needn't be shy. Ah, it's devilish good wine, though. I do give old Varney credit for getting up the thing decently, which he certainly has, and no mistake."

"Who has seen my daughter? Where is my daughter?" cried Mrs. Williams, as she looked about her in vain for Helen.

"You needn't trouble yourself, ma'am," said the admiral; "she has just walked off with a little fellow of the name of Anderson, who, although he was no match for Varney, the vampyre, I think will turn out to be one for your daughter."

Mrs. Williams was thoroughly thunder-stricken, and she sat down in a chair, and commenced wringing her hands, muttering as she did so, —

"Oh, that I should have lived to see this day. Oh, that I should have existed to be so — so — — "

"Jolly well humbugged, ma'am," said Jack Pringle, "with a vampyre, instead of a baron; why, lord bless you, ma'am, nobody in their senses would have taken old Varney for a baron; why, he is a regular old blood-sucker, he



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is, and a nice family you would have had; but, however, if you are fond of him, you can marry him yourself, you know, now; and I shouldn't at all wonder, but he will consent, for a man will put up with any d — d old cat, when he finds he can't get a better."

"Good God," said Mrs. Williams, "I think I know your voice now; ain't you Admiral Green?"

"Avast, there," said Jack; "I ain't anything of the kind; they calls me Colonel Bluebottle, of the horse-marines."

"The what?"

"The horse-marines. Didn't you never hear of them, ma'am?"

"I certainly never did. But don't try to deceive me, sir; you are Admiral Green and if you will, my dear sir, spare me a few minutes of your valuable time, I shall be able to explain to you— —"

"What?" said Jack.

"Why, that really — you will scarcely believe it — but really, Admiral Green, my daughter Julia is, although I say it, one of the best of girls."

"Oh, I dare say she is, ma'am; but I don't know as that much matters to me."

"Excuse me, Admiral Green, but it really does, and you must know — of course it's quite between ourselves this — that she happened to see you when you did me the honour of calling upon me."

"Did she really?"

"Yes, my dear admiral; and, do you know, ever since then she has been positively raving about you; and as you were good enough to say, the baron should not stand in the way of your affections, allow me to recommend Julia to you."

"Oh, that's it, is it!" said Jack. "Well, ma'am, I should not have said no, only that you ain't half particular enough for me!"

"Not particular! Oh, good God."

"No, ma'am, you ain't. Here you would have married one of your daughters to a vampyre, and how do I know waht other sort of odd fish you might bring into the family."

"But, my dear Admiral —"

"Oh! gammon. I tell you what, now, I will do — I don't mind standing something devilish handsome, if you will marry old Varney yourself."

"What! the baron that was, and the vampyre that is? I marry him! Oh, dear, no, I really could not — that is to say, how much would you give, Admiral Green?"

"Ah!" said Jack, "I knew it. Who says, after this, that women won't marry the very devil himself, if they only have the chance. And now, Mother Williams, I'll just tell you what you have done. The fact is, I took a fancy to you myself, and that's why I came here at all to-day. I meant to have proposed to you, and if you had only said you would not have the Baron Vampyre for any money, d — n it, I would have had you myself, and settled a matter of £15,000 a year upon you."

"Oh, gracious Providence! what do I hear?"

"Just what I says. I'm a man of my word, ma'am, and would have done it."

"Mrs. Williams was so affected at the chance she had lost, that she quite forgot to look after Helen, but was actually compelled to indulge herself with a glass or two of something strong and powerful, which she said was sherry, but which somebody else said was brandy, in order to recover from the faint feeling that would come over her.

After this, Jack thought he had had about the bitterest revenge upon Mrs. Williams that it was possible to achieve, and he was quite right as far as that went. The old admiral, too, who overheard some part of the colloquy, was quite delighted with it, and again told himself what a clever fellow Jack was, and quite a wonderful character in his way.

"Ah!" he said, "one would have to sail a tolerable lot of voyages before finding anybody as was exactly Jack's equal; and I'll be hanged if I don't forgive him for the next piece of mutinous conduct he is guilty of, on account of the way he has served out that horrid old Mother Williams; for in all my life I never saw a woman I disliked more. Stop, what am I saying? Did I really forget Mrs. Chillingworth, the doctor's wife? That was too bad."

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## Chapter CXX. THE HUNT FOR THE VAMPYRE IN THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

The information that had been given to Mrs. Willams respecting her daughter and James Anderson having together left the great hall of Anderbury House, was perfectly correct.

The voice of Anderson, whispering words of affection in the ear of Helen, was sufficient to arouse her from the state of syncope into which she had fallen; and when she recovered and looked in his face, the expression of joy which her countenance wore, at once dispelled all his doubts.

"Helen, dear Helen!" he whispered; "are you, indeed, still, in heart, mine?"

"Still, as ever," she replied.

"Come with me; I have much to tell you; and we need not heed the thoughts and feelings of the throng that is here. If you can walk, place your arm in mine, and lean upon me, and we will get out of all this trouble and confusion."

Helen was but too glad to avail herself of such an offer, and she accordingly at once did so; and leaning for support upon that arm, which, of all others, she most loved to bear upon, they together passed out of the great hall, through one of the numerous doorways leading from it.

Being both of them quite ignorant of what may be called the topography of Anderbury House, they went on till they came to a small but very elegant apartment, in which a table was laid with wines, and some costly refreshments, which, from the fact of an extremely clerical-looking shovel hat being upon one of the chairs, there was no great difficulty in coming to the conclusion that this had been a reception-room, got up purposely for the reverend gentleman who was to perform the ceremony of marriage between the baron and Miss Williams, and in which he had refreshed himself prior to the performance of that dreadfully arduous task, for which, no doubt, as all persons are, he was so very insufficiently paid.

A glass of wine, which James Anderson poured out for Helen, tended much to recover her; and then he said to her in accents of the greatest affection, —

"Helen — Helen! is it possible that you really so far forgot me, as to promise your hand to another?"

She burst into tears as she clung to his arm, saying, —

"I know you cannot, you ought not to forgive me. I did promise; but I did not forget you; and if you know the cruel persecution to which I have been subjected, you would pity, perhaps, as much as you condemn me."

"You did not know that some days since I wrote you a note."

"Me a note? Oh, heavens! no — no. What became of it? To whom did you entrust it? Oh! James, had I but thought you were near me, do you think that for one moment I would have yielded, even to the representations which were made to me?"

"I see it all," he said. "Your mother has carried on this matter with more tact than candour and honesty of purpose. I do not condemn you, dear Helen; and no one shall ever disturb you in your possession of a heart which is wholly yours."

"And can you forget — "

"All but that I love you I can and will forget, Helen."

"I do not deserve this noble generosity, for I ought not to have yielded, James. I feel that I ought to have clung to the remembrance of your affection, and found in that an abundant consolation, as well as abundant strength, to resist the whole world."

"Say no more, dearest, upon that head; but let us, to the full, enjoy the happiness of this meeting, without the drawback of a single doubt."

"We will never part again."

"Never — never."

"But, James, what was the meaning of that sudden exclamation, from one of the guests, as regarded the baron?"

"You allude to Admiral Bell proclaiming him to be a vampyre; and, I must say, it fills me with quite as much astonishment as it can you. I did hear a strange story of that sort from a sailor a short time ago, but I looked upon

it as a mere superstition and paid no attention to it. You know what it means, I presume, and that a vampyre is supposed to be a half-supernatural creature who supports a spurious and horrible existence, by feeding upon the blood of any one whom he can make his victim."

"If this horrible superstition," said Helen, with a shudder, "be true, what a dreadful fate have I escaped!"

"It surely must be some error of judgement; but still, dear one, you have escaped a dreadful fate, a fate worse than any vampyre would have inflicted upon you — the fate of being united to one whom you cannot love."

"Yes," said Helen; "that is, indeed, an escape; but how came you, of all persons in the world, a guest here?"

"I came, Helen, under cover of a general invitation, with a most worthy family, to whose kindness I feel myself much indebted, and which empowered them to bring with them whom they pleased. My wish and object was to take one last look at the face I had loved so well before I left you for ever."

"Oh, Heavens!" said Helen, "and I was so near being sacrificed while you were by. Even now I shudder at the dreadful chasm; I feel that you ought not to forgive me."

"Say no more — say no more; all that, Helen, is now past and forgotten, and I can well imagine how your mother would torture you with supplications, because she believed this man to be rich, and consequently the sort of person, above all others, as most desirable for her to have as a son-in-law. We will only consider that a great anxiety and a great danger has passed away, and we will not stop to ask ourselves what it was."

"Ever good, and ever generous," resumed Helen, as her head reposed upon her lover's breast.

"Oh," said Jack Pringle, as he popped his head in at the door; "I beg your pardon, you are better engaged; but we are going to have a grand vampyre hunt through the house, and I thought you would like to join in it, perhaps."

"Stay a moment, stay," cried Anderson. "Do you mean to tell me, really, that this is the person who gave your friends, the Bannerworths, so much trouble and inconvenience?"

"Yes, I do," said Jack; "lor bless you, he is quite an old acquaintance of ours, is old Varney; sometimes he hunts us, sometimes we hunt him. He is rather a troublesome acquaintance, notwithstanding, and I think there are a good many people in the world, a jolly right worse vampyres than Varney."

"I have no cause to hunt him," said Anderson, "and so, therefore, I feel certainly more inclined to decline, than otherwise, engaging in such a transaction."

"Don't mention it," said Jack; "you are a deuced deal better engaged, and there needs no excuses."

Jack was quite correct as regarded the projected hunt for the unfortunate Varney in Anderbury House; for the liberal offer of reward which the admiral had made to any one who would secure him, was calculated to stimulate every possible exertion that people could make upon the occasion; so much so, indeed, that the Bannerworths, after a brief consultation among themselves, thought that for the protection of Varney it would be much better that they should find him, than now leave him with the character that had been given him as such a dangerous member of society.

The servants, and some of the guests, even, had gone very systematically to work for the purpose of taking Varney prisoner; for, in the first instance, they had secured all the outlets from the house, so that, as the footman with the yellow plush continuations remarked, he must jump over the cliff if he wanted to get away.

The admiral and Henry agreed with each other that they would be foremost in the search, in order to protect Varney from any violence; for although this conduct of his might be considered as very bad, and an outrage upon society in passing himself off as a baron, and endeavouring to effect an alliance with a young and innocent girl, yet they, the Bannerworths, had nothing to complain of in the transaction whatever.

Consequently was it that they felt an inclination to defend Varney from personal violence.

And this was, to a certain extent, to be dreaded, because Anderbury being so short a distance from Bannerworth, it was not to be supposed but that some news of the mysterious appearance of the vampyre had reached the ears of almost every one who happened to be present at the baron's wedding.

And although these persons might be supposed to belong to a class of society not likely to commit acts of violence, yet there was no knowing what, in the excitement of the moment, might be done.

While the search went on, Flora was introduced to Helen Williams, and remained with her, commencing a friendship which lasted afterwards, to the great advantage of Helen, for many a year.

The Bannerworths would have been pleased and interested at going over Anderbury House, under any other circumstances than the present one, for truly the baron had made it a most magnificent abode.

By judicious additions to the antique furniture which had belonged to it when he took it, he had made some of

the apartments look gorgeous in the extreme; and while he had not disturbed the character of the decorations, he had certainly shown a very fine taste in adding to them.

But their minds were by far too much occupied with considerations connected with Varney to pay much attention to his house; and, as they traversed room after room in search of him without finding him, they began to think that, with his usual good fortune, he had contrived entirely to escape.

The servants, who knew the place well, perhaps better than Varney did himself, searched for him in almost impossible places, until it began to be the general opinion that he must have escaped.

They were standing by a large bay window, which commanded a view of the gardens, when one of the servants suddenly exclaimed, --

"I see him -- I see him; there he goes," and pointed into the garden, where, for one instant, Henry Bannerworth, as well as the admiral, saw Varney, in his rich suit of wedding apparel, dart from among the bushes, towards a summer-house that was in the garden near at hand.

"Tis he, indeed," said Henry. "Let us get down instantly, or he may yet effect his escape."

"No, no," cried one of the servants, "he cannot do that; the garden wall is too high, and the men are stationed at the gate. It's quite clear to me what he is about. Look at him; he is going towards the old passage that leads to the sea shore."

"Then he will escape, of course," said Henry, "for no one can hope to overtake him."

"Don't you be afraid of that, sir," cried the servant; "one of my mates has gone round to the beach to watch, and he won't let the door be opened that leads out on to the sands, so he cannot get away by that mode."

"In that case, then, we have him completely entrapped, and, as you say, he cannot escape. It must be the madness of positive desperation that induces him to go to that place."

"Let us be off at once after him," said the admiral; "that is our only plan. Come on at once. The sooner we get hold of him the better, for his own sake as well as for ours."

Thus urged, they all proceeded towards the garden, in which was the mysterious, well-like entrance to the subterraneous passage, which formed so great a feature in the estate of Anderbury, on the moment, and which, at the time that Varney had taken the mansion, had evidently formed to him one of its principal attractions.

To the admiral and his party, as well as to several of the guests, who joined from motives of curiosity in the pursuit for Varney, this place was perfectly new, and it certainly, to look down it, did not present by any means an inviting prospect; for although it sloped sufficiently to take off the absolute appearance of being a downright hole in the earth, yet, beyond a few feet in depth, the gloom had something positively terrific about it.

"Well," said the admiral, "I've been into the hold of many a ship, but never one that looked half so gloomy as this, I can say. What do you say to it, Jack?"

"It's no use saying anything to such places," said Jack. "The only way, if we want to catch old Varney, which I suppose we do, is to pop down it at once and done with it; so come along, I won't flinch if it was ten times worse. Come on, admiral, let's go down after the enemy."

"I cannot say it's exactly the kind of place I admire," said the admiral; "but, howsoever, if one must go down it, who shall say that Admiral Bell flinched from it? Come on, all of you. Let all who will follow."

The passage did not look a very inviting one; and it was found that the courage of the guests began to cool down wonderfully when, instead of rushing from apartment to apartment, in search of Varney, the vampyre, they found that they had to encounter the gloom and darkness of that underground abode.

Out of the positive throng which had been pursuing Varney, only four, in addition to the admiral and the male portion of his party, ventured to descend into that black-looking place.

"What!" cried Jack, "have we got such a lot of skulkers whenever we come to close quarters with the enemy? Well, shiver my timbers, if I didn't expect as much from a lot of land lubbers, who don't know what they are about any more than a marine in a squall. But who cares? Come along, admiral; and, if we do have all the fighting, we shall, at all events, have all the glory."

"I hope there will be nothing of the one, at all events," said Henry; "for my intention is rather to save Varney from injury than to injure him."

"We must have lights," said the admiral. "I don't mind going down into a queer place to look for Varney, but I must have the means of seeing what I am about when I get there."

"They will be here, sir, directly," said the big footman, who from the first had made himself conspicuous in

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the pursuit of Varney; that is to say, ever since the reward of £100 had been offered by the admiral to any one who would take him prisoner.

And in a few moments, some of the links, which were always kept in the kitchen of Anderbury House, for the express purpose of descending into the subterraneous passages with, were produced and lighted. By this time, too, the four guests had decreased to three, and two of those seemed to hang back rather a little; while one of them seemed disposed to make up as much as possible for any deficiency of courage on the part of the others, by declaring his intention of ferretting out Varney, let him be hidden where he might.

"I am with you, sir," he said to the admiral, "let this place lead where it may; for I have heard so much about vampyres, and really am so curious to know more about them."

"You don't believe in them, do you?"

"I cannot say that I do, sir. But, at the same time, when we hear such well authenticated cases brought forward about them, it is very difficult, indeed, to say at once, that one has no belief in such things."

"Well, you are right enough there; and if you knew as much about Varney, the vampyre, as we do, I think you would be a little puzzled to know what to say about him; for I'll be hanged if he don't puzzle me above a bit, and I don't know now what to think of him."

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## Chapter CXXI. THE DEATH OF THE INQUISITIVE GUEST. -- THE ESCAPE OF SIR FRANCIS VARNEY

The guest who was so valorous, and so very impatient for the capture of Varney, would have preceded everybody in descending to the passage cut in the cliff, but Henry Bannerworth thought not only was it more particularly his concern to do so, but that as he knew Varney better, it was desirable that he should go first.

He thought there would less likelihood of any mischief by adopting such a kind of procedure, for he did not anticipate that Varney would willingly do him any injury; while, as regarded what he might do if any stranger should attempt to seize him, that was quite another affair.

"You do not know him as we know him," said Henry, to the guest. "He is a dangerous man, and in all respects such an one as your prudence might well induce you to keep clear of. Allow me to precede you, therefore, for the sake of preventing the probability of the most unpleasant consequences."

This argument appeared to have its effect and to damp a little the ardour of this individual, which it might well enough do, without casting any imputation upon his courage whatever; for, after all, he could have no strong motive in the pursuit of Varney, since he was in a line of life which would have prevented him, even if he had been the sole captor of Varney, from taking the reward which the admiral had offered for his apprehension.

The sudden change from the daylight, and all the noise and bustle which had animated the scene above, to the silence, the darkness, and the strange atmosphere which reigned in the underground region, could not fail of having some effect upon the imagination of every one present.

This effect would, of course, vary in different individuals, being the greatest in those of a highly excitable and imaginative turn of mind, and the less in those who were of a more matter-of-fact kind of intellect. Probably, Henry Bannerworth felt more acutely than any one else the full effect which such a scene was likely to produce, and he was profoundly silent upon the occasion for some time.

Under even the most extraordinary circumstances, the descent into such a place must have affected the mind to some extent, for it seems like leaving the world altogether for a time, and bidding farewell to everything which we have been in the habit of enjoying and thinking beautiful.

No one ever thought of accusing Admiral Bell of being very imaginative; but, upon this occasion, although he was the first to speak, what he did say, showed that he had felt some of those sensations to which we have alluded.

"How do you feel, Henry?" he said. "I'll be hanged if I don't seem as if I were going into my grave before my time."

"And I, too," said Henry; "but I rather like the solemn feeling which such a place as this inspires."

"Gentlemen," said the tall footman with the yellow plush what-do-you-call-em's, "gentlemen, I think, after all, that I somehow will go back again. I don't seem, actually, in a manner of speaking, to care to catch the baron, somehow; so, if you please, gentlemen, I rather think I'll go back."

"Why don't you say you are afraid, at once, John?" said the admiral.

"Who, me, sir? I afraid? Oh, dear, no, sir. It would take a trifle, indeed, to frighten me, I rather think. Oh! no, no, sir you mistake me. It's my feelings -- it's my feelings, sir."

"Why, what the deuce have your feelings to do with it?"

"Everything in the world, sir. Haven't I drank his beer, sir, and haven't I eat his beef, and his bread, and his tatoes, sir, and shall I now hunt him up among his own ice-wells? No; perish the thought -- perish the blessed idea. Perish the -- the -- the -- good bye, gentlemen."

With these words, the chivalrous footman gave up all idea of continuing the chase for Varney, the vampyre, and turning quickly, so as to stop the possibility of his hearing any further remonstrance, he went from the place with great speed.

Still, however, with the departure of this individual, whose courage from the first had had about it a very suspicious colour, they were in quite sufficient strength to have accomplished the capture of the vampyre, if they could get hold of him, and always provided he was not sufficiently armed with powers of mischief to their number, by taking perchance the life of some one of them.

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There was one circumstance connected with a search for anybody in that strange region, which spoke much in favour of a successful result, and that was that the passage was narrow, and that there were no hiding-places except the ice-wells, to explore which, at all events, could not be a very difficult task; and as they proceeded, they felt certain that they must be driving Varney before them.

Before they had got very far, Henry Bannerworth thought it would be advisable to announce to Varney the precise intentions of himself and the admiral, always provided he were equally peaceably inclined, and within hearing of what was said to him.

He accordingly raised his voice, inquiring, --

"Sir Francis Varney, you no doubt recognise, by my tones, that it is Henry Bannerworth who speaks to you; and therefore you may feel convinced that no harm is intended you; but you are implored to come forth and meet your friends, who, from former circumstances, you ought to know you can trust."

There was no reply whatever to this appeal, and when the echoes of Henry's voice had died away, the same death-like stillness reigned in the place that had before characterised it.

"He will not answer," said the admiral; "and yet, if the other end of this passage be guarded as it is said to be, he must be here. Let us come on at once -- I have no wish of my own to stay in this damp, chalky hole a moment longer than may be absolutely necessary."

Nor I," remarked Henry; "so let us proceed, and it will be necessary that we keep an accurate watch upon our progress, for I am told that there are ice-wells here of great depth, down which you may fall and come by an awful death when you least expect, unless you are very cautious in looking where you tread."

"There's no doubt of that, sir," said one of his guests. "This place is considered to be one of the most curious that Anderbury can boast of, and I have been told that there are ice-houses, in which all kinds of provisions may be kept with ease and safety in the most violent heat of the summer months."

After a few moments they came upon one of the ice-wells, which yawned terrifically before them, and had they not been very careful and watchful upon the occasion, one or more of them might have been precipitated down the well, and the loss of life must have been the result.

"I scarcely think," said Henry, "that ordinary caution has been used in the construction of these places, or they never would have been left in such a state as they are now in. The ice-well, you perceive, lies directly in the very pathway?"

"Yes," said the admiral, "it does seem so, Master Henry; but if you look a little closer you will perceive that at one time there has been a wooden bridge exactly over this chasm."

"Ah, I do, indeed, now perceive such has been the case."

"Yes, and that made the place both safe and convenient; for no doubt there was a means of lowering down any baskets of wine or other matters that required a low temperature."

The admiral was perfectly right in his supposition, for that was just the way in which the ice-wells of Anderbury House were constructed; and now, since the bridge had been broken down, there was but a very narrow pathway, indeed, by which the well could be passed, unless it was jumped over, which might be done by any active person.

They would not pass this ice-well without an examination of it, and that was accomplished by lying down upon the rough pathway of the passage, and holding a light at arm's-length down it, when the bottom was clearly visible.

"He is not there," said Henry, who was the person who made the experiment; "he is not there, so we must pass on."

They accordingly did so, until they came to another such ice-well, and then the guest which had shown such eagerness in the chase, and accompanied them so far, went through the process of stooping down the chasm to ascertain if it contained anything unusual beyond the debris of broken bottles, old flint-stones, which might fairly be expected to be there.

"Do you see anything?" inquired Henry, as the guest seemed to be looking very intently over the precipice.

He was about to reply something, for some sound came from his lips, when he suddenly, as if he had been impelled to do by some unseen power, toppled over the edge and disappeared, torch and all, into the abyss below.

"Good God!" cried Henry, "he has fallen."

"Good night," said the admiral, with characteristic coolness; "I suspect, my friend, that your career is at an

end."

"Listen! for God's sake, listen!" cried Henry; "does he speak?"

There was a strange scuffling noise, and then a low deep groan from the bottom of the ice-pit, and then all was still; and from the character of the sound, Henry was of opinion that this well was of much greater depth than the former one, which he had so successfully examined.

"He has met with his death," said Henry.

"Don't be too sure," said the admiral; "we must have a good stout rope, and somebody must go down; if nobody likes the job, I will go myself."

"If ropes are wanted," said one of the other two persons who were present, "I can show you where they may be found, for I was at the inquest on the body of the man who was found dead in this place some time ago, and I marked that the ropes by which his body had been got out of one of the ice-wells were left where they had been used."

"That, then, said the other, "is further on, and nearer the beach."

"Yes; lend me the light, and I will get the rope as quickly as I can; for I don't think, as well as I can remember, that there is another well between this one and that which is nearer the beach entrance."

This was done, and for a few moments Henry and the admiral were left in darkness while the ropes were being searched for. It was a darkness so total and complete, that it did indeed seem like that darkness which it requires but a little stretch of the imagination to fancy it can be felt.

"Henry," said the admiral -- "Henry!"

"Yes; I am here."

"Were you ever in such a confounded dark hole in all your life?"

"Scarcely, I think, ever. It is certainly tremendous, and it is a grievous thing to think that a life had been sacrificed, as no doubt it has, in this adventure."

"Ah, well! we must all go to Davy Jones's locker some day, you -- But -- but don't lay hold of me so!"

"I lay hold of you! I am not near you, sir."

"D -- n it! who is it, then? Somebody has got hold of me as if I were in a vice. Stand off, I say! Who are you?"

"Varney, the vampyre," said a deep sepulchral voice; "who warns you, and all others, that there is abundance of danger in visiting here, and nothing to be gained."

Almost as these words were spoken, Henry suddenly found himself whirled round with such force, that it was only by a great effort that he succeeded in keeping his feet, and he felt convinced that some one had passed him. Who could that one be but Sir Francis Varney, the much dreaded vampyre?

In the next moment the light glanced again upon the walls of the subterranean passage, and the admiral cried, --

"He has escaped, unless some one stops him above. But let us think of nothing else at present, but to find out if the poor fellow who fell down here be alive or dead."

Henry descended by the assistance of the ropes, and found the adventurous guest quite dead. They raised the body from the well, and conveying it, as best they could, among them, they arrived, after some troubles on account of their burden, in the gardens, and, finally, in the great hall of Anderbury House, on a table in which they laid the corpse.

It was quite evident now to the admiral and to the Bannerworths that Varney had escaped, so they could have no desire to remain at the house, over which Mr. Leek was running like a madman, wondering what he should do. Flora had invited Helen Williams to accompany her to the inn, so that the whole party of the Bannerworths went away together, with the one addition to it of that poor girl who had so narrow an escape of becoming the vampyre's bride. Horrible destiny!



## Chapter CXXII. MRS. WILLIAMS VISITS THE BANNERWORTHS AT THE INN. -- THE MARRIAGE OF JAMES ANDERSON WITH HELEN.

Let us fancy now, after all these singular circumstances had taken place, the Bannerworth family, with James Anderson and Helen Williams, seated in a comfortable room at the inn at Anderbury, where they had put up when they came to that place, in pursuance of the invitation they had received from Mrs. Williams.

And that lady, probably could she have foreseen what was about to occur, would have taken most especial pains to prevent such an invitation from ever reaching such a destination; but she had fallen a victim to her own love of display, and not being content with inviting people whom she did know, she must, forsooth, give them a *carte blanche* to bring with them people whom she did not know at all.

And this it was that she had been horrified by what had taken place, and had had all her brightest visions of the future levelled with the dust.

When Jack Pringle told Mrs. Williams that he believed she would quite willingly have sold her daughter to a vampyre, he was right; for she would have done so, always provided that the vampyre, as aforesaid, had a good property, and was able to convince her of that most important fact. The only person of all the little party that was assembled at the inn, who looked pale and anxious, was poor Helen, and she certainly did look so; for when we come to consider her novel position we shall not wonder at it.

She had thrown herself completely upon the consideration of strangers, and was severed from all those natural ties which ought to have for ever held her in their gentle bondage. But this conduct, or rather the conduct of that one who ought to have protected her though all trouble and anxieties -- her mother -- had been such as to deprive her of the feeling that she had a home at all.

Flora saw that her guest, as indeed she considered Helen, looked sad and dejected, and she made every effort within her power to rescue her from such a state of things.

"Do not despair of much happiness," she whispered to her; "but rather thank good fortune, which, at the last moment, rescued you from one whom you could not love. Be assured that now you will enjoy the protection of those who will soon be able to prevail upon your mother to look with a favourable eye upon any new arrangement."

"I am much beholden to you," said Helen -- "very much beholden to you, and I feel that I ought to congratulate myself upon my escape. But my heart does feel sad, because the state of things, to avoid which I made myself a sacrifice, may now ensue in all their terrors."

"My dear," said the admiral, who overheard her, "don't you believe any such rubbish as all that. I have no doubt you have been regularly persecuted into the match with the supposed baron, and you would, perhaps, have found out afterwards that one-half of the things you were told, to induce you to consent, had no foundation but in somebody's active imagination."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"Do I think so! To be sure I do. Now, I dare say you were told how, if you married the Baron What's-his-name, you would be doing something wonderful for all your family."

"Yes -- yes."

"Oh, of course; I can see through all that clearly enough; and I tell you, my lass, that you have had a most fortunate escape, and that there is, and shall be, no reason on the face of the earth why you should not be married to the man of your choice. He has been to sea, and so, of course, he has finished what may be called his education. If he had been on shore all his life, you might have doubted about the prudence of having him; but, as it is, it's quite another matter."

"Sir, I thank you for your kind advocacy of my cause," said James Anderson; "and I shall ever consider, as one of the most fortunate accidents of my life, the meeting with Admiral Bell."

"Oh, don't say anything about that. I know some of the people at the Admiralty, and when you go to make the report of how you have been shipwrecked, and how you lost your despatches, I will give you a letter of introduction, which, I dare say, won't do you any harm."

"Indeed, sir, this is more kindness than I ought to expect."

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"Not at all, my boy — not at all. Don't put yourself out of the way about that. Only I tell you what I would do. You need not take my advice unless you like; but, if I were you, I'd be hanged if I moved an inch anywhere till I had made Helen Williams my wife."

"Can you suppose," cried James Anderson, while his eyes sparkled with delight — "can you suppose, my dear sir, that such advice could be other than most welcome to me?"

"And what do you say, Helen, to it?" whispered Flora.

"What can I say?"

"You can say yes, I suppose?" said the admiral.

Helen was silent.

"Very good," added the admiral. "When a girl don't say no, of course she means yes; and you can make sure of your prize now you have got her, Master Anderson. Let's see; you manage these affairs with what you call a special license, don't you?"

"Yes, uncle," said Flora; "that is the way. You seem to know all about it, and I almost suspect you really must have had some experience in those matters."

"I experience, you little gipsy! — what do you mean? I never was married in all my life, and I don't intend to be."

"Don't make too sure, uncle. But, despite all that, no one could more warmly second your advice to Mr. Anderson than myself."

"Very good. For that speech I forgive you. And now, Mr. Anderson, just come along with me, for I want to say a few words to you which nobody else has anything to do with."

When the admiral got James Anderson alone, he said to him, —

"Of course you are without funds, so it's no use making any fuss of delicacy about it. I have no doubt but that, with my interest, I shall be able to get you into an appointment of some sort; but, in the meantime, I beg that you will not cross me in my desire to serve you; and mind, I take your word of honour to repay me, so, you see, there is no obligation."

"Sir, this noble generosity— —"

"There, there — that's quite enough; for the fact is, it ain't noble generosity at all, so hold your tongue about it, and be so good as to let me consider that as settled. Here are fifty pounds for you, which will enable you to go to London like a gentleman, and to conduct your marriage either here or there, as you may yourself think proper, and as your bride may consent."

"Sir, I would fain make Helen my own here."

"Very good. I don't pretend to understand how to manage these things: but set about it as quickly as you can, and don't be deterred by anybody."

This short but, to James Anderson, deeply interesting conversation, because it relieved his mind from a load of anxiety, took place a few paces from the inn door only, so that they returned at once; but scarcely had they joined the rest of the party, and were considering what they should order for dinner, when one of the waiters of the establishment came to say, —

"If you please, there's a lady who wants to come in. I asked her her name, but she won't give it; but she says she must see everybody."

"The deuce she must!" cried the admiral. "What sort of a craft is she?"

"Sort of a what, sir?"

"My fears tell me," sobbed Helen, "that it is my mother."

The admiral whistled, and then he said, —

"I suppose we shall have a breeze; but the sooner it's over the better. Let the lady come in; and don't you be afraid of anything, my lass. Why, you look as pale as if you expected — here she is."

The door was flung open, and Mrs. Williams made her appearance. Anger was upon her face, and it required but a small amount of penetration to perceive that she came fully charged with all sorts of reproaches. Helen trembled and shrunk back for she had an habitual fear of her mother, which the imperious conduct of that individual had induced in the mind of so gentle a creature as Helen from her very childhood.

"Well, madam," said Henry, stepping forward; "to what are we indebted for the honour of this visit from one who has not the courtesy to wait for an invitation?"

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"Oh! I expected this," said Mrs. Williams, with a shivering toss of her head; "I quite expected this, I can assure you — of course. But I'll pretty soon let you know, sir, what I came about. I have come for my daughter, sir. What have you got to say against that?"

"Nothing, madam; if your daughter chooses to comply with your request."

"Helen!" screamed Mrs. Williams. "Helen! I command you to come home this moment!"

"Mother, hear me!" said Helen. "Consent to my happiness with one whom I can love, with the same readiness that you would have seen me the bride of one for whom I never could hope to feel anything in the shape of affection, and I will accompany you home at once."

"Oh, dear, yes — of course. Consent to ruin — consent to nonsense! Consent to your marrying a scapegrace who cannot even keep himself — far less a wife! No, Helen; you cannot expect that I should ever consent to your marrying such a poor wretch."

"But don't you think," said Henry, "that any poor wretch is better than a vampyre?"

"No; I do not."

"Oh! very good, then," said the admiral; "if that's the lady's opinion, what can we say to her? And, as for commanding Miss Helen, here, to go home, I command her to stay."

"You command her?"

"Yes, to be sure. Ain't I an admiral? What have you got to say against that, I should like to know? I shall take good care that James Anderson is no poor wretch by getting him some good appointment; and, as your daughter is of age, old girl, and so can choose for herself, you may as well weigh anchor, and be off at once, for nobody wants to be bothered with you."

"Do you mean to say you are a real admiral, and have nothing to do with the horse-marines?"

"Nothing whatever, ma'am. Good day to you — we are all waiting for our dinners, and don't feel disposed to talk any more; so be off with you."

Mrs. Williams seemed to be considering for a moment, and then she said, —

"Oh, gracious! a mother's feelings must always be excused. I almost think that — just to please you, admiral — I will consent."

"You will, mother?" exclaimed Helen.

"Why, in a manner of speaking," said Mrs. Williams, "I should not mind; but it's quite, you see, a dreadful thing to think of, when we consider what an expense I have gone to in all these matters, and that I have not had so much as one farthing from the baron, although he did say he would pay all the cost I might be put to."

"From resources which, in course of time, industry may procure me," said James Anderson, eagerly, "you shall be repaid all that you can possibly say has been expended for Helen."

"Ah! well, then, if Admiral Bell, here, will say that he will see me paid, I consent."

"Very well," said the admiral; "I'll see you paid. If you had acted generously in the matter, you should have been a gainer; but, as it is, you shall be paid, and we decline your acquaintance."

Mrs. Williams began, from the tone and manner of her daughter's new friends, to suspect that it would have been more prudent on her part if she had behaved in a very different manner towards them, and complied with a good grace with their wishes; for, as regarded the baron, anything in the shape of a more extended connexion with him was clearly out of the question.

But she had gone almost too far for reconciliation, and, although there was no such thing as denying the genius of the lady, she was, for a few minutes, puzzled to know what to do. At length, however, she thought it would not be a bad plan to be suddenly quite overcome with her feelings, and make a desperate scene.

Accordingly, to the surprise of every one, and the consternation of the admiral, she suddenly uttered a piercing scream, and commenced a good exhibition of hysterics.

"D — n it!" cried the admiral; "what does she mean by that? Come, come, I say, Mother Williams, we cannot stand all that noise, you know; it is quite out of the question!"

"Let us all leave the room," said Henry, "and send Jack Pringle to her. I have heard him say that he has some mode of recovering ladies from hysterics by throwing a pail—full of salt water over them, and then biting their thumb—nails off."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Williams, suddenly recovering. "The wretch! I'd let him know soon enough what it was to interfere with my nails!"

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"Oh! you are better, are you?" said the admiral.

"What's that to you?" shrieked Mrs. Williams. "I'll go at once to a lawyer, and see what can be done with you. I look upon you all with odium and contempt!"

"Ah! words easily spoken," said the admiral; "and just like young chickens they commonly go home to roost."

Mrs. Williams darted an angry look at the whole party, which she intended should be expressive at once of the immense contempt in which she held them, and of her determination to have vengeance upon their heads, which double-dealing look, however, had no effect upon them of an intimidating character, and then she bounced from the room.

"My dear," said the admiral, turning to Helen, who he saw was affected at the proceeding. "My dear, don't you fret yourself. Your mother cannot make us angry; and, as far as regards her own anger, it will all subside, and then we will forget that she has said anything at all uncivil to us. So don't you fret yourself about what is of no consequence at all."

"You may depend," said Henry, "that such will be the fact, and that in a very short time you will find that your mother has completely recovered from her anger, and will be as pleasant with us all as possible. I grieve to say so to you, but the fact is, what you must perceive, namely, that, as regards your mother, your marriage is merely a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence, and when she finds that the baron's fortune cannot be had, she will content herself with reflecting upon the prospects of Mr. James Anderson, who, if he do well, will soon be quite a favourite."

It was humiliating to poor Helen to be forced to confess that this was the correct view to take of the question, but she could not help doing so at all: and, after a time, she did not regret having sufficient moral courage to resist the command of her mother to return home.

In the society of him whom she loved, and upheld and encouraged, too, as she was by Flora, who was just about the best and kindest companion such a person as Helen could have had, the minutes began to fly past upon rosy pinions, and the remainder of that day she confessed, even to the admiral, was the happiest she had known for many a weary month.

The Bannerworths and James Anderson fully expected another visit from Mrs. Williams on the morrow, but she did not come; and, although they had expected her to do so, her not coming was no disappointment, but, on the contrary, a matter for some congratulation.

But no time was lost; and, as James Anderson was really most anxious to get to London to report himself at the Admiralty, and as that was an anxiety in which the admiral much encouraged him, so that as it was quite an understood thing among them all that the marriage of the fair Helen should take place before he again left her, a special license was procured, and the ceremony arranged to take place at nine o'clock in the morning, on the second morning after the strange and exciting occurrences at Anderbury House.

This marriage was conducted in the most private manner possible; because, as it had been so well known throughout the whole of Anderbury that Helen Williams was the chosen of the great and rich Baron Stelmuyer of Saltzburgh, who had turned out to be such an equivocal character, the news of her marriage with any one else would have been sure to have created a vast amount of public curiosity.

All this they escaped by fixing the hour at which the ceremony was to be performed at an early hour in the morning, and trusting no one out of their own party with the secret.

Of course, from what the reader knows of the gentle and timid disposition of Helen Williams, he may well suppose how glad she would have been to have had the countenance of her mother at her marriage, notwithstanding the conduct of that mother was certainly not what should have entitled her to the esteem of any one whatever, not excepting her own child.

But this was a feeling which, when she came to consider the new tie she was forming, was likely soon to wear away; and, although, while she pronounced those words which were irrevocably to make her another's, the tears gushed to her eyes, they were far different from those bitter drops she had shed when she considered that, beyond all hope of redemption, she was condemned to become the bride of the baron.

When the ceremony was over, they all went back very quietly and comfortably to the inn, and, after a good breakfast, and many healths had been drunk to the bride, James Anderson, according to arrangement, took his departure for London, leaving Helen in the care of the Bannerworths until he should come back to claim her, as he now could do, despite all the plots and machinations of Mrs. Williams, who, as yet, was in a state of blessed

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ignorance as to the fact of her daughter's wedding, and who had not quite made up her mind as to what she should do next in so delicate and troublesome a transaction.

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## Chapter CXXIII. MRS. WILLIAMS TAKES THE INITIATIVE, AND NEARLY CATCHES AN ADMIRAL.

Mrs. Williams, when she reached home after what must be called her very unsuccessful attempt to make a disturbance, and to do the grand at the inn where the Bannerworths were, set herself seriously to think what would be the best course for her to adopt in the rather perplexing aspect of her affairs.

The few words she had used at the inn, indicative of her censure of all the proceedings, had been of rather a strong and energetic character, so that she had a very uncomfortable suspicion upon her mind that she would find it rather a difficult task to pacify her daughter's new friends.

The offer which the admiral had made to repay to her any expense she had been at, impressed her with a belief that he surely must be in possession of what, to her, was the most delightful thing in the world, and comprehended all sorts of virtue, namely, money; and of course her feelings became instantly most wonderfully ameliorated.

"I'm very much afraid I have been too precipitate," she said. "I really am afraid I have, and that ain't a pleasant reflection by any means. What can I do to get good friends with them all, and particularly the dear old gentleman who promised to pay me?"

This was the problem which Mrs. Williams presented to her mind, for the captivating idea of actually having been paid 500 pounds by the baron, and thus sending in a bill of the same amount to the admiral, took wonderful and complete possession of her.

This was, indeed, she considered, a masterstroke of policy, and all she had now to consider was, the means of getting on such good terms with the admiral that he should neither question items nor amount of the account she intended to send him in.

"If he only pays the 500 pounds as well as the baron has paid his, I shall not come out of the transaction so badly," said Mrs. Williams.

While she was in this state of perplexity, she was sitting by the window of her dining-room, which commanded a view of the street, and, as she sat there, she was much surprised to see Jack Pringle, who she still had a lingering suspicion might, notwithstanding his disclaimer of the title, be Admiral Green, on the other side of the way, making various significant movements of his hands and head, as if he had something of an exceedingly secret and strange mysterious nature to communicate to her, Mrs. Williams.

This was quite sufficient to call for that lady's most serious attention, and accordingly she walked graciously so close to the window that her aristocratic nose touched the glass, and nodded to Jack, after which she beckoned him across the way, after the manner of the ghost in Hamlet, upon which Jack, with a nod, came across the way forthwith.

In another moment Mrs. Williams opened the street-door herself, and said, --

"Mr. What's-your-name, have you got anything to say to me?"

"Rather," said Jack.

"What is it, then -- pray what is it, Mr. What's-your-name?"

"Don't call me What's-your-name, ma'am, any longer; my name is Jack Pringle."

"Mr. John Pringle, I suppose?"

"No such thing; nothing but plain Jack, ma'am; so you see you are mistaken. But I have got something to say to you, ma'am, as you ought to know."

Any one who had known Jack would have seen, by a certain mischievous twinkling of the eyes, that he had on hand what he considered one of the most excellent of jokes in all the world, and was about to perpetrate what he thought some famous piece of jollity. What it was, we shall quickly perceive, from his communication with Mrs. Williams.

"Well, ma'am," he added, "you know Admiral Bell, I believe?"

"Oh, yes -- yes; certainly, I do."

"Well, I don't know as I ought to tell you, Mrs. W., what I'm going to tell you; but, first of all, the old admiral, what with prize money, pay, and one thing and another, is so immensely rich, that he really don't know what to do with his money."

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"How dreadful!" said Mrs. Williams; "I think I could really suggest to him some few things to do."

"Oh, he is so desperately obstinate, he will listen to nobody; and, you see, as he never married, who as he got to leave it to? At least that's what we have been all wondering, for I don't know how long; but now what do you think we have found out, Mrs. Williams?"

"Well, that's very difficult, of course, for me to say. Perhaps you will be so good as to tell me."

"You ought to know. He has fallen in love, ma'am — actually in love, for the first time in his life. Yes, he has actually fallen in love, Mrs. Williams; there's a go."

"And with one of my daughters! It's with Julia — I did mention her to him, and I thought I saw a curious expression come across his face. Of course, I'm quite delighted to hear it; for, with the feelings of a mother, I like to get my girls off hand as well as I can; and, as Admiral Bell is so very respectable a person, I can have no sort of objection in the world."

"There you go, again," said Jack; "you are quite mistaken, I can tell you. You never made a greater blunder than that in all your life, Mother Williams — excuse me, ma'am, but that's my way."

"Oh, don't mention it — but where's the mistake, my dear sir?"

"Why, just here, ma'am — just here. The admiral is not so young as he was twenty-five years ago, and he ain't quite such a fool as to think that a young girl can care anything for him. But he is in love, for all that. Only you see, ma'am, it happens to be with somebody else."

"Good gracious! Who is it? — and why do you come to me about it?"

"Because it's you."

"Me! me! oh, gracious Providence, you don't mean that! In love with me! The rich old admiral — he cannot live long. How much money, take it altogether, do you really think he has got? I declare you have taken me so by surprise, that I don't know what I am saying. Of course he will propose a very handsome settlement."

"You may depend upon all that," said Jack; "but the odd thing is, you see, ma'am, that although he is quite over head and ears in love, he won't own it, but walks about like a bear with a bad place on his back, doing nothing but growl, growl, from morning till night."

"Then how can you tell," said Mrs. Williams, "if he never said so?"

"Oh, he does say so. He mumbles it out to himself, and we have heard him say, —

"'Damn it all! that Mrs. Williams is the craft for my money; but what's the use of me bothering her about it? — she wouldn't have an old hulk like me, so I won't say anything about it to anybody.'"

"What an amiable idea!"

"Very, ma'am, very; and what I have come to you for now is to say, that if you have no objection to the match, you might as well make the old man happy, by letting him know, in some sort of way, that you wouldn't be so hard-hearted as he thinks, but would have him if he would say the word."

"How can I express how much obliged I am to you, Mr. Wingle!"

"Pringle, if you please, ma'am, is my name; and as to being obliged to me, you ain't at all, and I'll tell you how: you see, I and the admiral have sailed with each other many a voyage, and I have a sort of feeling for the old man that makes me, when I see that he has a fancy, try my best to gratify him; and, without thinking of anybody but him, I've come to you just to tell you what I know about the affair, and I must leave it to you to do what you like."

"Still I am very much obliged to you. What if I were to call and ask for a private interview with the old man?"

"A good idea," said Jack. "It was only the other day I heard him say you was his pearl, and the main chain of his heart, I can tell you, and ever such a load more. He will be taking his dinner at four to-day, and after that he usually takes a sleep in an arm chair, in a room by himself, and if you like to come then, you will catch him."

"Be assured, my dear sir, I shall be there punctually to the minute. You will be so good as to receive me, and introduce me to him, and, perhaps, it would remove some of his timidity if I were to let him know that I was aware that he had called me his pearl, and the main chain of his heart."

"Of course it would," said Jack. "You put him in mind of it, ma'am, and if you find him back'erd a little, don't you mind about giving him a little encouragement, because you know all the while he really means it, so you need not care about it."

"Well, Mr. — a — a — Bingle, all I can say is, that I feel very much obliged to you indeed, for letting me know this matter; and my great respect for you and for the old admiral will, I assure you, induce me to consent to

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what you propose. — A—hem! of course I have many offers, as you may well suppose, Mr. Cringle."

"Damn it," said Jack, "I've told you before that my name is Pringle, and if you can't recollect that, just call me Jack, and have done with it — you won't forget Jack, I'll be bound. Call me that, and I sha'n't quarrel with you about it, ma'am; but don't be inventing all sorts of odd names for me."

"Pray excuse me, my dear sir, I certainly will do no such thing; and at three o'clock, I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. I believe it's the Red Lion where you are staying?"

"Yes, the Red Lion Inn; and at three I shall be on the look out for you, ma'am, you may depend; and I only hope you won't mistake the admiral's bashfulness for anything else, because, I assure you, he is mad in love with you, but don't like to own it, ma'am; so just you bring him out a little, and don't you mind what he says."

Mrs. Williams duly promised she would not mind what the old man said, and, from what we know of that lady, we are quite inclined, for once in a way, to give her credit for sincerity in that matter, and the greatest possible amount of candour.

As for Jack, when he left her house, and had got fairly round the corner and out of sight, he laughed to that excess that several passers—by stopped to look at him in wonder, and had he not ceased, he certainly would have had a crowd round him in a very few minutes longer, that would have perhaps thought him out of his senses.

But after a few minutes, the explosion of his bottled—up mirth had subsided, and after giving a boy, who was the nearest to him of the admiring spectators, a good rap on the head, he walked to the inn.

Jack would have been glad to have told some one of the capital joke he was playing off at the admiral's expense, but he was afraid of being betrayed; so he wisely kept the secret of the forthcoming jest all to himself; although Henry Bannerworth and Charles Holland might both, after such a thing happened, or even during its progress, have a good laugh at it, it is not to be supposed, entertaining as they did so great a respect for the old admiral, that they would have lent themselves to the perpetration of such a joke.

As may be supposed, Mrs. Williams was all flutter and expectation, and the idea of at length mending her decayed fortune by an union with the old man, who was reported to be immensely rich, and who had already reached an age when his life could not be depended upon one week from another, was one of the most gratifying circumstances on record to her.

No possible plan could have been devised which was so likely to chime in with her humour as this, and if she had been asked in which way she would like to make money, it would have been that which she would have undoubtedly chosen.

"Now," she thought, "I shall, after all, make an admirable thing of this affair, there can be no doubt. I shall, of course, soon be a widow again, for the old sea monster cannot live long. I shall insist upon a very liberal settlement indeed, and then I suppose, while he does live, I must keep him in a good humour, so that he may leave me, at all events, the bulk of his property when he dies, and then I can live in the style I like, and make everybody die of envy."

To excite an extraordinary amount of envy was the very height of felicity to Mrs. Williams, as, indeed, it is to many people of far greater pretensions than that lady; and we cannot help thinking, when we see gaudy equipages and all the glittering and costly paraphernalia of parvenu wealth, that the great object of it is to excite envy far more than admiration and pleasure.

"There are the Narrowidges, and the Staples, and the Jenkinses," thought Mrs. Williams. "Oh! I know they will all be ready to eat their very heads off, when they hear that I am married, and that, too, so well. Oh! they will die of spite, and particularly Mrs. Jenkins. I am quite sure she will have a serious illness."

These were the kind of triumphs upon which Mrs. Williams felicitated herself, and pictured to her imagination as the result of her marriage with the admiral, which she now looked upon as quite a settled thing; because, if he were willing, she felt perfectly sure that she was; and, therefore, what was to prevent the union from taking place?

What pleasant anticipations these were! Really, we can almost consider them, while they lasted, as sufficient to counterbalance any disappointment which was likely afterwards to take place; and the hour or two which Mrs. Williams devoted to the gorgeous dream of wealth she so fully expected to enjoy, were probably the most delightful she had ever passed. And certainly so far she had to thank Jack Pringle for giving her so much satisfaction, although, as will be seen, she did not feel towards him any great amount of gratitude on the momentous occasion.

Mrs. Williams, no doubt, still thought herself quite a fascinating woman; and when she had failed in guessing



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that it was to herself that the admiral was, according to Jack's account, devoted, it was not that she entertained a modest and quiet opinion of her own attractions, but from the force of habit, seeing that so long a period had elapsed without her having an admirer, that she could not believe she had one then, until actually assured in plain language of the fact.

And now, about half an hour before the appointed time, the lady arrayed herself in what she considered an extremely becoming and fashionable costume, and started to keep her appointment with Jack Pringle, who, in her affections, now held quite a pleasant place, and towards whom she considered herself so much indebted for the kind information she had received at his hands.

The distance from any house in Anderbury to any other, was but short, so that Mrs. Williams was within the time mentioned, when she reached the door of the Red Lion; but she was gratified to find that Jack Pringle was there, apparently on the look out for her, because it showed that nothing had happened to alter the aspect of affairs, but that the chances of her becoming Mrs. Admiral Bell were as strong as ever.

"I'm glad you have come," said Jack. "They got over their dinner rather quick, and that's a fact; and the old man is fast asleep as usual, so you can commence operations at once."

"A thousand thanks — a thousand thanks, my good friend, and you may depend upon my gratitude."

"Hush! never mind that," said Jack; "I don't want nothing. This way — this way, ma'am, if you please."

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## Chapter CXXVI. THE ADMIRAL IN A BREEZE. -- A GENERAL COMMOTION, AND JACK PRINGLE MUCH WANTED, BUT NOT TO BE FOUND.

To say that Mrs. Williams was on the tiptoe of expectation, is to say very little that can convey a good idea of what was her real condition, nervously speaking, as she followed Jack Pringle up, not the principal, but a back staircase of the inn, toward the room where the admiral took his nap, which was

"His custom always of an afternoon." The fact is, that Jack had a great dread of Mrs. Williams being seen by any of the Bannerworth family, because they all knew her; and the nice little plot he had got up for the purpose of holding out the admiral to ridicule, while at the same time he enjoyed the immense satisfaction of having some revenge upon Mrs. Williams.

Hence was it, that, like many a great politician, he went up the back staircase instead of the front, in order to avoid unnecessary observation and remark.

By good fortune, as well as good management, Jack met nobody, but succeeded in reaching the room door, within which the admiral was sleeping, in perfect safety.

"Now, ma'am," said Jack, "don't you be backerd in going forer, cos, as I tell you, the old man is dying by inches for you, and I don't see why you shouldn't have his half a million of money, as well as anybody else. Ah! and a good deal better, too, when one comes to consider all things."

"Thank you, Mr. Pringle, thank you. I really don't know how to express my obligations to you, upon my word. You are so very kind and considerate in all you say."

"Oh! don't mention it, ma'am. Walk in, and there you will find the old baby. I shouldn't wonder but he's disturbing his old brains by dreaming of you now."

Jack opened the door, and Mrs. Williams glided noiselessly into an apartment, where, seated, sure enough, in an easy chair, with a silk handkerchief over his face, sat the admiral, fast asleep, enjoying that comfortable siesta, which he never for one moment imagined would be disturbed in the manner it was about to be.

"Well," said Mrs. Williams, "there he is, to be sure, just as Jack Pringle said, -- asleep, and no doubt dreaming of me. I must make sure of the old fool in one interview, or he may slip through my fingers, and that would not be at all pleasant after counting upon him, and taking some trouble in the matter."

But although she made up her mind that nothing should be wanting, upon her part, to make sure of him, yet she debated whether she ought to awaken him or not; for she well knew that many old people, especially men, were very irascible if they are awakened suddenly, and from what she had already seen of the admiral, she could very well imagine that such might be the case with him.

This was getting rather a quondary, out of which Mrs. Williams did not exactly see her way; and yet the proposition that the admiral was to be, and must be, awakened in some way, remained as firmly as ever fixed in her mind. And then, too, the idea -- a very natural one under the circumstances -- came across her that each minute was fraught with danger, and that, for all she knew, the yea or nay of the whole affair might depend upon the promptitude with which it was concluded.

What, if, she asked herself, some of the odious Bannerworth people were to come in and find her there -- of course they would awaken the admiral at once, and in consequence of their presence, she would lose all opportunity of exercising those little blandishments which she meant to bring to bear upon him.

This was positively alarming. The idea of all being lost, prompted her at all events to attempt something; so Mrs. Williams thought that the mildest way of awakening the admiral was by a loud sneeze, which she executed without producing the least effect, as might have been expected; for the man who had many a time slept soundly in the wildest fury of the elements, was not likely to awaken because somebody sneezed.

"Dear me, how sound he sleeps. A -- hem! -- hem! A -- chew! -- a -- a -- hem! -- A chewaway!"

The admiral was proof against all this, and Mrs. Williams might just as well have spared herself the trouble of exciting such an amount of artificial sneezes, for the admiral slept on, and it was quite clear that something much more sonorous would be required for the purpose of awaking him.

"How vexatious," she thought; "how very vexatious. But there's no help for it. Awakened he must be, that's quite clear; and if fair means won't do it, why, foul must."

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Acting upon this resolve, Mrs. Williams hesitated no longer, but, approaching the sleeping admiral, she dragged the handkerchief off his face, and its passage over his nose, no doubt, produced the tickling sensation that induced him to give that organ a very hard rub, indeed, and start wide awake with an exclamation that was much more forcible than elegant, and that consequently we need not transfer to our pages at all.

"Oh! admiral," said Mrs. Williams, assuming a look that ought at once to have melted a heart of stone; "oh! admiral, can you, indeed, forgive me?"

"The devil!" said the admiral.

"Can you, indeed, look over the fact, that in my anxiety to see that face, I took from before it the envious, and yet fortunate handkerchief that covered it? It was my act, and upon my head fall all the censure, my dear, good, kind admiral."

The old man rubbed his eyes very hard with his knuckles, as he said, —

"I suppose I'm awake."

"You are awake, my dear sir. It is, indeed, no dream, let me assure you, that disturbs you, but a living reality. You are awake, my dear sir."

"Why — why, what do you mean? I begin to think I am awake, with a vengeance; but who are you? Hang me if I don't think you are old Mother Williams!"

"Oh! my dear admiral, you are so facetious — so very facetious; but can you for one moment fancy, my dear sir, that I am insensible to your merit? Can you fancy that I could look with other than indulgent eyes upon a Bell?"

"Upon a what?"

"A Bell — an Admiral Bell. Indeed, I may say — with a slight but pardonable alteration of a word — an admirable Bell. My dear sir, your pearl speaks to you."

The admiral was so amazed at this address, accompanied as it was by most languishing looks, that, with his mouth wide open, and his eyes preternaturally distended, he gazed upon Mrs. Williams without saying a word; from which she inferred that he was beginning to see that she was aware of his attachment to her, and was thinking of how he could best express his gratitude for her taking the initiative in the matter.

Thus encouraged, then, she spoke again, saying, as she advanced close to him, —

"Oh, my dear sir, what a thing the human heart is. Only to think now, that from the first moment I saw you, I should whisper to myself — there — yes, there is the only human being for whose sake I could again enter into that holy state from which the death of Mr. Williams released me."

"Why, good God!" said the admiral, "the woman's mad!"

"Oh! no — no. The world — the horrid, low, work-a-day world, may make invidious remarks about us, but your pearl will recompense you for all that, and in the sweet concord of domestic life, we shall never sigh for more than we shall have, which will be, of course, if I understand rightly, a large income — I don't know how much a year, and if I ask, it is only out of curiosity, my dear sir, and nothing else. Love — absolute and beautiful love, is all I ask."

"Hilloa!" roared the admiral; "Charles! Henry! Jack! Where the devil are you all? D — n it, you are all ready enough when I don't want you; but now, when I am going to be boarded by a mad woman, you can't come one of you. Hilloa! help! Charles! Jack, you lubber, where the deuce have you taken yourself to, and why don't you tumble up when you are sent for?"

"But, my dear sir, why need you trouble yourself to call so many witnesses to our happiness? Let us be privately married in some rural church."

"Privately d — d first, I'd be," said the old admiral.

"Oh, then, it shall be a public alliance, if you wish it," exclaimed Mrs. Williams, as she made up her mind to clinch the affair at once by a coup de main; and advancing to the admiral, she flung her arms around his neck just as a door at the other end of the apartment opened, and Charles and Henry, with Flora, made their appearance, and looked with the most intense astonishment at the scene before them.

"Well, uncle," said Charles, "I certainly should not have expected this of you. I am astonished, I must confess."

"Nor I," said Henry; "why, admiral, I had no idea you were so dangerous a personage."

Mrs. Williams, when she saw what arrivals had taken place, gave a faint scream, and released the admiral, and

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then she added, —

"Oh, admiral, how could you hold me so when you hear somebody coming? How shall I ever survive such a scene as this? My character will be gone for ever, unless I am immediately married to you, and I have no doubt but that all your friends will at once see the propriety of such a step."

"I do," said Charles.

"And I," said Henry.

"And I," of course, said Flora.

Mrs. Williams burst into tears when she saw this unanimity of opinion; but the admiral's face got the colour of a piece of beet-root, and he was only silent for a moment or two, while he was made the subject of these cruel remarks, until he could sufficiently recover to speak with the energy that did characterise him when he really began.

We are not exactly in the vein to transfer to our pages the violent expletives with which he garnished his outburst of passion, and our readers, if they recall to their minds a large amount of nautical oaths, can have no difficulty in supposing that the admiral uttered every one of them with a volubility that was perfectly alarming.

"D — n it! do you mean to kill me, all of you, or to drive me mad? (Five oaths in a string came in here.) Do you want to cut me up, you — —? (Three horrible epithets.) What do you mean by setting this old woman upon me? Whose precious idea was this, I should like to know, to put an elderly she-dragon upon me, whom I hate and be — (ten oaths at least) when I was enjoying a comfortable nap?"

"Hate!" exclaimed Mrs. Williams; "did you say hate, you old seducing villain! when you knew you said I was your pearl, you hoary-headed ruffian!"

"That's a thundering crammer," cried the admiral; "you said it yourself; and as for hating you, d — n it, if I don't do that with all my heart."

"And is this the way I'm to be treated before people? Oh! you wicked old sinner, I understand you now. Your intentions were not honourable, and now you find that my virtue is proof against your horrid old fascinations, you want to pretend that it's all a mistake."

"Really," said Charles, "we must confess, uncle, that we found Mrs. Williams and you — ahem! — rather loving, you know; and the gentleman on these occasions is usually asked to account for such things, I take it."

"Of course," said Mrs. Williams; "I'll bring an action against the admiral, and I shall call upon you all to be witnesses for me. Oh! you old sinner, I'll make you pay for this!"

"We certainly can all be witnesses," said Flora, "that the admiral called for help; and when we came we found Mrs. Williams holding him fast round the neck, to which he seemed to have the greatest possible repugnance."

"That's right! hurrah! That's the truth, Flora, my dear. That's just how it was. This horrid old woman come all of a sudden and laid hold of me after awakening me, and then I called for help. That's how it was."

"But these gentlemen," said Mrs. Williams, appealing to Henry and Charles, "will swear quite different."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Williams," said Charles; "if we are brought forward to swear anything, we must be correct; and, therefore, we shall have to say just what this lady has stated; and perhaps your best plan will be to go away and say no more about it; but consider that you have made a mistake."

"A mistake!" screamed Mrs. Williams; "how could I make a mistake, when Mr. John Pringle, who knows the admiral so well, told me that he was dying to see me, and in love with me to never such an extent, only that he was afraid I would not have anything to say to him on such a subject."

The admiral drew a long breath and sat down. Then, clenching his hand, he shook it above his head, saying, in a voice of deep and concentrated anger, —

"I thought as much. D — n it, if I did not. It's all that infernal scoundrel Jack Pringle's doings, I find. It's one of that lubberly, mutinous thief's tricks, and it's the last one he shall ever play me."

"A trick!" screamed Mrs. Williams; "a trick! You don't mean that! Ah, me! what compensation shall I get for the dreadful circumstance which has made me confess the secret of my heart! What shall I do — oh, what shall I do? When shall I hope for consolation! What sum of money, even if you, my dear admiral, were to offer it to me, would be a sufficient balm now to my wounded heart?"

"Madam," said Henry, "it seems that you have been imposed upon, and made the victim of a practical joke, which we nor the admiral can have nothing to do with; and the only consolation we can offer to your wounded heart, is, that we will keep the secret of your attachment most inviolate."

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"What compensation is that to me? I'll bring my action for breach of promise of marriage, if I don't get something, and that something very handsome too. It's all very fine to talk to me about your mistakes; I'll be paid — ah, and paid well, too, or I'll make the whole country ring again with the matter."

"Madam," said Charles, "I dare say the admiral don't care one straw whether the country rings again or not, and you can do just as you please; but since you have commenced threatening, you will, I hope, see the obvious propriety of at once leaving his place."

"I will leave this place, but it shall be to go direct to my solicitor, and see what he will say to a lone woman being treated in this way. I'll swear that he called me his pearl — and if that don't get me a verdict and most exemplary damages, I don't know what will. We shall see what we shall see, and, in the meantime, you wretches, I leave you all to contempt. Yes, contempt."

"Stop a bit, ma'am," said the admiral. "It's quite plain to me that you don't mind how you earn a trifle, so that you do get it; and now I'll tell you, that if you find out that rascal, Jack Pringle, and give him a good trouncing for his share in the business, you may come to me for a reward."

Mrs. Williams, whatever might have been her personal feelings on this head, did not deign to make the least reply to this intimation, but suddenly cried —

"I want to see my daughter."

"She is not here at present," said Flora; "and, if she were, she is Mrs. Anderson now, and therefore would of course decline accompanying you to your home — and she is only waiting some arrangements of her husband's, prior, most probably, to going to London with him."

This speech brought to the recollection of Mrs. Williams, that the admiral had promised her all the expenses that she had been at contingent upon the broken-off marriage of her daughter with the baron, and she began to consider that her action for breach of promise of marriage against him might fail, and that, if it succeeded, it might not bring in half so much as the amount of the bill she could by fair means get out of him.

These considerations were of great pith and amount, and they had their full effect upon Mrs. Williams; so, instead of bursting out with any further reproaches, she sat down and commenced a softening process by a copious flood of tears which she had always at command.

"Oh," said the old admiral, "you may well cry over it, old girl. I suppose you really thought you had hooked the old man at last, eh? But never do you mind, you may make a good thing of it yet, if you get hold of that scoundrel, Pringle, and serve him out well. I'll pay for that job more willingly than for anything else I know of just at present."

"Don't speak to me of that brute, my dear sir," sobbed Mrs. Williams. "It's a very cruel thing, of course, to be used in this way, and, as it's all a mistake on my part, I hope you will excuse and look over what has happened. I am sure I should be the last person in the world to trouble anybody with visits who did not want to see me; and so, I dare say, we shall only meet once again in this world."

"Once again, madam! What is the use of our ever meeting again?"

"It would look decidedly disrespectful on my part, if I were not to hand you the bill myself for the little matters that you were kind enough to say you would pay for on account of what I had expended on Helen's projected marriage with the vampyre baron, you know, admiral."

"Oh, ah! I recollect now. Well, well; I don't want to go back from my word, and as I did promise you, why, I will pay you; but as I don't want, on any account, the pleasure of your company again, you will be so kind, ma'am, as to take this twenty-pounds note, and keep the change."

This the admiral thought liberal enough; for his idea of matrimonial preparations consisted of a new dress or two, or so, and which twenty pounds ought fairly enough to cover; and he thought he would do well enough by overpaying Mrs. Williams, as he believed, with that amount.

When Mrs. Williams recovered from her surprise, not unmingled with indignation, into which this most audacious and, to her, extraordinary offer threw her, she spoke with a kind of scream, that made the old admiral jump again, as she shouted in his ears, —

"What! twenty pounds? Are you in your senses? Twenty pounds! Why, my bill will be, at least, five hundred pounds."

"What?" roared the admiral. "Are you in your senses? D — n it, ma'am! you may swallow your bill; and you had better do so, for all the good it is likely to do you; for, if I pay a farthing more, may I be hung up at my own

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yard-arm. Why, you must think that a British admiral is another name for a fool."

"Then I tell you what," said Mrs. Williams — "I tell you what, you stupid, old, atrocious sinner — I tell you, I will bring my action against you for breach of promise of marriage; and I'll swear that, before your gang of people here came in — who, of course, will swear black is white, and white is crimson for you, because, I believe, you are the father of them all — that you first asked me to live with you, and when I refused, you said you would marry me by special licence to-morrow."

"Madam," said Charles, "now that you think proper entirely to forget that you are a lady, allow me to beg of you to retire; because it is quite impossible, after what has happened, that I should hold any further conversation with you."

"Yes, Mrs. Williams," said Henry, "I hope you will perceive the propriety of at once leaving."

At this moment a note was handed to Henry, who, upon opening it, read aloud, —

"The Baron Stolzmyer, of Salzburgh, presents his compliments to Mr. Bannerworth, and begs to state that Mrs. Williams has received from him the sum of five hundred pounds for expenses to be incurred on account of the wedding of her daughter; and he hereby fully empowers Mr. Bannerworth to demand of Mrs. Williams that sum, and to devote it to the service and uses of Mr. James Anderson, of whose existence the baron was not aware when he made his proposal to Mrs. Williams for her daughter, whom she sold to him, the baron, for that sum."

"Hilloa!" cried the admiral; "what do you think of that, Mrs. Williams? I don't know what you will say to it; but I know very well that I should consider it a shot between wind and water."

"I trust," said Henry, "that you will now still further see the propriety of leaving here, and of letting this matter completely rest; because it strikes me that the more you investigate it, madam, the more it will turn out greatly to your disadvantage."

"I don't care a pin's head for any of you, nor half a farthing," cried Mrs. Williams. "The baron gave me the money, and he has no power to get it back again, as you know well enough. I'll bring my action, and my principal witness shall be Mr. Pringle, who came to my house, and who, if put upon his oath, will be obliged to swear — "

"That it was all a lark," said Jack, popping his head just within the amazingly short distance that he opened the door, and then he disappeared before a word could be said to him.

Mrs. Williams who, notwithstanding all her threats, seemed to have a lingering impression that she was victimised in the transaction, had all the ire of her nature aroused at once by the sight of Jack, and she at once rushed after him, leaving the admiral and the Bannerworths not at all lamenting her loss.

Jack had no idea that he would be followed by anybody but the admiral, and to distance him he knew there was no occasion to run; so, when he had got down to the hall of the hotel, he subsided into a walk, until he heard a tremendous scuffling of feet behind him, and, upon looking round, saw Mrs. Williams in full chase, and with an expression upon her countenance which plainly enough indicated that her intentions were not at all of a jocular character.

"The devil!" said Jack; "if here ain't Mother Williams coming full sail, and at fourteen knots an hour, too, with a fair wind, I'll be bound. Never mind — a stern chase is a long chase, so here goes."

As Jack uttered these remarks, he dashed onwards at tremendous speed; but the sight of him again, had inflamed Mrs. Williams's wrath to madness, and she made the most incredible exertion to come up with him, so that it was really wonderful to see her.

But Jack, being less encumbered by apparel than the lady, would have distanced her, but for an unlucky accident, that gave her a temporary mastery. The fates would have it, that a baker with a tray upon his head, containing sundry pies, was coming up the street, and as people do sometimes, when they are mutually anxious to pass each other without coming in contact, they dodged from side to side for a few seconds, and then, of course, ran against each other as if they really meant it, with such force, that down came Jack, and baker, and pies, in one grand smash.

In another moment the enraged Mrs. Williams reached the spot.

To snatch up the only whole pie there was left, was to the lady the work of a moment, and to reverse it upon Jack's face, was the work of another moment; and then, in the vindictiveness of her rage, she stamped upon the bottom of the dish until his head was embedded in damsons, and he was nearly smothered.

From the window of the inn the Bannerworths and the admiral saw all this take place, and the delight of the old man was of the most extravagant character, exceeding all bounds, while the Bannerworths, for the life of

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them, could not help laughing most heartily.

"Now, you wretch!" said Mrs. Williams, "I hope this will be a lesson to you. Take that --- and that --- and that, you sea-snake! you odious tar-barrel!"

As she spoke, she hammered on the dish till it broke, and that was for Jack the best thing that could have happened, for it gave him a little air, and by a frantic effort he scrambled to a sitting posture, and commenced dragging the damsons out of his eyes and mouth. Mrs. Williams then thought it was high time to leave, and so muttering threats, to the immense amusement of a crowd of persons who had assembled, she walked away, leaving Jack by no means delighted with the end of the adventure, and to settle with the infuriated baker as best he might.

It was no small additional mortification to Jack to look up and see the admiral and the Bannerworths at the window of the hotel, enjoying his discomfiture, and laughing most heartily at his expense.

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## Chapter CXXVII. A CHANGE OF SCENE AND CIRCUMSTANCES. -- AN EVENT IN LONDON.

The recent events which followed each other so rapidly, were strangely concluded by the sudden and mysterious disappearance of Sir Francis Varney. That he should thus have eluded all, was aggravating to a very large class of people, who seemed to insist that he should have come to some notable catastrophe.

"Had he only been killed," they argued, "we should have known the last of him."

Of the truth of this there could be no doubt. When a man is dead and buried, you do, as far as human nature serves, know the end of him; but this great fact does not always come within the knowledge of men, who sometimes, contrary to expectation, drop off themselves, and instead of knowing the end of somebody else, why, somebody else knows the end of them.

It is a well known fact, that as some die before others, that it does sometimes happen that those who wish to see another out, may be seen out themselves; besides, taking the question of longevity aside, it does not follow, because we so wish to come to the conclusion of an affair, that its author may but change the scene, and transport it elsewhere, and the good and curious lieges become defrauded of their self-satisfying knowledge, viz., the end of the affair.

Of course it was an aggravation, to know that there was an interesting and highly exciting affair gone off, and they were not allowed to peep into that mystery, the future; but so it was -- they were not gratified.

Some were of the opinion that he had departed this life in a mysterious and unsatisfactory, because secret manner, and that was why nobody could tell anything about it.

But there were other opinions afloat, and among others, that of the admiral, which was pretty general, which was, that he had very likely disappeared from that part of the world to seek in some other place the renovation his system required, by means that were natural to him, but hideous in others to contemplate or think of.

This was generally the received opinion, for it was universally admitted by the wise people thereabouts, that he must at certain times recruit himself.

The opinion thus entertained by all who lived thereabouts, became less and less absorbing; other matters began to be thought of, things began to flow into their usual channel, and a subsidence took place in the turmoil and excitement consequent upon the presence of the vampyre.

About this period, while these parts were regaining their original serenity and calmness, and while the vampyre was looked upon as an awful and fearful episode in the life of those who lived there, there happened in London a circumstance that it is necessary to relate to the reader, inasmuch as it is very important, and bears strongly on our story.

Not far from Bloomsbury-square, which, at the period of our story, was a very fashionable place, and in one of the first streets thereabout, was the house of a widow, whose name was Meredith. She had been the wife of a man in good circumstances, but at his death she was left with a house filled with furniture, some little loose cash, and several daughters, marriageable and unmarried, this being all Mr. Meredith had to leave.

There could be but one way of obtaining a living -- at least, but one that suggested itself to her, which was to turn lodging-house keeper of the better sort. Her children had been well educated, that is, sufficiently so, to pass off in life, in decent society, without any particular remark.

As she was well calculated for the object she had in view, it was no wonder that she succeeded in her undertaking, and appeared to do very well.

About this time an arrival occurred at an hotel not very far from this spot, which caused a communication to pass to Mrs. Meredith, who had been recommended lodgers from the hotel, when any of the inmates desired to be accommodated, and wished for a place with all the comforts of a home, and domestic attention.

"Mrs. Meredith," said the head waiter of the hotel, "I wish to have a word in private with you."

"With greatest pleasure, Mr. Jones," said Mrs. Meredith, who was extremely civil to the waiter; "will you be pleased to sit down."

"I have not the time, I thank you -- I have not time; but I have run over to you to inform you we have an old invalid colonel at our place, who seems as if he did not know what he wanted; he wants some kind of lodging --



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he don't like the hotel — whether there is some genteel family, whose kind attentions would soothe his disorders, and, I suppose, his temper."

"Oh, poor gentleman," said Mrs. Meredith; "how unfortunate he should suffer — is he rich?"

"Yes, I believe so — very rich, he's a colonel in the India service; he's been a fine man, but he has had some hard knocks. I have seen more ricketty matters than he before to-day, and he will do very well. I told him I knew where there was a lady who occasionally admitted an inmate to her house, which was a large one, but she must be satisfied that her lodger is a gentleman.

"Has she any family?" he inquired; "because I hate to go where there's nobody but the lady of the house, because she can't always attend upon me, read to me, and the like of that."

"Goodness me, what an odd man!"

"Yes, but he pays well; a retired colonel — large fortune. You know that these East Indians expect I don't know what; they are even fed by beautiful young black virgins."

"The wretch!"

"Oh, dear, no; it's the custom of the country; so, you see, he's been humoured, and it will be necessary yet to humour him, if you mean to have him for your lodger. I expect he'll only be troublesome; but, when they pay for trouble, why, it's all profit."

"Very true," replied Mrs. Meredith; "is he a single man?"

"Yes, oh, yes; I believe he has never been married; has had so much to do in India, that he had nothing to do with marriages."

"Where does he come from?"

"India. I believe he had a very fine palace of his own, at Puttytherapore, so I'm told. Lord, he seems to think nothing of these parts — but he's an odd man; however, as he pays well, he'll make a good lodger anywhere."

"Well, you may tell him, Mr. Jones, that we have a fine suite of rooms for his accommodation on the first floor, and bed rooms — every attention he can wish. You know our terms, Mr. Jones, I think — but I may as well tell you — five guineas a-week."

"Five guineas a-week, eh?"

"Yes; that is moderate, when you come to consider what a trouble and an expense it will be to get such things as will please the palate of an Indian."

"It is a trouble, certainly."

"And, besides that, he will have such a place and furniture as he seldom meets with in London; besides, from what you say, there will be little trouble in attending to him by myself and daughters, and you know I have several."

"Exactly — exactly; that is the thing he seems to desire; you will, therefore, have a preference over any one else who may have anything that he wants — a kind of domestic hearth; he has none of his own, you see."

"Has he no friends?"

"None living, I dare say; besides, he would hardly like to trust himself along with relations, who would poison him for the sake of his money; and, if he have any living, he may know nothing of them, where they are, or anything else, and they would be as strangers to him, for he would not be able to recognize them — but I must go now. Five guineas — that includes all?"

"Yes; all, except wines and liquors, you know."

"Very well, I'll let him know; and, perhaps, you'll be in the way, in case he should come round this evening to examine the place."

"Do you think there is any chance of his coming in to-night?"

"Really, I cannot tell; he may, or may not, just as he pleases — he is an odd fish; but, good Mrs. Meredith, I will talk to him."

The waiter left; and Mrs. Meredith sat in her parlour, which was her own private apartment, which she and her daughters usually retired to and received their own friends. Here they remained, in some degree kept in continual expectation; nothing was said, for some time, by either mother or daughter, for there was but one at home at that time.

"Do you know, Margaret," she said, "we are likely to have a new lodger?"

"Indeed, ma?"

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"Yes, my dear; he is a fidgetty old man, a colonel from India; he is vastly rich, I am given to understand, and will require all the attentions of a relative. He will pay very handsomely; in fact, my dear, he will keep us all with a little care and management."

"Well, ma, the men ought to do so, the creatures! — what are they for, if they don't. I'm sure, if ever I come to marry, which I am sure I sha'n't, and if I found that he didn't find me in all I wanted, wouldn't I lead him a life! — I rather think I would," said the amiable child; "I'd never let him know peace night nor day. It would be useless for him to tell me misfortune had deprived him of means; that would do for me. Oh, dear, no; a married man has no right to meet misfortunes; indeed, he deserves to be punished for having a wife at all under such circumstances."

"A very proper spirit, my dear; but you must never let such a thing as that pass your lips, because it would be very likely to cause you to lose a chance; the men are so fastidious now a-days, and they think they win us, when we angle for, and catch them."

And this lodger, ma?"

"Oh, he's, as I told you, a rich old East Indian."

At this moment, a coach drove up to the door, and a tremendous double rap was played off upon the door, as if it had been committed by a steam-engine; so loud and so long was the application for the admittance, that both mother and daughter started.

"Dear me, that must be him," said the mother; "yes, a coach and all — there — there, I declare."

"What, ma?"

"Why, look at that girl next door out in the balcony; there's Miss Smith — that girl is always trying to attract some person or other; and the men affect to believe that she is beautiful; for my part, I think a girl of seventeen ought to have more modesty."

"The hussy!" said the young lady, contemptuously.

The servant now entered to inform her that a gentleman had called about the apartments.

"Ask him up stairs," said Mrs. Meredith; and she prepared to follow the colonel so soon as she heard he was ascending the stairs, which was a slow job to him, as he walked lame, with a gold headed cane.

When Mrs. Meredith came to the room, she saw a tall gentleman; his height was lost, on account of him stooping; he wore a green shade over one eye, and he had one arm in a sling; besides which, as we have before related, he was rather lame.

"Not so bad as I thought for," muttered Mrs. Meredith, to herself, as she curtsied to his salute.

"I have been recommended to seek here a lodging, ma'am. I do not know if I am correct in believing you have such as I want."

"This, sir, is the sitting-room; it is a very handsome one, and above what is visually offered at a lodging-house. The fact is, sir, the house was never furnished for letting, but for our own private occupation; therefore, it has all of the comforts of a private residence."

"That is what I chiefly want. You see, I do not care to undertake the trouble of setting up an establishment myself. I am alone, I may say; therefore it is I seek such a lodging as comes nearest to what I should myself choose if I were to make a home of my own."

"Precisely, sir. There is the back drawing-room, and a bed room up-stairs."

"Oh, very good; I need, I presume, make no inquiry as to what kind of table you keep; the best, I dare say. I was informed of the price you asked."

"Yes; we consider that quite moderate, sir."

"I dare say," said the Indian, looking about the place with an air of curiosity; "I dare say."

"Yes, sir; you see the advantages we offer are much above the usual run. Besides, you are an invalid, and will require extra attention."

"Yes; there is much truth in that; I have used to it, and therefore you will see that I bargain for it; but, at the same time, you will not find me difficult to please, I flatter myself; but we shall know more of each other the longer we are together."

"Certainly, sir. I can assure you, that should you take the apartments, nothing on my part, or my daughters', will be wanting to make your stay agreeable."

The stranger examined the appearance of the room, and the others, and then, after much conversation with

them, he agreed to take the lodgings, and to come into them on the morrow, as he was extremely particular as to well-aired beds, and should require them all to be re-aired.

"And now, madam, before I finally agree to come in, will you show me the means of escape, if any, in case of fire. I am anxious about that; I have read so many calamities arising from that cause of late in London that I am somewhat nervous about it, though I am so much of an invalid that I should hardly be able to avail myself of it."

"You shall see, sir," said Mrs. Meredith; "we have ample and safe accommodation in that respect. You see, here is a pair of broad steps that lead up to that door -- a trap-door; and here is another, that opens upon the leads at the top of the house."

The colonel made shift to walk up, and to look over the house-tops; there was a sea of chimneys and pantiles, at the same time they were all easy of access on this side of the street; so there was no danger from fire, and each house there was similarly provided.

"Well, madam, I think I may say that this affair is concluded. I will leave you my card, and, if you think proper, you can obtain what information you desire of me at the hotel."

"I am quite satisfied, sir," said the landlady, as she took the card that was proffered her, and also a bank-note which he offered her, in token of his taking possession of the lodgings.

Mrs. Meredith curtsied, and the colonel left the apartment, and descended the staircase with great deliberation, for he could not go very swiftly; he was lame, and one arm was up in a sling, and therefore he had not the free use of his limbs.

As he came down the stairs, and when near the mat, Margaret, the eldest daughter, came out and passed into the back parlour, for no other ostensible purpose than that of seeing the stranger, whose eye was instantly, but only momentarily, fixed upon her; but it was enough; they both saw each other, and had a glance at the features, and Margaret disappeared.

The stranger stepped into the coach, and, as the door was being shut, he looked up to the windows of the next house, where the young lady, nothing daunted, still sat at the window; and so little was she interested with her neighbour's affairs, that she barely bestowed a momentary glance upon the coach or its occupant, whose solitary optic took notice of her, and then the Jehu drove away with his rumbling vehicle.

"Well, I never saw such impudence, in my life!" said Mrs. Meredith, as she came to the parlour-windows, which happened to bow outwards, and gave her a better opportunity of watching her neighbours to the right and left of her.

"What is the matter, ma'?" inquired her daughter.

"Why, there's that minx still up yonder. I declare if she didn't stare at the colonel; he saw her, and noticed her, too. Well, I wouldn't have had her there to-day for a trifle; he will think he has got into a bad neighbourhood, seeing her so bold. Really, now, she lays herself open to all kinds of imputations. I do not mean to say any evil of her; but, really, if she will do that now, what will she not do by-and-bye? I am sorry she has no one to advise her better."

"I am sure she is old enough to know better," rejoined the daughter. "I am quite sure she's no beauty, and, if she wants to catch any of the men, she won't be successful in that manner; unless, indeed, she doesn't care whom she picks up with."

"Oh, that is, I fear, too often the case with young girls with weak intellects. But did you see our new lodger, my dear?"

"Yes, ma'."

"And what did you think of him?" inquired Mrs. Meredith, with an amiable whine, and a gentle rubbing of hands.

"Think, ma', think -- what can I think of a man whom I have hardly seen, ma'? He only passed me; I could not recollect him again if I tried."

"Ah, well, my dear, you know best. I can always recollect people whom I have once seen? He is a very fine man -- at least, he has been; he has lost much of his height, for he is lame, and stoops much; but still he has been a handsome man."

"One eye, only, ma', I think."

"Yes, my dear, one eye, as you say; but I think a remarkably keen one, too. He's quite the gentleman, too; he's been used to command, you can see that. These military men have an air about them that you cannot mistake; and

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even this gentleman, though, you see, wounded and lame, yet he has the air of an officer about him."

"He may have, ma'; but, you know, if he have the air of a general, with nothing else, it would buy a very poor dinner."

"So it would, my dear. You certainly are an extraordinary girl, Margaret, a very extraordinary girl, and will be the making of your family. Only suppose you should marry this rich colonel, what then, eh? I only say, suppose you were to marry him? — because it isn't certain, yet — well, wouldn't that minx next door think you were lucky? She would bite her nails in anger."

"Yes, she would, ma'; but it may never happen. But, if she thinks to get a beau that way, she's much mistaken. I am sure she will get insulted."

"No wonder. But, Margaret, my dear, you must do your best to please this gentleman; he wants to have people about him just as if he had his own home. He has no friends or relatives; who knows what may happen yet?"

"No, ma'; we don't know what may happen, and I will do my best to please him; but I sha'n't court him, you know, ma'; he must do that."

"Yes, certainly, my child, he must. No; you mustn't appear anxious about it; but merely say you are pleased to have his good opinion, and you must be a little coy of everything else; for there are times when such old gentlemen are easily entrapped. But I must set about having things aired and put into order for his arrival to-morrow."

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## Chapter CXXVIII. THE NEW LODGER. -- A NIGHT ALARM. -- A MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE.

It was not until late the next day that Mrs. Meredith heard anything of her new lodger. All she had heard was that he would be there during the day, but whether to breakfast, dinner, or tea, she could not tell which, and now she was waiting with expectation, if not anxiety; but, at the same time, she knew she was quite sure of her lodger, because she held his bank-note.

It had been a dull day; there are many such in London, and therefore that was no singular circumstance. It was one of those dull, leaden-coloured days of which you can predict nothing with certainty, or even a chance of being right; it was rather squally at times, and at others a west wind blew; not cold — at least, not particularly so; but, yet, notwithstanding the heavy appearance of the sky, there was a clear white light that made every object look more disagreeable than ordinary.

The landlady and her daughter were both on the *qui vive*, as it is called, looking out for their new lodger, whom they expected the more immediately as the evening drew on, for there was less likelihood of his coming in the middle of the day than towards the evening, and less after evening had set in than before, for he was an invalid.

It was, they thought, just about the time when he must arrive, when there could only be the uncertainty of a few minutes. The whole house was in order; nothing was left to chance; Mrs. Meredith herself had gone over the whole place, and took especial pains to find all sorts of fault with the unfortunate drudge who did the work, of course, aided by the mother and daughter; but such aid was distressing, because she had to wait upon both, and do her own work as well.

However, all was in readiness, and they were looking out at every coach from between the blinds. The sound of wheels was enough to cause them to start, when suddenly a coach drove up to the door, upon which had been carefully packed several leather boxes and portmanteaus.

"Here he is," said the daughter; "here he is."

"Yes; and, as I am alive," said Mrs. Meredith, as she cast her eye upwards towards the next house, "as I am alive, there is that girl again. I do believe that she does it on purpose. It is done to aggravate me, and to attract attention from the men. The hussy!"

There was now no time to lose, the knocker at the door giving pretty clear indication that instant attention upon their part was requisite, and up jumped Mrs. Meredith and her daughter Margaret. Immediately the servant opened the door into the passage, the coach door was opened, the steps let clattering down, and Colonel Deverill entered the house.

"Will you walk into the parlour, colonel," inquired Mrs. Meredith, "until your boxes are all in, and you see they are all correct? There is a good fire."

"Thank you, madam," said the colonel, with some difficulty walking along. "I am scarcely so well able to walk as I was yesterday."

"Ah! colonel, you must have suffered much. But I am glad the parlour is so handy — it will save you the walk up stairs at present, until you are quite recovered from your fatigue. Pray be seated, colonel, by the fire. The man shall bring them in, and lay them before the door."

"Thank you," said the colonel, and he sat down in a large easy chair, having first dropped his cloak, which was a large blue military cloak, lined with white, with a fur collar, and looked extremely rich and handsome; beneath which he wore an officer's undress frock, covered over with a profusion of braid.

The boxes and portmanteaus were brought in and laid down so that the colonel could see them; and, when that was done, the coachman made his demand, which excited an exclamation of horror from Mrs. Meredith, and a declaration that she thought hackney coachmen were the greatest impostors and extortioners under the sun. There never was such a set as hackney coachmen — never!

"Saving lodging-house keepers, ma'am — axing your pardon for saying so. Not that I means any offence, only I lived in one once, and ought to know summat."

The colonel, however, made no remark, but, pulling out an embroidered purse, which appeared to full of gold,

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he paid the man his demand.

"Thank you, your honour; you are one of the right sort, and no mistake." So saying, the coachman walked away, jinking the money as he walked along the passage, until he came to the door where the girl was standing, and then, giving her a knowing wink, and jerking his head backwards, he said, —

"They are a scaley lot here, ain't they, Mary?"

"Mary!" screamed Margaret.

"Yes, miss."

"Shut the door, and come away from that insolent fellow."

Slam went the door, and then the servant went down stairs, and the parlour-door was immediately closed, and the colonel was given into the tender mercies of the lodging-house keeper; for, though she pretended that she merely offered a genteel and presentable house for such as desired it, and could afford to pay for it, she was, in every sense of the word, a lodging-house keeper.

The colonel, however, sat very composedly in his chair, and gazed at the fire in silence; and from time to time he gazed at the mother and daughter with his one eye; he had not lost the entire use of the other, but had a green silk shade over it. He watched what went on, and replied cautiously to what was said to him, but appeared inclined to silence, and occasionally abrupt in his conversation; but this they attributed to the habit he must have been in, when abroad, of commanding.

"Will you take tea at once, colonel, or at what hour do you choose to have it?"

"I will take it at once. I am tired."

"What will you take, sir?" inquired Margaret, at one end of the table; and, placing herself in an enticing posture, she awaited the answer, expecting to be looked at.

"Coffee," said the colonel, abruptly.

There was a pause; but Margaret said nothing more, and set about doing such little matters as appeared to be an employment. But it was a mere deception — it was all done; nothing had been left undone; they had taken care of that, as the servant knew full well.

However, there was little that passed of any peculiar character on that occasion, for the evening passed off very calmly and comfortable, the colonel giving his opinion somewhat dogmatically; but that, of course was submitted to, as he was a military man and had much experience, and, moreover, he was a rich man — quite a nabob.

It is astonishing, as a general rule, what people will submit to when it comes from those who have riches at command. That fact alone seems to stamp all that is foolish and absurd, coming from such a quarter, with sense and worth.

It is in vain for any one not blessed with property to talk; his talking is nothing in comparison with what falls from the lips of the man who has property. You are talked down, and if you are obstinate, and won't be talked down, why, you are a disagreeable fellow, a dissatisfied man, and your neighbours ought to set their faces against you.

Thus, through life, he who does not submit to the wealthy, is always run down, and there is every disposition, if possible, of running him off the road altogether, no matter how great the injustice against him, and the enormity of the conduct of others; they are, as they think, justified, because he is not a genteel person; in fact, he is not evangelical.

The evening passed over, as we have said, in calmness and quiet, and Mrs. Meredith appeared to be well pleased with her lodger; and, at a moderately early hour, they separated and went to bed. The colonel retired, after taking leave of them, to his own room, complaining he was in great pain, and scarce able to walk, and so cold, he was nearly benumbed.

"This climate," he said, "is so cold, so moist, and altogether so uncomfortable, that I cannot understand how it is people ever endure it. Indeed," he continued to Mrs. Meredith, "there must be some great difference between rich and poor in their conformation, else they couldn't stand it."

Of course, Mrs. Meredith assented to the proposition, as she would have done to any other, no matter what proposition, that had been so urged by such a person.

Thus it was with the colonel, who appeared very well satisfied with his lodgings; and all parties, for so short a time, were well pleased with each other. \* \* \* \* \*

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The night was dark, that is to say, it was one of those nights in which neither moon nor stars showed themselves; no sound was heard through the streets, save the heavy step of the guardian of the night, or the midnight reveller, who might be finding his way homeward boisterously, and with scarce enough sense to enable him to take the right path.

There were clouds enough to have intercepted the moon, but there was a kind of light that was spread through them that you saw when you looked up, but which aided not the traveller below; but, then, there were countless lamps that illumined the streets.

At that time there was a man creeping over the house-tops. He had gained the housetop of Mr. Smith, the house in which resided Miss Smith, who had given so much offence to Mrs. Meredith by sitting so much out in the balcony. He stooped in the gutter, and looked cautiously around; no human being was within sight; he was alone, and no soul saw him.

Cautiously he crept towards the trap-door — it was bolted; but that was soon obviated — no sound, however, could be heard. The soft, but rotten, wood gave way under the steady pressure exerted upon the door, which at length opened.

He paused a moment or two, and listened carefully for several minutes. Then he entered the loft slowly and noiselessly, keeping as low as possible, so that he might run no risk of being observed by any one who might be passing the house, or who might be up by accident in any of the opposite houses, in consequence of illness, or any other cause.

There was a lower trap-door through which the figure passed. There could be no difficulty in passing, because that was always kept open, as it was considered to assist in ventilating the house; and then the intruder stood within the house.

He then drew himself up to his full height, and paused for some moments, as if considering the next step he would take; but then he descended to the second floor, on which were placed what are called the best bedrooms. He paused at one, gently tried the handle, and finding it turn, and the door open, he gave one look towards the stairs that he had just descended, and then he entered the apartment.

All was yet still; no sound met his ear, save the breathing of the sleeper within, who lay in a sweet sleep, and was as calm and unconscious as the blessed; perfect rest and forgetfulness had steeped the senses of the young girl, who lay in ambrosial sleep. One arm was thrown outside the clothes, and revealed, in all its symmetry, a snow-white bosom, heaving gently to the throbbing of the heart.

The intruder gazed at the young girl for some moments, and clasped his hands with trembling eagerness, and a ghastly smile played upon his terrible features, while a fearful fire shot from the eyes of one who thus disturbed the slumbers of the living.

He approached the bed, and took the hand within his own, and then the sleeper awoke. It would be impossible to describe the look of terror and horror that sat on the young girl's face.

She could not scream, she could not utter a sound; her whole faculties appeared to have been bound up for a short time. She could not even shrink from the horrible being who approached her, she was so perfectly horror-stricken with that truly horrible countenance, the glance of which seemed as if it would destroy the power of speech for ever. She shrank now, but could not move.

The creature crept closer. It seized her hand, and held it within its own; but even that could not awake her from the trance she was in. She felt a horrible sinking feeling, as though she must sink through the very flooring of the house, and yet she could not stir.

It appeared as though, so long as the hideous face was opposed to her's, so long she was unable to move; it was a species of fascination; however great the horror felt, yet there was no help for it. She could not ever shut her eyes; that boon was denied her.

What she saw cannot be described. It is by far too horrible for pen to describe. The wild horrible insanity that appeared in the eyes of the creature, with their peculiar cast, was indescribable; the only light that entered the room, at that moment, came from a lamp below, and illumined only the upper part of the room above the window sills.

The creature then stood in relief against this light, a horrible dark object, whose glaring eyeballs were too terrible ever to be forgotten.

Then, again, while he with one hand held her's, he passed his other hand up her arm, and then felt along the

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soft, white flesh with its cold, clammy fingers, as if it were feeling for something, or greedy of the velvet-like substance.

Still keeping the eyes fixed upon the hapless and helpless girl, he drew the arm towards him, and, leaning upon the bed, suddenly plunged his face on the arm, and held and seized it near the middle with its teeth, and then it made an attempt to suck the wound.

This, however, broke the charm, horrible and complete as it was; for the creature's hideous countenance was lost to her sight, as he plunged his face to her arm.

Shriek followed shriek in quick and rapid succession. The whole house was alarmed by the terrible shrieks that came from the apartment. She struggled, and by a sudden effort, she disengaged herself from the grasp of the fiend, and rolled, wrapped up in the bed-clothes, to the other side of the floor.

The monster still pursued her with greedy thirst for blood, and had picked her up, and again placed her on the bed, with more than mere human strength, and again sought the arm he had been deprived of by the sudden effort of the young girl.

"Help! help! Mother! father! help! help!"

The shouts rang through the house, awaking the affrighted sleepers from their repose, in a manner that may be called distressing.

It is distressing in the midst of a large city to be awoken, in the dead of the night, by loud and urgent cries of distress. It is such a contrast to the dead stillness that reigns around, and when the first cries are heard, it creates a terror and surprise that takes away all power of action.

It was not till the cries had been heard a second time that the inmates aroused themselves; the fact was, they were fearful of fire. The moment that idea floated across their minds, then, indeed, they started up, and the father of the young girl, hearing the fall, at once rushed to the room of his daughter. He arrived but in time; the hideous monster, being affrighted by the footsteps approaching him, turned from his blood-stained feast, and hid himself beneath the drapery, as the father entered the room.

"Mary," he said, "Mary! Mary! what means this -- what can be the matter -- are you hurt -- how come you in this disorder?"

"Oh, God! that thing from the grave has been sucking my blood from my veins. See -- see yonder -- he moves! Watch him -- note him, father!"

Believing she raved, her father paid no attention to what she did say, but continued to regard her with sorrow and regret, for he believed it to be a sudden attack of mania; but seeing the curtains move, he turned his head, and at once divined it to be the cause of his daughter's alarm.

The glance was but momentary; but he saw the figure of a man who was escaping from the apartment by the door by which he had at that moment entered.

"Help!" he shouted -- "help -- thieves -- murder!"

And as he shouted, he rushed after the figure that was flying towards the top of the house. By this time the house was filled up with people, and the noise up stairs had caused the servants below to rise confused and thoroughly terrified by the sounds they heard, and the cries of their master.

At that moment, one of those watchful guardians of the night passed by the house, and was immediately hailed by the unfortunate people below, who were afraid to go up stairs to offer any assistance, lest they might be knocked back again, which fear stopped all aid from below.

"Hilloa! what's the matter now?" inquired the worthy guardian of the night.

"Oh, I don't know -- goodness knows. You had better go up and see. I'll come up after you. Don't be afraid; I'll come up after you, if you'll go first."

"Stop a moment while I spring my rattle," said the worthy functionary; who thereupon gave an alarming peal upon his instrument, and then he entered the house, with instructions to the servant to run down stairs and let any of his party in that might come up.

Then the guardian of the night hastened up stairs with all the haste he could, and came up just in time to pick Mr. Smith up, who was lying stunned at the foot of the stairs.

The fact was, Mr. Smith had pursued his adversary too quickly, and finding he could not get off, he turned round and felled him to the earth, like an ox. It was just at this juncture when the charley came up stairs, and in another moment Mr. Smith recovered.



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"What's the matter?" inquired the watchman; "is the house on fire."

"No, no; the vampyre — the vampyre!"

"Eh — what? Never heard on 'im afore — never seed him."

"Quick — quick! he has gone up stairs. Quick — after him!" said Mr. Smith, as he ran up the stairs, and was quickly followed by the watchman and some others who now crowded about, having had time to dress themselves and come to Mr. Smith's aid; and they now crowded to the house-top, for they saw the trap-door was unfastened, though it had been hastily pushed to. This they opened, and then looked on the house-top, first one way, and then another.

"He ain't here," said the watchman, "and we mustn't expect to find him here; he wouldn't wait for us, you may depend upon that. We had better search along the house-tops till we see him, or find some of the other traps open, and then you may guess where he has gone."

"The difficulty is, which way did he go?" said Mr. Smith.

"Oh, I saw him go that way," said another watchman, who came up stairs, having been first attracted by the sounds of the rattle, and then, looking up at the house, he saw the figure of a man stealing, with great rapidity of motion, across the house-tops.

"There I lost him, then," he said. "I didn't see him after that spot; but he may have gone further, for all I can say to the contrary. But we shall soon see."

"This trap-door is open," said the other watchman, as he pulled aside Mrs. Meredith's trap-door, which had only been pushed to. "We had better go in here, and see if he isn't gone somewhere into the house, and hiding himself until all is quiet, and then he will make off if left alone."

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## Chapter CXXIX. THE UNSUCCESSFUL PURSUIT. -- MR. SMITH'S DISAPPOINTMENT, AND THE TESTIMONY OF MRS. MEREDITH.

Mrs. Meredith and her daughters had long sunk into deep sleep before the events just narrated took place in her neighbour's house. There was a perfect stillness; the whole house appeared as though there were no living soul within it, all was so still and quiet.

Presently, however, there was a terrific sound; it was like that of a human being falling and bumping down stairs, and then there was a great deal of shouting and calling, and Mrs. Meredith opened her eyes and trembled in her bed, while her daughter Margaret, who upon the occasion slept with her, was likewise as frightened.

"What is th -- that?" she stammered, with some difficulty.

"Oh, hear, I cannot think. Thieves -- murderers, I dare say. Oh, merciful Heaven! what shall we do -- where shall I go? We shall be murdered!"

Both females trembled in their beds, and were quite unable to move, breaking out in a profuse sweat from fear; and yet the noise came nearer and nearer, and there were many persons evidently in the house; their numbers were so numerous that they evidently didn't care to conceal themselves.

The fact was this: when Mr. Smith and his party found the trap-door open, they descended into the house, the watchman leading the way; but in going down the ladder, his foot slipped, and he came with a dreadful thump on the landing, and fortunately he rolled up against the servant girl's door, instead of down stairs. The door flew open, and the girl was too terrified to speak for some moments.

At length the watchman having got up, he made for the bed, upon which the girl jumped up, and began to scream out for help in piteous tones.

"Come, come -- don't be frightened," said the watchman; "get up and show us over the house."

"Well, I'm sure!" said the girl, who had recovered some of her assurance, for the coat, stick, and lantern of the watchman at once assured her that she was in no immediate danger whatever. "Well, I'm sure! to think of coming in a female's room in this manner. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you old wretch, you ought!"

"No names. If you don't get up and show us over, and call your master -- "

"I ain't got a master."

"Well, your mistress, then -- we will go ourselves, and we'll soon make short work of it. Come, come, no nonsense. We will dress you ourselves."

"You monster! Go out of the room, can't you? Have you no decency left you? I'll get up; but I'll lay a complaint before the lord mayor, and he shall tell you a different tale to this. I'm ashamed of you, and so you ought to be of yourselves."

However, during this energetic remonstrance, she contrived to shuffle on some things, and when she was ready, she came down to her mistress's door, and then began to hammer and kick at it, saying, --

"Oh, Mrs. Meredith, here's sich a lot of men in the house. Do come out, mem. I don't know what's the matter; but they'll break into your room, as they broke into mine."

"What do they want, Mary?"

"Don't know, mem."

"There is some one escaped into your house that has broken into the next house, and your trap-doors on the roof were open."

"Gracious me!" said Mrs. Meredith -- "gracious me! Show them over the place, Mary. We will get up in a few moments, and come to you. Margaret, my dear, get up; some housebreakers have got into the house, and we shall all be murdered in our sleep if we don't find them. Oh, dear, dear! what will become of us? What will our new lodger say to this disturbance?"

Margaret made no reply, but began to dress herself, while the party began their search; and Mr. Smith hastened back to his daughter, to understand the nature of the attack that had been made upon her, and whether she were any better than she was when he left her.

However, when he came to hear what was the real cause of her terror, to find the marks on her arm, and the certainty that nothing had been lost or moved, he was perfectly staggered, and hastened back after the party he

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had left, to make some further attempt to follow the miscreant, and to discover, if possible, his retreat, and bring him to justice for the vile attack he had made.

When he returned, he met Mrs. Meredith coming out of her room, she having hastily dressed herself, followed by her daughter.

"Oh! Mr. Smith — Mr. Smith, what is the meaning of all this disturbance? Here are a number of strange men, who have forced themselves into my house, and whether their object is our property or our lives, we cannot tell. What can I do, Mr. Smith?"

"You have nothing to fear, ma'am."

"Nothing to fear, sir! Why, is not such an occurrence something to be feared for its own sake alone?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is very disagreeable, I am willing to admit; but I presume you would not give refuge to a vampyre?"

"A what, sir?"

"A vampyre, madam. I know not how to explain it to you, but I have to assure you my daughter has been attacked in her sleep by the midnight blood-sucker from the graves. Oh! God, that such a thing should happen in my family. I would not have believed it, had the same been related to me from anybody else."

"It must have been the night mare," suggested Mrs. Meredith.

"Would to Heaven it had been so; but I came to her assistance, and saw him as he fled from my daughter's bedside, and I followed him to the roof, and he was lost on your house, and your trap-door was open, and we presumed he went in here."

"The door was bolted when we went to bed last night," said Margaret.

"Yes," responded her mother; "we always have that bolted every night, for it is our only protection from that side of the house; but no one can be here; we have no man in the house save our lodger, and invalid and quite a gentleman."

"Can we see him?"

"I should think not, because he is an invalid; he's a colonel in the East India service, and will, no doubt, be very angry at such a disturbance, and much more so when he finds he is wanted. I am really much shocked at this disturbance, which is the more unfortunate as it is the first night he has slept here."

"I must see him."

"Must, Mr. Smith — must! I cannot permit anything of the kind to be said in my house. I give you permission to look for him over the house, but I can't give any such permission with what my lodgers possess — it is not in my power to do so if I had the inclination."

While this was going on, the house had ben rummaged over and over, and then a party of them, with Mr. Smith, came to the colonel's bedroom; a close travelling cap and a dressing-gown were found on the mat before the door.

"Oh!" said Mr. Smith, as he picked it up, "this appears very much like what I saw the figure was dressed up in — something like robes, and this would serve the purpose."

"Ah!" said the watchman, "we shall have him now."

"But the gentleman is an invalid; he can hardly walk up stairs, much less can he be scrambling over house-tops," said Mrs. Meredith. "You must surely all have been dreaming. Something has disagreed with you, and the result has been visions of which you can of course find no trace."

"Not quite that, either," said one of the watchmen, "for we saw him getting away, and he made for your trap-door, where I missed him. I could not see any more of him among the chimneys, or something of that sort, but I thought he came in here, and found your door open."

"And you saw him come in?" said Mrs. Meredith.

"I can't say I saw him come in," said the man; "I couldn't see through a brick-wall and a stack of chimneys which were in the way, but I felt certain he must have come in here."

"Well, this is very strange — very singular."

"The dressing-gown, too," said Mr. Smith, "is dusty and dirty all over — at least in places where it appears to have come in contact with anything dirty — possibly the roof of the house; certainly something of that sort has happened. It looks very much like it."

"And the cap sits close to the head; that is dirty."

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"But it is dry dirt," said Mr. Smith, "and of the same character; we had better see this lodger of yours, Mrs. Meredith, and with your permission I will knock."

As Mr. Smith spoke he gave two or three loud knocks at the door, which were not answered for some time. But they were speedily repeated, and then a peremptory voice exclaimed, --

"In the name of goodness, what is the meaning of all this disturbance? Is the house broken into, or is it a resort for thieves? Be it as it may, if I am disturbed in this way, and you don't instantly get out of the way and make less noise, I'll fire through the door. I have loaded pistols by my side, and I will not submit to this shameful disturbance."

At the sound of these words, the two watchmen were much disturbed, and immediately stepped back so hastily as nearly to overthrow Mrs. Meredith and her daughter; but Mr. Smith, after a step or two backwards, resumed his place by the door, and exclaimed, --

"I have not come here, sir, to be frightened; some strange circumstances have just happened, and I must beg you'll open your door to explain them."

"And who the devil are you?"

"My name is Smith, sir. I live next door, and my daughter has been attacked by a vampyre. I know not what nature the creature must possess, but it has shocking propensities -- there are evidences at your door which make it appear he has got into your room."

"It would be very foolish in him to do anything of the sort," said the colonel, "for, in the first place, I will not suffer annoyance in any shape; and besides, I have loaded pistols for his reception. Wait till I am dressed, and then I will come out to you."

"I am sure the colonel will be very much offended by this conduct, which is very shameful; people's houses broken open and entered in this manner, and people's rest broken so. I am quite ashamed of my neighbours -- quite."

"Really we have strong suspicions -- strong grounds of suspicion, too, against that lodger of yours; look at that dressing-gown and cap, the open trap-door, and all -- really I can't help thinking there is something very suspicious in all this."

"Yes, said the watchman; "I know there's nobody else in the house. I've been all over it, and it's very strange to me if he ain't the man."

"Well," said Margaret Meredith, "it seems as if you are most willing to accuse those who are quite incapable of doing what you accuse them of. This gentleman was barely able to get up stairs without assistance; besides, he could not have gone up stairs without some one being awake by the noise. It's my opinion that it is a piece of impertinence altogether."

"So I think, my dear," said Mrs. Meredith.

"I am a father, Mrs. Meredith," said Mr. Smith, "and I have my daughter's safety and happiness at heart. I am sure there's much, too, very suspicious. You wouldn't like your daughter's blood sucked out of her arms. I am sure I don't, nor does she."

"Oh, botheration!" said Margaret; "who ever heard of such stuff? I'm sure I never did, except in some book of improbabilities, and nothing more; but here is Colonel Deverill."

At that moment Colonel Deverill opened the door, and then retired a little into his room, saying as he did so, in a very angry voice, but, at the same time, endeavouring to be courteous, --

"You can come in, now; but I am quite at a loss to understand the nature of this disturbance; the house don't appear to be on fire; and that is the only contingency in my mind that will justify such a disturbance. What is the matter, Mrs. Meredith?"

"I can hardly tell you, sir. I have been disturbed by finding a party of people in my house; it is most amazing to me how they came in."

"I will tell you, sir," said Mr. Smith. "My daughter has been terrified by the appearance of some one in her bed-room, who attempted to suck her blood from the veins of her arm. I don't know what to say about it."

"I am sure I don't," said Colonel Deverill; "but I must say it's a most unpleasant affair for those who have nothing to do with it. It is a pity your domestic afflictions should call you out in this manner; take my advice, sir; go home, else you'll catch cold."

"You may repent making a jest of this-- -- "

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"I never repent anything, sir. I regret I am so unnecessarily disturbed; and it appears to me, your intrusion here is most unwarrantable."

"Is this your dressing-gown, sir?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well, then, how did it come here, and in this state?" inquired Mr. Smith, triumphantly.

"I don't know — I didn't put it there; but I suppose it must have fallen accidentally; it would not have been thrown there willingly," said the colonel, deliberately.

"Well, I don't know," said Mr. Smith, "but it strikes me you've been on the tiles this evening."

"My good sir, if you don't leave my apartment, it may happen I may forget my pains and lameness, and fling you out of the window. If this had happened in India instead of here, you would have had a particularly sharp knife inserted between your ribs, or have been thrown into a well. But I know nothing, of this matter, which appears so strange, as to be beyond all reason; neither experience nor common sense at all throw any light upon the matter; be advised, sir, and retire, and allow honest people and invalids to sleep the night out."

Mr. Smith looked very blank, and, unable to comprehend all that had passed, he could not tell what to think; he could not urge the matter further, for he was met by real contempt and perfect self-assurance on the part of the colonel, who moved about the room very lame, while his hand was in a sling, and a green shade was placed over his eyes.

"You see," said Mrs. Meredith, "you must be very entirely mistaken. Colonel Deverill, we are sure, is quite unable to run about over house-tops, even had he the inclination to do so, which is really absurd. It must be at least a great mistake on your part."

"Yes, I am sure, too, Colonel Deverill could not have left the house without our knowing it; indeed, it is a very silly affair, and has been a great nuisance, to say the least of it. I wonder Mr. Smith doesn't know better than to break into peaceable people's houses."

"But I did not do so."

"How came you here, then?"

"I followed some one else; the place was open; and yet you say it was shut at night, and you usually kept it so. How do you account for that?"

"I cannot do so, unless some neglect took place, or else you must have forced it open."

"Oh, no, ma'am," said the watchman; "I can swear Muster Smith didn't do that; it was open, and I found it so, so there's that to be accounted for; and then there's the togs a lying outside here, that's to be accounted for; so, you see, it's a werry suspicious case."

"You are a very stupid fellow," said the colonel, "a very idiot, if you imagine people are to be held responsible because a dressing-gown happens to fall down. I do not know but I shall proceed with this matter myself; it seems to me you have committed a trespass, to say the least of it. I can pledge my word, as a man of honour and a soldier, I have not left my room; indeed, these ladies know I could not do so; and their testimony would be ample in a court of justice, and to a gentleman."

"Yes, that is no more than the truth," said Mrs. Meredith, who was by no means pleased with the disturbance; and because she had no sympathy for the young lady who sat in the balcony to the annoyance of herself and daughter.

"And I can bear witness to the same," said Miss Meredith. "I think it is quite time Mr. Smith returned to his own place, and see what is the matter there; perhaps the person he saw may have passed him, and gone back again into his own house."

Mr. Smith lingered, looked wistfully, as if his doubts were not cleared off; but yet the testimony was so clear and so strong, that he could not dispute it; and, however unwillingly he was compelled to acknowledge, there were some matters that he could not dispute, though he was unable to solve them; and he and those with him returned from their unsatisfactory search.

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## Chapter CXXX. A BREAKFAST SCENE. -- A MATCH-MAKING MOTHER.

The next day there was some anxiety on the part of Mrs. Meredith, to ascertain how far her new lodger might have been disturbed by this event; and in what temper of mind he felt upon the occasion. It is usual in all lodgings, to have some little regard to the lodger's comforts for some days, perhaps a week or two, and then things are allowed to take their chance; and if the lodger complains, he gets for an answer, that they take a vast deal of pains to oblige him, and intimate that he is a peculiarly lucky man for having become a lodger at that place; and you would have been worse off if you had gone elsewhere, which, of course, you don't believe, though they tell you so.

It is an old and favourite saying, that a new broom sweeps clean; and, in time, an old one becomes very nearly useless. So it is with lodging-house keepers; the longer you remain, the more inattentive they become, until you get wearied, and are compelled to leave, and then you get some scurvy insolence, and your landlady eventually believes she is an ill-used woman.

But, in the present instance, Mrs. Meredith had other hopes and fears than those of a mere lodging-house keeper. Not that she had formed any plan in her own mind; but she had some floating idea that there was seldom such a chance turned up, because the colonel had evidently no relations; and who could tell what, in the chapter of accidents, might happen?

"I am quite grieved," she said to her daughter, "it should have happened this night. What could be the meaning of the disturbance, I can't think. Now, it's very tiresome things will happen so cross as this, that I don't know what to think of it."

"It really appears as if it was done on purpose."

"It does; but I am sorry for it, because it would seem as though we were liable to some kind of interruption at all times, for they generally expect attention at the first, if at no other time; and he may think this is a bad beginning, at all events."

"But we shall convince him that we shall not treat him neglectfully, ma'."

"No, my dear; but these Indians are strange-tempered people, and when they once take a fancy, there is no knowing what they may do; and there is no knowing what a dislike taken at such an occurrence might produce, and likes and dislikes are taken without rhyme or reason."

"Yes, ma', so they are; and that is the reason why you took such a dislike to young Willis, for he was as nice a young man as I have seen."

"Nice, my dear -- nice! I don't see why he was nice, unless it was because he was presumptuous, and had no money," said the amiable parent.

"He was not rich, ma' -- --"

"He was positively poor, Margaret," interrupted the mother, "and therefore it was absolutely necessary to discourage such persons; for, if they do no good, they are sure to be productive of mischief; for their hanging about, you know, deters others from coming forward who have means."

"He was very handsome."

"Handsome is as handsome does,' my dear. You'll find that is a motto through life, that will carry weight at any time. All the good looks in the world would never put a gown on your back, or a sixpence in your purse, recollect; besides, he was not handsome."

"You are prejudiced against the young man. Not that I care anything about him, though he was a very agreeable and nice young man; so it's no use in saying that he wasn't."

"Well, my dear, it doesn't much matter; this is a matter of opinion. What do you think of our colonel? He is a fine man, and a rich one besides."

"He is tall, I admit, but stoops a great deal; is very lame; one eye much worse than the other, and one arm in a sling. Well, I can't see much beauty in all that; much out of repair, you must admit, ma'."

"Yes; Colonel Deverill has seen some service, and his misfortunes are so many points of honour; they are like so many medals which speak of his worth. Besides that, he is a most gentlemanly and pleasant man. I don't know that I ever spoke to a more fascinating man."

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"That might be at times; but then that was evidently a constraint upon his natural temper, because he every now and then broke out abruptly about something or other, which proves that he has an abrupt and imperious temper, not to say savage and snappish."

"There you are clearly unjustifiable, my dear Margaret. The colonel, you see, is a military man, and used to command, and therefore it is a very usual occurrence, and not a matter of disposition at all; but what can that matter when you come to consider his wealth?"

"There is certainly room for congratulation there," said Margaret.

"Indeed, my child, there is room for congratulation; and I am convinced there is happiness where there is a fortune, for that will obtain all you want, and, when you obtain all you want, what can you be otherwise than entirely happy? — therefore, riches are happiness."

"Yes; there is much truth in all that, ma'," said Margaret; "and all I hope is, that I might obtain a fortune; then I would make you comfortable, ma'."

"I am sure you would, Margaret. My whole life has been spent in shifts to maintain you and bring you up in a manner that would enable you to become a fortune; which, thanks to my care, example, and precept, you are fully equal to at any moment it may become your lot."

"Yes, ma'; I feel that I was born to command, and the lady of a colonel would not be a bit too high in rank for my ambition or deserts."

"Indeed, it would not, my dear; but now listen to me. You know, my dear, I never plan anything but what is for your benefit. Now, I am given to understand that Colonel Deverill has no relatives at all, and I think hardly any friends, and we can make ourselves quite necessary to him — in fact, perfect friends to him. He will look upon us as his nearest relatives, and he may take a fancy to you, as you may easily induce him. Old men like flattery, there is no doubt, and that kind of flattery which is called attention. Wait upon him most assiduously, and read to him, and all that kind of thing, my dear."

"Yes; I know, ma'."

"And then, dear, if you mind what you are about, the colonel and all his wealth may be yours before six months are over, or I am no witch."

"Hush! I hear him stirring."

"He's coming down stairs; there he is in the drawing-room; I hear him over head. Go up stairs, my dear, and inquire when he will choose to have his breakfast."

"Yes, ma'," said the young lady, who betrayed an extraordinary desire to obey her parent, a matter not equally to be said of all young ladies, nor of this one upon many occasions; but, then, this was one that was quite agreeable to her own feelings, which explains the secret.

Colonel Deverill had, indeed, descended, and was seated in the drawing-room, with his feet on the fender and his head leaning on his hand, and his elbow on the table, when Margaret entered. He appeared to be thoughtful and unwell; he had, perhaps, passed a bad night, or the interruption had robbed him of his sleep, which to an invalid was the more severely felt.

Good morning, colonel," said Margaret, advancing. "I hope the disturbance that so inopportunately took place, did not have the effect of destroying your night's rest."

"Indeed, it did do so to a very great extent," replied the colonel, "though not entirely; but still it makes one very poorly, gives one the headache, and causes a sense of lassitude and fatigue to oppress the body, which, added to the weariness incident to such cases, makes one very uncomfortable."

"I am sorry you have been so discomposed, and so is my ma'. She really is grieved; but you see, sir, it was a matter so entirely beyond any control, that she cannot be blamed for it, though it happened, most unfortunately, at a time when it was least wanted, or most to be avoided."

"True — very true. I can imagine all that. I am not unjust enough to blame you for it. I could no more help it than you could, and I dare say you were none the better for such a disagreeable disturbance; I am not, I am very certain.

"No, sir, I am not. When would you please to breakfast?"

"As soon as I can have it," replied the colonel.

"You can have it at once."

"Then be pleased to let me have it. I have the use of but one arm entirely; may I beg your aid in making tea for

me?"

"With pleasure, sir."

Margaret immediately left the room, and informed her mother of what had passed upon the occasion; and when the breakfast was laid, and all things ready, Margaret Meredith sat down with Colonel Deverill to breakfast. Before, however, they had gone far, he inquired if she had breakfasted.

"No, I have not."

"And your mother — has she breakfasted?"

"No, sir, she has not."

"Then give her my compliments, and I shall be glad to take breakfast in her company too; for I am very poorly this morning, and company is agreeable."

This was soon effected, and in a few minutes more they all sat down, the colonel being duly waited upon by Margaret and her mother; the latter being employed in aiding the former to pay great attention to their host; for they breakfasted at his expense, as a matter of course.

"It was really a most unfortunate occurrence, that of last night," said Mrs. Meredith; "very unfortunate; because some people have a difficulty in sleeping in a strange bed; and when once awake, they cannot easily, if at all, get asleep again, and that I had great fears might have been your case."

"Not precisely," said the colonel; "but the fact is, I have seen so much hard service, that I can sleep anywhere without any effort of mine; but when one has suffered from wounds, the heats of climate, and the terrors of imprisonments in Indian prisons, one's health becomes so shattered, that one's rest is not so good as it ought to be — but that is no one's fault."

"It is a grievous misfortune," said Mrs. Meredith.

"Yes," added Margaret; "and I think there is not enough gratitude in the country towards those who so nobly defend us in our homes; to do which they must not only brave danger and death in the field of battle, but all the evils that spring from climate, insidious diseases, brought on by the exposures and hardships of a soldier's life; and then when they see them return to their own country, with wounds that ought to bring honour, glory, and sure profit, they are omitted and neglected."

The colonel sighed deeply, but said nothing.

"My dear Miss Meredith, will you fetch me my keys? — I left them in the bureau."

"Yes, sir," said the amiable young lady, who arose, and left the room.

"Your daughter is an amiable girl, Mrs. Meredith," said Colonel Deverill. "She reminds me of one who is now dead, and at whose decease I left England for India; the country became insupportable to me at that time, but she now recalls all the feelings and aspirations of youth."

"Ah! she is an amiable and good girl — though I am her mother; yet I must not do her less than justice, because it is usual to consider it partial or silly of a parent praising her own child; but she does deserve all that can be said of her."

"It is a blessing. There was the same class of beauty, and the same amiable and sensible deportment. Oh, dear! those days are gone by, indeed!"

"Who knows but they may return?"

"It is doubtful; more than doubtful — certain. I am an old man, now, Mrs. Meredith, — an old man. Yes; I have deserved some thanks at the hands of my country; and I am rich — yes, Mrs. Meredith, I am rich — very rich, I believe I may say."

"That is some reward."

"It is. But I cannot recall the past — I am no longer young — I have no young wife by my side — to soothe my pillow — to attend to my wants. No; I am an old man, as I said before, and cannot expect the attention of the young and beautiful."

"But, Colonel Deverill, you are not an old man; and as for your wounds, they are honourable."

"But my shattered constitution — —"

"May be mended by care and attention, doubtless; and I am sure, while you are here, you shall want no attention we can possibly bestow."

"I thank you, Mrs. Meredith — I thank you," said the colonel.

"I only regret the disturbance you suffered last night," said Mrs. Meredith. "I am afraid want of proper rest has



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made you melancholy. I knew not of such a thing, neither was I at all aware of the fact of the trap-door being open — indeed, I can't understand it."

"Nor I, ma'am. I do not clearly understand what they said; they talked of some young lady being strangled or assaulted in in her sleep."

"Yes, colonel. It was in her sleep, and I cannot help thinking it must have been a dream; however, if it were not, I do not know what to think of it."

"Nor I," said the colonel, thoughtfully.

"They talked about a vampyre, and said Miss Smith had been seized by the arm; and the creature had attempted to suck the blood from the veins."

"Dear me, what a strange affair."

"Very, sir; but I never heard of such things only in books; but, goodness help us from such strange unearthly beings — have you seen any in your travels, Colonel Deverill? You have travelled in hot countries, and have seen them, I should imagine."

"Not I, Mrs. Meredith; I have seen strange things, but I never saw a vampyre, though I have heard of such things; indeed, there are many disgusting things in creation, and that is one of them. But what could be the reason they should come to that young lady above any other, I cannot conceive."

"Nor I, sir."

At this moment Margaret returned, having recovered the keys, which were not wanted; only the watchful mamma thought there was an opportunity for a little tender gag relative to the amiability of the young lady, and, therefore, it ought not to be omitted.

Moreover, she saw there was no necessity for leaving them alone yet; there would be plenty of time yet for that, and she felt assured there would be ample opportunity for the progress of the suit she now confidently anticipated must take place; for she saw, however prompt and ready the colonel might be from habit, yet there was a good deal of the willing mood about him.

"His health and weakness," she thought, "causes that; and now, while his health lasts this way, he may be secured; or, at least, the foundation laid upon which we may build our hopes. He shall want no aid of mine to help him on that way."

"Have you been long in England, colonel?" she inquired.

"Not very long."

"The voyage homeward must have been very tedious."

"It would have been, but I did not come that way. I crossed into Egypt, and came to the Mediterranean, and thence to Italy; so I varied the scene, and travelled at leisure, and got here a month before the vessel I was to have come by."

"Oh, that was much more pleasant."

"Decidedly so; and then I came to the hotel; not that I had not all proper attention paid me — but then there is no sociality there; men only surround you with whom you can hold no converse whatever."

"Certainly not, they are menials."

"And of the lowest class. However, I sought out such a place as this, where I wished to have some of the domestic comforts around me, that I might have had, had I a home of my own; some one to whom I could speak more seriously; for I am debarred the affectionate regard of near and dear female relatives."

"You must look upon us in that light, Colonel Deverill; as persons who are anxious and desirous of causing you to forget these wants by our assiduity and attention. I can speak for my daughter as myself; she will do all in her power to render your stay comfortable."

"She is young and beautiful."

"Ahem!"

"And doubtless will change such occupations to those of a more endearing character. Well, it is as it should be, and I am selfish to feel jealous. I wish I was young myself — but, enough of this. I have to express my obligation to you for the ready manner in which you came forward to speak of my being in my room last night, when that man was here and the watchmen."

"Mr. Smith?"

"Yes, that was the man; they would not have taken my word for it; however, I hope to be able to remain here

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until I find myself sinking to the grave; and those who act as you have began to act for me, I must and will remember at my death and afterwards."

"I do not act with such a motive, Colonel Deverill."

"No, no; I am well aware of that; but that renders it a duty in me. However, we will say no more now; I am even wearied out."

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## Chapter CXXXI. MRS. MEREDITH'S FRIEND. -- EXCHANGE OF SERVICES, AND COMPACT.

There could be no doubt in the minds of both mother and daughter that there was something much resembling a moral certainty concerning the fate of the retired colonel. That he must marry was evident -- he was to all intents and purposes resolved to do so. He talked of a home and domestic comfort, and all that kind of thing; therefore it would be easy to entangle him in the meshes of love; the snares of passion might be successfully set, and they would be sure to be productive of some sport, and even a stray colonel might be caught, one who, having had enough of the wars of man, might now be considered to become a fair object of attack in those of Venus.

However, there appeared much in the colonel's circumstances and disposition that laid him open to the attacks of designing matrons and maidens. He seemed to appreciate female company -- was particularly well pleased with female attentions; perhaps his health required their aid more than that of any other; and he had evidently been in love, and lost the object of his earliest affections.

One great thing in Margaret Meredith's favour was, the colonel had taken it into his head that she much resembled this lady, whoever she was; and this fact, no doubt, had opened his heart towards her; and he felt a kindly, and perhaps a warmer feeling, towards her. This, they calculated, would greatly assist them in their efforts to circumvent the colonel, and cause him to capitulate upon matrimonial conditions.

"There never was so good a chance," said Mrs. Meredith, in the course of a day or two after the above scene; "there never was such a chance as the one you now have."

"What, with the colonel, ma'?"

"Yes, my love, you may depend upon it, that is a very safe speculation. Why, he must be immensely rich. I am sure that some of the jewels I have seen on his fingers must be worth thousands of pounds. He is a very rich man, there can be no doubt."

"Yes, ma', he is very rich."

"And you will have many fine things that you have never dreamed of. Why, you will have a carriage; I should think he would never refuse you that trifle."

"He has not one now."

"Yes, that is true; he would never use it himself; and that accounts for it. But when he has a wife it is quite another matter; and one which you can easily manage when you are a wife; you can do more than you can now. Besides, you'll see how the money is spent; and it must all go through your hands, you know; that can't be helped."

"No, I dare say not; but, ma' don't you think, when he dies, there will be a loss of the pension? and that would be a serious loss."

"It would; but then you will have a pension as an officer's widow, besides all his vast property, without any trouble whatever -- with nobody to contradict you; that is, if he were to die; but I think he will not do that; he does not, at times, appear so old as one would think; and yet, he is very pale; but that, I suppose, is caused by his long residence abroad in hot climates, and being exposed to the weather of all kinds, attended by wounds and sickness."

"No doubt he has suffered much; but he has obtained a handsome fortune, which pays for a great deal, you know, said Margaret.

"Undoubtedly, by dear; by--the--bye, have you heard how that affair of Miss Smith was ended, and why they came in here in such a manner?"

"Oh, it was a very shocking affair; there were some marks in her arm, which I cannot understand; it does seem very extraordinary to me, but she says she was awoke in the night by some monster sucking her blood."

"Dear me! who ever heard of such nonsense?"

"I cannot but think there must have been something in it; and, yet, what could have been the reason for them all to utter a falsehood, I don't know. There was, you know, the father, then the watchmen, all of whom said they saw it; at all events, they appeared to have some idea that it must have been done by some one in our house; the dressing gown and that appeared to bewilder them."

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"Did they say they thought so still."

"No; they did not do that, we spoke spoke so positive; and I saw when I went in to see her, she was much terrified at what had occurred, and could not get up; she had a physician to attend her, who will not hear of anything that she says."

"Well, I think he is right."

"But the whole family appear to side with her, and insist that it was no robber who made the attempt; for nothing was gone, nothing was attempted in the shape of robbery; nothing was touched nor moved; therefore, there could be no common motive, they said. Well, at all events, they have made somebody very disagreeable in the family, and they had better have been quiet, but they are a disagreeable set, and I shall not go in again."

"You are right; my dear; they would be glad to push that minx of theirs in here, and get an acquaintance with the colonel. No, it will be safest to keep them apart; we will have as few female visitors, my dear, as possible; not that I think you run any chance of rivalry, but, you know, men are such uncertain things."

"To be sure they are, ma'." replied Margaret.

"Well, then, if we have no female acquaintances, you see we cannot possibly run any risk, and the matter will not be so protracted, because everything depends upon things being smooth and uninterrupted; he will be the more ready to propose and push the matter to a point."

"Do you think him a likely man, ma', to marry?"

"Certain of it, my dear, quite certain of it. I know a marrying man as soon as I see him; the colonel is decidedly a marrying man, he talks of home, domestic comfort, and all that kind of thing; and when men do that, you may be sure, if you are cautious, to catch such an one."

"Well, I will try."

"Do, my dear; it will be worth your while, it will make all our fortunes. I wonder what his money is invested in."

"I should like to know that," said Margaret.

"And so should I. Do you know, I have been thinking of that myself more than once. It will be necessary to find it out, and yet it is so delicate a matter, that I think you had better make no attempt to work it out of him. Let the affair take its own course at present."

"But I can hear all."

"Then you will act wisely, my dear, very wisely, prudently; but do no more — hear and see all, and say nothing — of course, I mean upon that subject alone. Now, if we proceed cautiously, we shall be sure to gain our object; I will take some method of obtaining the information I want at some future time, because it will be well to have him caught before we begin to pull tight the line; or, at least, before we begin to make any inquiries respecting his means he must give us some caue to do so."

"I dare say we shall know something by accident some of these days; perhaps, at the hotel where he comes from, something may be learned by inquiry."

"Possibly there may, my dear; but I do not like to go there. At all events, they can know but little, for he has not been long in England, and would hold but little communication with such people. We must have some better plan than that to go upon, else we shall never be successful, except at the cost of some cross in our hopes we would rather have avoided."

"Well, ma', you shall do as you like in this affair. I am sure you will do what is right and best for the occasion; besides, one plan is better than two."

"You are right, my dear. I am, however, resolved to have a visitor."

"A visitor, ma'?"

"Yes, my dear; only Mr. Twissel, the attorney."

"Oh, I know who you mean now; but why do you have him? He is a very funny sort of an acquaintance, especially if he is to meet the colonel."

"I wish him to meet him, my dear, for that reason. He will be able to get out of him, by some means, what he has got his money locked up in. A hint will serve him, and he can make inquiries, and learn it all, and then he will, if we are successful, have a good thing of marriage settlements, and so forth. Besides, I will make an agreement with him that he shall have a sum of money for his trouble."

"That will be a very good plan, certainly."

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"Exactly, and you needn't be seen in it at all; so I think we shall be all very fairly put in the way of doing well. I shall go out this morning, and call upon Mr. Twissel, and have some conversation with him. He used to have some business of your father's to do, and has had much of his money, as well as a good word now and then."

"Dear me, who is that? There is a double knock at the door, ma'. How vexing it will be to have any one come here. I shall hate the sight of any one coming in now."

"Can't you see from the window who it is, my dear?"

"No, ma'."

"Then we must wait until the servant comes in."

The words had hardly been uttered, before the servant entered, and said that Mr. Twissel wanted to speak to Mrs. Meredith, if she was at home.

"God bless me! — send him in," said Mrs. Meredith, after the first surprise was over; and then, turning to her daughter, she said, "Talk of what's—his—name, and you are sure to see some of his friends. If I had wanted him to come, he would not have been here."

"Very likely, ma'; and yet you do, and he is here."

At this moment Mr. Twissel made his appearance, and entered the parlour. Having saluted the ladies, he proceeded to lay his hat and cane on the table, saying, —

"Mrs. Meredith, I dare say you are surprised to see me, after so long an absence."

"My surprise is not greater than my pleasure, Mr. Twissel. I am very glad to see an old friend of my husband's. Pray sit down, sir."

"Thank you, I will. I am glad to see you look so well. I need not ask how you are, and your amiable daughter too; she appears charming."

"Yes, Mr. Twissel, we are in tolerable good health; not often better."

"Do not let me disturb you, Miss Margaret," said Mr. Twissel, as she rose to leave the room.

"Oh, no, sir, not at all. I have something to attend to, if you will excuse me."

"Certainly, certainly. I hope I shall not be any cause of putting you to any constraint and inconvenience; at the same time, I shall not detain Mrs. Meredith long."

"Oh, we don't intend to lose you suddenly," said Mrs. Meredith. "Anything I can oblige you in I shall be very happy to do so, if you point out the how."

"Then I will proceed to do so at once," said Mr. Twissel; "I will do so at once. You see, when your late husband died, or before, he gave me several debts to collect."

"So I understood," said Mrs. Meredith.

"Exactly; I see you understand me. Now, those debts I was to collect myself for my own benefit, he having, when he died, owed me a considerable sum of money. He assigned them to me, and I accepted them as payment of his debt due to me."

"I understood such to be the case, and at that point the matter was considered as settled; was it not, Mr. Twissel?" said Mrs. Meredith.

"It was so, and is so now, as far as I know now; but I want some few papers which it is possible may be somewhere in your possession, to enable me to secure the payment of them; and without those papers I shall not be able to enforce attention. Now, I want to know if you will oblige me with them if you have them by you?"

"I will certainly look and make any search I can for them, and if I find them you shall have them, certainly. But, now I have disposed of that, will you do me a favour?"

"Certainly, with pleasure."

"Well, then, Mr. Twissel, you see, there is a certain rich lodger of mine who pays certain attentions to my daughter Margaret," said Mrs. Meredith.

"I see," said Mr. Twissel.

"Well, then, he had made no positive offer yet; but we have certain expectations, you see, and in case those expectations become realized, I want to be in such a situation as to know at once what I shall do in such a case — what ought to be done."

"Very good, my dear madam; very good."

"Now, we only know from report, and from appearances, that he is rich; we feel quite convinced of that — he could not well be otherwise," said Mrs. Meredith; "but we are anxious to know in what kind of stock or property

he is likely to have invested it."

"Yes, I see. Well, then, all you have to do is to learn what you can from himself or his friends, and then make inquiries respecting the truth of what you hear. I should be very happy in assisting to make such inquiries, or in any way you may point out."

"I am very much obliged to you; but, Mr. Twissel, it is a very delicate subject for females to touch upon, and, moreover, it is worse, considering how my daughter is likely to be in connection with him."

"It is a delicate matter, certainly."

"Well, now, what I wanted was this; if you would on some occasion — I would let you know beforehand, — call in and take some tea, or whatever meal happened to be at hand, and get into conversation with the colonel, and get this matter from him — "

"Oh, he is a colonel in the army, then?"

"Yes; but returned, in bad health, from the Indies. He has come only recently."

"Aye, aye, I see; you have a nabob, I see. That will be a very handsome settlement for your daughter, my dear madam; a very handsome settlement."

"Yes, it will."

"Well, it is handsome; but there are drawbacks, you see."

"Oh, age, and ill health."

"Exactly; they are drawbacks, you see, that are not always to a young female's taste."

"No, no; but, then, my daughter is a reasonable young woman, Mr. Twissel, and would not object to a good fortune because there was a kind, though, perhaps, elderly, gentleman for a husband. Oh, dear, no, sir, I have no apprehensions of that character; she will be good and obedient, especially when she knows that it is all for her good; besides that, you see, the colonel, though an invalid, is not so very old, and is a most pleasant, and, I might say, fascinating gentleman to converse with; so that she can have no personal objection; and, besides, from what I can observe, I have reason to believe that the colonel is by no means disagreeable to her."

"Then I am sure it is a very handsome prospect for her, and one that might have been long in happening to one who had a better fortune to aid her."

"Yes, indeed, it might."

"Well, then, if I can aid you, command my services."

"In this respect you may do me much good, but I do not, as it will be some little loss of time to you, desire you should do so for nothing. If we succeed, and all is comfortable, you shall have a hundred pounds soon after the marriage — say three months."

"Very well. I am quite willing to accept the terms, and should I be wanted at any time, perhaps you will let me know as long before as possible."

"I will do so."

"And then, when I next come, perhaps you'll be able to hand me the papers, and be ready to sign some agreement which I will get ready for the purpose."

"Very well, I will do it."

"I am much obliged to you," said Mr. Twissel; "however, I suppose, when I am introduced to the colonel, I am only to come in as an old friend of the family?"

"Exactly so; that will be by far the best character to assume, because you may be anything; besides which, when matters come to a point proper for interference, you can do so the more easily, and with more effect, and he also will be less inclined to quarrel; and at the same time he can have less objection to do so, which, you see, is a little better."

"I see," said the attorney, rising; "and now, as we have settled this business so far, I will bid you good afternoon, as I have some business elsewhere this evening, which I must get finished."

After exchanging greetings, the attorney quitted the house of Mrs. Meredith without further remark.