CHAPTER VI.

ON the next day, I was introduced to the Jew's workshop, and to the eminent gentlemen occupying it. My model Rembrandt was put before me; the simple elementary rules were explained; and my materials were all placed under my hands.

Regard for the lovers of the Old Masters, and for the moral well-being of society, forbids me to be particular about the nature of my labors, or to go into dangerous detail on the subject of my first failures and my subsequent success. I may, however, harmlessly admit that my Rembrandt was to be of the small or cabinet size, and that, as there was a run on Burgomasters just then, my subject was naturally to be of the Burgomaster sort. Three parts of my picture consisted entirely of different shades of dirty brown and black; the fourth being composed of a ray of yellow light falling upon the wrinkled face of a treacle-colored old man. A dim glimpse of a hand, and a faint suggestion of something like a brass washhand basin, completed the job, which gave great satisfaction to Mr. Pickup, and which was described in the catalogue as--

"A Burgomaster at Breakfast. Originally in the collection of Mynheer Van Grubb. Amsterdam. A rare example of the master. Not engraved. The chiar'oscuro in this extraordinary work is of a truly sublime character.

Price, Two Hundred Guineas."

I got five pounds for it. I suppose Mr. Pickup got one-ninety-five.

This was perhaps not very encouraging as a beginning, in a pecuniary point of view. But I was to get five pounds more, if my Rembrandt sold within a given time. It sold a week after it was in a fit state to be trusted in the showroom. I got my money, and began enthusiastically on another Rembrandt--"A Burgomaster's Wife Poking the Fire." Last time, the chiar'oscuro of the master had been yellow and black, this time it was to be red and black. I was just on the point of forcing my way into Mr. Pickup's confidence, as I had resolved, when a catastrophe happened, which shut up the shop and abruptly terminated my experience as a maker of Old Masters.

"The Burgomaster's Breakfast" had been sold to a new customer, a venerable connoisseur, blessed with a great fortune and a large picture-gallery. The old gentleman was in raptures with the picture--with its tone, with its breadth, with its grand feeling for effect, with its simple treatment of detail. It wanted nothing, in his opinion, but a little cleaning. Mr. Pickup knew the raw and ticklish state of the surface, however, far too well, to allow of even an attempt at performing this process, and solemnly asserted, that he was acquainted with no cleansing preparation which could be used on the

Rembrandt without danger of "flaying off the last exquisite glazings of the immortal master's brush." The old gentleman was quite satisfied with this reason for not cleaning the Burgomaster, and took away his purchase in his own carriage on the spot.

For three weeks we heard nothing more of him. At the end of that time, a Hebrew friend of Mr. Pickup, employed in a lawyer's office, terrified us all by the information that a gentleman related to our venerable connoisseur had seen the Rembrandt, had pronounced it to be an impudent counterfeit, and had engaged on his own account to have the picture tested in a court of law, and to charge the seller and maker thereof with conspiring to obtain money under false pretenses. Mr. Pickup and I looked at each other with very blank faces on receiving this agreeable piece of news. What was to be done? I recovered the full use of my faculties first; and I was the man who solved that important and difficult question, while the rest were still utterly bewildered by it. "Will you promise me five and twenty pounds in the presence of these gentlemen if I get you out of this scrape?" said I to my terrified employer. Ishmael Pickup wrung his dirty hands and answered, "Yesh, my dear!"

Our informant in this awkward matter was employed at the office of the lawyers who were to have the conducting of the case against us; and he was able to tell me some of the things I most wanted to know in relation to the picture.

I found out from him that the Rembrandt was still in our customer's possession. The old gentleman had consented to the question of its genuineness being tried, but had far too high an idea of his own knowledge as a connoisseur to incline to the opinion that he had been taken in. His suspicious relative was not staying in the house, but was in the habit of visiting him, every day, in the forenoon. That was as much as I wanted to know from others. The rest depended on myself, on luck, time, human credulity, and a smattering of chemical knowledge which I had acquired in the days of my medical studies. I left the conclave at the picture-dealer's forthwith, and purchased at the nearest druggist's a bottle containing a certain powerful liquid, which I decline to particularize on high moral grounds. I labeled the bottle "The Amsterdam Cleansing Compound"; and I wrapped round it the following

note:

"Mr. Pickup's respectful compliments to Mr.--(let us say, Green). Is rejoiced to state that he finds himself unexpectedly able to forward Mr. Green's views relative to the cleaning of 'The Burgomaster's Breakfast.' The inclosed compound has just reached him from Amsterdam. It is made from a recipe found among the papers of Rembrandt himself--has been used with the most astonishing results on the Master's pictures in every gallery of Holland, and is now being applied to the surface of the largest Rembrandt in Mr. P.'s own collection. Directions for use: Lay

the picture flat, pour the whole contents of the bottle over it gently, so as to flood the entire surface; leave the liquid on the surface for six hours, then wipe it off briskly with a soft cloth of as large a size as can be conveniently used. The effect will be the most wonderful removal of all dirt, and a complete and brilliant metamorphosis of the present dingy surface of the picture."

I left this note and the bottle myself at two o'clock that day; then went home, and confidently awaited the result.

The next morning our friend from the office called, announcing himself by a burst of laughter outside the door. Mr. Green had implicitly followed the directions in the letter the moment he received it--had allowed the "Amsterdam Cleansing Compound" to remain on the Rembrandt until eight o'clock in the evening--had called for the softest linen cloth in the whole house--and had then, with his own venerable hands, carefully wiped off the compound, and with it the whole surface of the picture! The brown, the black, the Burgomaster, the breakfast, and the ray of yellow light, all came clean off together in considerably less than a minute of time. If the picture, was brought into court now, the evidence it could give against us was limited to a bit of plain panel, and a mass of black pulp rolled up in a duster.

Our line of defense was, of course, that the compound had been

improperly used. For the rest, we relied with well-placed confidence on the want of evidence against us. Mr. Pickup wisely closed his shop for a while, and went off to the Continent to ransack the foreign galleries.
I received my five and twenty pounds, rubbed out the beginning of my second Rembrandt, closed the back door of the workshop behind me, and there was another scene of my life at an end. I had but one circumstance to regret--and I did regret it bitterly. I was still as ignorant as ever of the young lady's name and address.

My first visit was to the studio of my excellent artist-friend, whom I have already presented to the reader under the sympathetic name of "Dick." He greeted me with a letter in his hand. It was addressed to me--it had been left at the studio a few days since; and (marvel of all marvels!) the handwriting was Mr. Batterbury's. Had this philanthropic man not done befriending me even yet? Were there any present or prospective advantages to be got out of him still? Read his letter, and judge.

"SIR--Although you have forfeited by your ungentlemanly conduct toward myself, and your heartlessly mischievous reception of my dear wife, all claim upon the forbearance of the most forbearing of your relatives, I am disposed, from motives of regard for the tranquillity of Mrs. Batterbury's family, and of sheer good-nature so far as I am myself concerned, to afford you one more chance of retrieving your position by

leading a respectable life. The situation I am enabled to offer you is that of secretary to a new Literary and Scientific Institution, about to be opened in the town of Duskydale, near which neighborhood I possess, as you must be aware, some landed property. The office has been placed at my disposal, as vice-president of the new Institution. The salary is fifty pounds a year, with apartments on the attic-floor of the building. The duties are various, and will be explained to you by the local committee, if you choose to present yourself to them with the inclosed letter of introduction. After the unscrupulous manner in which you have imposed on my liberality by deceiving me into giving you fifty pounds for an audacious caricature of myself, which it is impossible to hang up in any room of the house, I think this instance of my forgiving disposition still to befriend you, after all that has happened, ought to appeal to any better feelings that you may still have left, and revive the long dormant emotions of repentance and self-reproach, when you think on your obedient servant,

"DANIEL BATTERBURY."

Bless me! What A long-winded style, and what a fuss about fifty pounds a year, and a bed in an attic! These were naturally the first emotions which Mr. Batterbury's letter produced in me. What was his real motive for writing it? I hope nobody will do me so great an injustice as to suppose that I hesitated for one instant about the way of finding that out. Of course I started off directly to inquire if Lady Malkinshaw had had another narrow escape of dying before me.

"Much better, sir," answered my grandmother's venerable butler, wiping his lips carefully before he spoke; "her ladyship's health has been much improved since her accident."

"Accident!" I exclaimed. "What, another? Lately? Stairs again?"

"No, sir; the drawing-room window this time," answered the butler, with semi-tipsy gravity. "Her ladyship's sight having been defective of late years, occasions her some difficulty in calculating distances.
Three days ago, her ladyship went to look out of the window, and, miscalculating the distance--" Here the butler, with a fine dramatic feeling for telling a story, stopped just before the climax of the narrative, and looked me in the face with an expression of the deepest sympathy.

"And miscalculating the distance?" I repeated impatiently.

"Put her head through a pane of glass," said the butler, in a soft voice suited to the pathetic nature of the communication. "By great good fortune her ladyship had been dressed for the day, and had got her turban on. This saved her ladyship's head. But her ladyship's neck, sir, had a very narrow escape. A bit of the broken glass wounded it within half a quarter of an inch of the carotty artery" (meaning, probably, carotid); "I heard the medical gentleman say, and shall never forget it to my dying day, that her ladyship's life had been saved by a

hair-breadth. As it was, the blood lost (the medical gentleman said that, too, sir) was accidentally of the greatest possible benefit, being apoplectic, in the way of clearing out the system. Her ladyship's appetite has been improved ever since--the carriage is out airing of her at this very moment--likewise, she takes the footman's arm and the maid's up and downstairs now, which she never would hear of before this last accident. 'I feel ten years younger' (those were her ladyship's own words to me, this very day), 'I feel ten years younger, Vokins, since I broke the drawing-room window.' And her ladyship looks it!"

No doubt. Here was the key to Mr. Batterbury's letter of forgiveness. His chance of receiving the legacy looked now further off than ever; he could not feel the same confidence as his wife in my power of living down any amount of starvation and adversity; and he was, therefore, quite ready to take the first opportunity of promoting my precious personal welfare and security, of which he could avail himself, without spending a farthing of money. I saw it all clearly, and admired the hereditary toughness of the Malkinshaw family more gratefully than ever. What should I do? Go to Duskydale? Why not? It didn't matter to me where I went, now that I had no hope of ever seeing those lovely brown eyes again.

I got to my new destination the next day, presented my credentials, gave myself the full advantage of my high connections, and was received with enthusiasm and distinction.

I found the new Institution torn by internal schisms even before it was opened to the public. Two factious governed it--a grave faction and a gay faction. Two questions agitated it: the first referring to the propriety of celebrating the opening season by a public ball, and the second to the expediency of admitting novels into the library. The grim Puritan interest of the whole neighborhood was, of course, on the grave side--against both dancing and novels, as proposed by local loose thinkers and latitudinarians of every degree. I was officially introduced to the debate at the height of the squabble; and found myself one of a large party in a small room, sitting round a long table, each man of us with a new pewter inkstand, a new quill pen, and a clean sheet of foolscap paper before him. Seeing that everybody spoke, I got on my legs along with the rest, and made a slashing speech on the loose-thinking side. I was followed by the leader of the grim faction--an unlicked curate of the largest dimensions.

"If there were, so to speak, no other reason against dancing," said my reverend opponent, "there is one unanswerable objection to it. Gentlemen! John the Baptist lost his head through dancing!"'

Every man of the grim faction hammered delightedly on the table, as that formidable argument was produced; and the curate sat down in triumph. I jumped up to reply, amid the counter-cheering of the loose-thinkers; but before I could say a word the President of the Institution and the rector of the parish came into the room.

They were both men of authority, men of sense, and fathers of charming daughters, and they turned the scale on the right side in no time. The question relating to the admission of novels was postponed, and the question of dancing or no dancing was put to the vote on the spot. The President, the rector and myself, the three handsomest and highest-bred men in the assembly, led the way on the liberal side, waggishly warning all gallant gentlemen present to beware of disappointing the young ladies. This decided the waverers, and the waverers decided the majority. My first business, as Secretary, was the drawing out of a model card of admission to the ball.

My next occupation was to look at the rooms provided for me.

The Duskydale Institution occupied a badly-repaired ten-roomed house, with a great flimsy saloon built at one side of it, smelling of paint and damp plaster, and called the Lecture Theater. It was the chilliest, ugliest, emptiest, gloomiest place I ever entered in my life; the idea of doing anything but sitting down and crying in it seemed to me quite preposterous; but the committee took a different view of the matter, and praised the Lecture Theater as a perfect ballroom. The Secretary's apartments were two garrets, asserting themselves in the most barefaced manner, without an attempt at disguise. If I had intended to do more than earn my first quarter's salary, I should have complained. But as I had not the slightest intention of remaining at Duskydale, I could afford to establish a reputation for amiability by saying nothing.

"Have you seen Mr. Softly, the new Secretary? A most distinguished person, and quite an acquisition to the neighborhood." Such was the popular opinion of me among the young ladies and the liberal inhabitants. "Have you seen Mr. Softly, the new Secretary? A worldly, vainglorious young man. The last person in England to promote the interests of our new Institution." Such was the counter-estimate of me among the Puritan population. I report both opinions quite disinterestedly. There is generally something to be said on either side of every question; and, as for me, I can always hold up the scales impartially, even when my own character is the substance weighing in them. Readers of ancient history need not be reminded, at this time of day, that there may be Roman virtue even in a Rogue.

The objects, interests, and general business of the Duskydale Institution were matters with which I never thought of troubling myself on assuming the duties of Secretary. All my energies were given to the arrangements connected with the opening ball.

I was elected by acclamation to the office of general manager of the entertainments; and I did my best to deserve the confidence reposed in me; leaving literature and science, so far as I was concerned, perfectly at liberty to advance themselves or not, just as they liked. Whatever my colleagues may have done, after I left them, nobody at Duskydale can accuse me of having ever been accessory to the disturbing of quiet people with useful knowledge. I took the arduous and universally neglected duty of teaching the English people how to be amused entirely

on my own shoulders, and left the easy and customary business of making them miserable to others.

My unhappy countrymen! (and thrice unhappy they of the poorer sort)--any man can preach to them, lecture to them, and form them into classes--but where is the man who can get them to amuse themselves? Anybody may cram
their poor heads; but who will brighten their grave faces? Don't read story-books, don't go to plays, don't dance! Finish your long day's work and then intoxicate your minds with solid history, revel in the too-attractive luxury of the lecture-room, sink under the soft temptation of classes for mutual instruction! How many potent, grave and reverent tongues discourse to the popular ear in these siren strains, and how obediently and resignedly this same weary popular ear listens! What if a bold man spring up one day, crying aloud in our social wilderness, "Play, for Heaven's sake, or you will work yourselves into a nation of automatons! Shake a loose leg to a lively fiddle! Women of England! drag the lecturer off the rostrum, and the male mutual instructor out of the class, and ease their poor addled heads of evenings by making them dance and sing with you. Accept no offer from any man who cannot be proved, for a year past, to have systematically lost his dignity at least three times a week, after office hours. You, daughters of Eve, who have that wholesome love of pleasure which is one of the greatest adornments of the female character, set up a society for the promotion of universal amusement, and save the British nation from the lamentable social consequences of its own gravity!" Imagine a

voice crying lustily after this fashion--what sort of echoes would it find?--Groans?

I know what sort of echoes my voice found. They were so discouraging to me, and to the frivolous minority of pleasure-seekers, that I recommended lowering the price of admission so as to suit the means of any decent people who were willing to leave off money-grubbing and tear themselves from the charms of mutual instruction for one evening at least. The proposition was indignantly negatived by the managers of the Institution. I am so singularly obstinate a man that I was not to be depressed even by this.

My next efforts to fill the ballroom could not be blamed. I procured a local directory, put fifty tickets in my pocket, dressed myself in nankeen pantaloons and a sky-blue coat (then the height of fashion), and set forth to tout for dancers among all the members of the genteel population, who, not being notorious Puritans, had also not been so obliging as to take tickets for the ball. There never was any pride or bashfulness about me. Excepting certain periods of suspense and anxiety, I am as even-tempered a Rogue as you have met with anywhere since the days of Gil Blas.

My temperament being opposed to doing anything with regularity, I opened the directory at hazard, and determined to make my first call at the first house that caught my eye. Vallombrosa Vale Cottages. No. 1. Doctor and Miss Dulcifer. Very good. I have no preferences. Let me sell the

first two tickets there. I found the place; I opened the garden gate; I advanced to the door, innocently wondering what sort of people I should find inside.

If I am asked what was the true reason for this extraordinary activity on my part, in serving the interests of a set of people for whom I cared nothing, I must honestly own that the loss of my young lady was at the bottom of it. Any occupation was welcome which kept my mind, in some degree at least, from dwelling on the bitter disappointment that had befallen me. When I rang the bell at No. 1, did I feel no presentiment of the exquisite surprise in store for me? I felt nothing of the sort. The fact is, my digestion is excellent. Presentiments are more closely connected than is generally supposed with a weak state of stomach.

I asked for Miss Dulcifer, and was shown into the sitting-room.

Don't expect me to describe my sensations: hundreds of sensations flew all over me. There she was, sitting alone, near the window! There she was, with nimble white fingers, working a silk purse!

The melancholy in her face and manner, when I had last seen her, appeared no more. She was prettily dressed in maize color, and the room was well furnished. Her father had evidently got over his difficulties. I had been inclined to laugh at his odd name, when I found it in the directory! Now I began to dislike it, because it was her name, too. It was a consolation to remember that she could change it. Would she change

it for mine?

I was the first to recover; I boldly drew a chair near her and took her hand.

"You see," I said, "it is of no use to try to avoid me. This is the third time we have met. Will you receive me as a visitor, under these extraordinary circumstances? Will you give me a little happiness to compensate for what I have suffered since you left me?"

She smiled and blushed.

"I am so surprised," she answered, "I don't know what to say."

"Disagreeably surprised?" I asked.

She first went on with her work, and then replied (a little sadly, as I thought):

"No!"

I was ready enough to take advantage of my opportunities this time; but she contrived with perfect politeness to stop me. She seemed to remember with shame, poor soul, the circumstances under which I had last seen her.

"How do you come to be at Duskydale?" she inquired, abruptly changing the subject. "And how did you find us out here?"

While I was giving her the necessary explanations her father came in. I looked at him with considerable curiosity.

A tall stout gentleman with impressive respectability oozing out of him at every pore--with a swelling outline of black-waistcoated stomach, with a lofty forehead, with a smooth double chin resting pulpily on a white cravat. Everything in harmony about him except his eyes, and these were so sharp, bright and resolute that they seemed to contradict the bland conventionality which overspread all the rest of the man. Eyes with wonderful intelligence and self-dependence in them; perhaps, also, with something a little false in them, which I might have discovered immediately under ordinary circumstances: but I looked at the doctor through the medium of his daughter, and saw nothing of him at the first glance but his merits.

"We are both very much indebted to you, sir, for your politeness in calling," he said, with excessive civility of manner. "But our stay at this place has drawn to an end. I only came here for the re-establishment of my daughter's health. She has benefited greatly by the change of air, and we have arranged to return home to-morrow. Otherwise, we should have gladly profited by your kind offer of tickets for the ball."

Of course I had one eye on the young lady while he was speaking. She was looking at her father, and a sudden sadness was stealing over her face. What did it mean? Disappointment at missing the ball? No, it was a much deeper feeling than that. My interest was excited. I addressed a complimentary entreaty to the doctor not to take his daughter away from us. I asked him to reflect on the irreparable eclipse that he would be casting over the Duskydale ballroom. To my amazement, she only looked down gloomily on her work while I spoke; her father laughed contemptuously.

"We are too completely strangers here," he said, "for our loss to be felt by any one. From all that I can gather, society in Duskydale will be glad to hear of our departure. I beg your pardon, Alicia--I ought to have said my departure."

Her name was Alicia! I declare it was a luxury to me to hear it--the name was so appropriate, so suggestive of the grace and dignity of her beauty.

I turned toward her when the doctor had done. She looked more gloomily than before. I protested against the doctor's account of himself.
He laughed again, with a quick distrustful lo ok, this time, at his daughter.

"If you were to mention my name among your respectable inhabitants," he went on, with a strong, sneering emphasis on the word respectable, "they

would most likely purse up their lips and look grave at it. Since I gave up practice as a physician, I have engaged in chemical investigations on a large scale, destined I hope, to lead to some important public results. Until I arrive at these, I am necessarily obliged, in my own interests, to keep my experiments secret, and to impose similar discretion on the workmen whom I employ. This unavoidable appearance of mystery, and the strictly retired life which my studies compel me to lead, offend the narrow-minded people in my part of the county, close to Barkingham; and the unpopularity of my pursuits has followed me here. The general opinion, I believe, is, that I am seeking by unholy arts for the philosopher's stone. Plain man, as you see me, I find myself getting quite the reputation of a Doctor Faustus in the popular mind. Even educated people in this very place shake their heads and pity my daughter there for living with an alchemical parent, within easy smelling-distance of an explosive laboratory. Excessively absurd, is it not?"

It might have been excessively absurd, but the lovely Alicia sat with her eyes on her work, looking as if it were excessively sad, and not giving her father the faintest answering smile when he glanced toward her and laughed, as he said his last words. I could not at all tell what to make of it. The doctor talked of the social consequences of his chemical inquiries as if he were living in the middle ages. However, I was far too anxious to see the charming brown eyes again to ask questions which would be sure to keep them cast down. So I changed the topic to chemistry in general; and, to the doctor's evident astonishment

and pleasure, told him of my own early studies in the science.

This led to the mention of my father, whose reputation had reached the ears of Doctor Dulcifer. As he told me that, his daughter looked up--the sun of beauty shone on me again! I touched next on my high connections, and on Lady Malkinshaw; I described myself as temporarily banished from home for humorous caricaturing, and amiable youthful wildness. She was interested; she smiled--and the sun of beauty shone warmer than ever! I diverged to general topics, and got brilliant and amusing. She laughed--the nightingale notes of her merriment bubbled into my ears caressingly--why could I not shut my eyes and listen to them? Her color rose; her face grew animated. Poor soul! A little lively company was but too evidently a rare treat to her. Under such circumstances, who would not be amusing? If she had said to me, "Mr. Softly, I like tumbling," I should have made a clown of myself on the spot. I should have stood on my head (if I could), and been amply rewarded for the graceful exertion, if the eyes of Alicia had looked kindly on my elevated heels!

How long I stayed is more than I can tell. Lunch came up. I eat and drank, and grew more amusing than ever. When I at last rose to go, the brown eyes looked on me very kindly, and the doctor gave me his card.

"If you don't mind trusting yourself in the clutches of Doctor Faustus," he said, with a gay smile, "I shall be delighted to see you if you are ever in the neighborhood of Barkingham."

I wrung his hand, mentally relinquishing my secretaryship while I thanked him for the invitation. I put out my hand next to his daughter, and the dear friendly girl met the advance with the most charming readiness. She gave me a good, hearty, vigorous, uncompromising shake. O precious right hand! never did I properly appreciate your value until that moment.

Going out with my head in the air, and my senses in the seventh heaven, I jostled an elderly gentleman passing before the garden gate. I turned round to apologize; it was my brother in office, the estimable Treasurer of the Duskydale Institute.

"I have been half over the town looking after you," he said. "The Managing Committee, on reflection, consider your plan of personally soliciting public attendance at the hall to be compromising the dignity of the Institution, and beg you, therefore, to abandon it."

"Very well," said I, "there is no harm done. Thus far, I have only solicited two persons, Doctor and Miss Dulcifer, in that delightful little cottage there."

"You don't mean to say you have asked them to come to the ball!"

"To be sure I have. And I am sorry to say they can't accept the invitation. Why should they not be asked?"

"Because nobody visits them."

"And why should nobody visit them?"

The Treasurer put his arm confidentially through mine, and walked me on a few steps.

"In the first place," he said, "Doctor Dulcifer's name is not down in the Medical List."

"Some mistake," I suggested, in my off-hand way. "Or some foreign doctor's degree not recognized by the prejudiced people in England."

"In the second place," continued the Treasurer, "we have found out that he is not visited at Barkingham. Consequently, it would be the height of imprudence to visit him here."

"Pooh! pooh! All the nonsense of narrow-minded people, because he lives a retired life, and is engaged in finding out chemical secrets which the ignorant public don't know how to appreciate."

"The shutters are always up in the front top windows of his house at Barkingham," said the Treasurer, lowering his voice mysteriously. "I know it from a friend resident near him. The windows themselves are barred. It is currently reported that the top of the house, inside, is shut off by iron doors from the bottom. Workmen are employed there who

don't belong to the neighborhood, who don't drink at the public houses, who only associate with each other. Unfamiliar smells and noises find their way outside sometimes. Nobody in the house can be got to talk. The doctor, as he calls himself, does not even make an attempt to get into society, does not even try to see company for the sake of his poor unfortunate daughter. What do you think of all that?"

"Think!" I repeated contemptuously; "I think the inhabitants of Barkingham are the best finders of mares' nests in all England. The doctor is making important chemical discoveries (the possible value of which I can appreciate, being chemical myself), and he is not quite fool enough to expose valuable secrets to the view of all the world. His laboratory is at the top of the house, and he wisely shuts it off from the bottom to prevent accidents. He is one of the best fellows I ever met with, and his daughter is the loveliest girl in the world. What do you all mean by making mysteries about nothing? He has given me an invitation to go and see him. I suppose the next thing you will find out is, that there is something underhand even in that?"

"You won't accept the invitation?"

"I shall, at the very first opportunity; and if you had seen Miss Alicia, so would you."

"Don't go. Take my advice and don't go," said the Treasurer, gravely. "You are a young man. Reputable friends are of importance to you at the

outset of life. I say nothing against Doctor Dulcifer--he came here as a stranger, and he goes away again as a stranger--but you can't be sure that his purpose in asking you so readily to his house is a harmless one. Making a new acquaintance is always a doubtful speculation; but when a man is not visited by his respectable neighbors--"

"Because he doesn't open his shutters," I interposed sarcastically.

"Because there are doubts about him and his house which he will not clear up," retorted the Treasurer. "You can take your own way. You may turn out right, and we may all be wrong; I can only say again, it is rash to make doubtful acquaintances. Sooner or later you are always sure to repent it. In your place I should certainly not accept the invitation."

"In my place, my dear sir," I answered, "you would do exactly what I mean to do."

The Treasurer took his arm out of mine, and without saying another word, wished me good-morning.