SEVENTH SCENE.--HAM FARM.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FOURTH. - THE NIGHT BEFORE.

THE time was the night before the marriage. The place was Sir Patrick's house in Kent.

The lawyers had kept their word. The settlements had been forwarded, and had been signed two days since.

With the exception of the surgeon and one of the three young gentlemen from the University, who had engagements elsewhere, the visitors at Windygates had emigrated southward to be present at the marriage. Besides these gentlemen, there were some ladies among the guests invited by Sir Patrick--all of them family connections, and three of them appointed to the position of Blanche's bridesmaids. Add one or two neighbors to be invited to the breakfast--and the wedding-party would be complete.

There was nothing architecturally remarkable about Sir Patrick's house. Ham Farm possessed neither the splendor of Windygates nor the picturesque antiquarian attraction of Swanhaven. It was a perfectly commonplace English country seat, surrounded by perfectly commonplace English scenery. Snug monotony welcomed you when you went in, and snug monotony met you again when you turned to the window and looked out.

The animation and variety wanting at Ham Farm were far from being supplied by the company in the house. It was remembered, at an after-period, that a duller wedding-party had never been assembled together.

Sir Patrick, having no early associations with the place, openly admitted that his residence in Kent preyed on his spirits, and that he would have infinitely preferred a room at the inn in the village. The effort to sustain his customary vivacity was not encouraged by persons and circumstances about him. Lady Lundie's fidelity to the memory of the late Sir Thomas, on the scene of his last illness and death, persisted in asserting itself, under an ostentation of concealment which tried even the trained temper of Sir Patrick himself. Blanche, still depressed by her private anxieties about Anne, was in no condition of mind to look gayly at the last memorable days

of her maiden life. Arnold, sacrificed--by express stipulation on the part of Lady Lundie--to the prurient delicacy which forbids the bridegroom, before marriage, to sleep in the same house with the bride, found himself ruthlessly shut out from Sir Patrick's hospitality, and exiled every night to a bedroom at the inn. He accepted his solitary doom with a resignation which extended its sobering influence to his customary flow of spirits. As for the ladies, the elder among them existed in a state of chronic protest against Lady Lundie, and the younger were absorbed in the essentially serious occupation of considering and comparing their wedding-dresses. The two young gentlemen from the University performed prodigies of yawning, in the intervals of prodigies of billiard playing. Smith said, in despair, "There's no making things pleasant in this house, Jones." And Jones sighed, and mildly agreed with him.

On the Sunday evening--which was the evening before the marriage--the dullness, as a matter of course, reached its climax.

But two of the occupations in which people may indulge on week days are regarded as harmless on Sunday by the obstinately anti-Christian tone of feeling which prevails in this matter among the Anglo-Saxon race. It is not sinful to wrangle in religious controversy; and it is not sinful to slumber over a religious book. The ladies at Ham Farm practiced the pious observance of the evening on this plan. The seniors of the sex wrangled in Sunday controversy; and the juniors of the sex slumbered over Sunday books. As for the men, it is unnecessary to say that the young ones smoked when they were not yawning, and yawned when they were not smoking. Sir Patrick staid in the library, sorting old letters and examining old accounts. Every person in the house felt the oppression of the senseless social prohibitions which they had imposed on themselves. And yet every person in the house would have been scandalized if the plain question had been put: You know this is a tyranny of your own making, you know you don't really believe in it, you know you don't really like it--why do you submit? The freest people on the civilized earth are the only people on the civilized earth who dare not face that question.

The evening dragged its slow length on; the welcome time drew nearer and nearer for oblivion in bed. Arnold was silently contemplating, for the last time, his customary prospects of banishment to the inn, when he became aware that Sir Patrick was making signs to him. He rose and followed his host into the empty dining-room. Sir Patrick carefully closed the door. What did it mean?

It meant--so far as Arnold was concerned--that a private conversation was

about to diversify the monotony of the long Sunday evening at Ham Farm.

"I have a word to say to you, Arnold," the old gentleman began, "before you become a married man. Do you remember the conversation at dinner yesterday, about the dancing-party at Swanhaven Lodge?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember what Lady Lundie said while the topic was on the table?"

"She told me, what I can't believe, that Geoffrey Delamayn was going to be married to Mrs. Glenarm."

"Exactly! I observed that you appeared to be startled by what my sister-in-law had said; and when you declared that appearances must certainly have misled her, you looked and spoke (to my mind) like a man animated by a strong feeling of indignation. Was I wrong in drawing that conclusion?"

"No, Sir Patrick. You were right."

"Have you any objection to tell me why you felt indignant?"

Arnold hesitated.

"You are probably at a loss to know what interest I can feel in the matter?"

Arnold admitted it with his customary frankness.

"In that case," rejoined Sir Patrick, "I had better go on at once with the matter in hand--leaving you to see for yourself the connection between what I am about to say, and the question that I have just put. When I have done, you shall then reply to me or not, exactly as you think right. My dear boy, the subject on which I want to speak to you is--Miss Silvester."

Arnold started. Sir Patrick looked at him with a moment's attention, and went on:

"My niece has her faults of temper and her failings of judgment," he said. "But she has one atoning quality (among many others) which ought to make--and which I believe will make--the happiness of your married life. In the popular phrase, Blanche is as true as steel. Once her friend, always her friend. Do you see what I am coming to? She has said nothing about it, Arnold; but she has not yielded one inch in her resolution to reunite herself

to Miss Silvester. One of the first questions you will have to determine, after to-morrow, will be the question of whether you do, or not, sanction your wife in attempting to communicate with her lost friend."

Arnold answered without the slightest reserve

"I am heartily sorry for Blanche's lost friend, Sir Patrick. My wife will have my full approval if she tries to bring Miss Silvester back--and my best help too, if I can give it."

Those words were earnestly spoken. It was plain that they came from his heart.

"I think you are wrong," said Sir Patrick. "I, too, am sorry for Miss Silvester. But I am convinced that she has not left Blanche without a serious reason for it. And I believe you will be encouraging your wife in a hopeless effort, if you encourage her to persist in the search for her lost friend. However, it is your affair, and not mine. Do you wish me to offer you any facilities for tracing Miss Silvester which I may happen to possess?"

"If you can help us over any obstacles at starting, Sir Patrick, it will be a kindness to Blanche, and a kindness to me."

"Very good. I suppose you remember what I said to you, one morning, when we were talking of Miss Silvester at Windygates?"

"You said you had determined to let her go her own way."

"Quite right! On the evening of the day when I said that I received information that Miss Silvester had been traced to Glasgow. You won't require me to explain why I never mentioned this to you or to Blanche. In mentioning it now, I communicate to you the only positive information, on the subject of the missing woman, which I possess. There are two other chances of finding her (of a more speculative kind) which can only be tested by inducing two men (both equally difficult to deal with) to confess what they know. One of those two men is--a person named Bishopriggs, formerly waiter at the Craig Fernie inn."

Arnold started, and changed color. Sir Patrick (silently noticing him) stated the circumstances relating to Anne's lost letter, and to the conclusion in his own mind which pointed to Bishopriggs as the person in possession of it.

"I have to add," he proceeded, "that Blanche, unfortunately, found an

opportunity of speaking to Bishopriggs at Swanhaven. When she and Lady Lundie joined us at Edinburgh she showed me privately a card which had been given to her by Bishopriggs. He had described it as the address at which he might be heard of--and Blanche entreated me, before we started for London, to put the reference to the test. I told her that she had committed a serious mistake in attempting to deal with Bishopriggs on her own responsibility; and I warned her of the result in which I was firmly persuaded the inquiry would end. She declined to believe that Bishopriggs had deceived her. I saw that she would take the matter into her own hands again unless I interfered; and I went to the place. Exactly as I had anticipated, the person to whom the card referred me had not heard of Bishopriggs for years, and knew nothing whatever about his present movements. Blanche had simply put him on his guard, and shown him the propriety of keeping out of the way. If you should ever meet with him in the future--say nothing to your wife, and communicate with me. I decline to assist you in searching for Miss Silvester; but I have no objection to assist in recovering a stolen letter from a thief. So much for Bishopriggs.--Now as to the other man."

"Who is he?"

"Your friend, Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn."

Arnold sprang to his feet in ungovernable surprise.

"I appear to astonish you," remarked Sir Patrick.

Arnold sat down again, and waited, in speechless suspense, to hear what was coming next.

"I have reason to know," said Sir Patrick, "that Mr. Delamayn is thoroughly well acquainted with the nature of Miss Silvester's present troubles. What his actual connection is with them, and how he came into possession of his information, I have not found out. My discovery begins and ends with the simple fact that he has the information."

"May I ask one question, Sir Patrick?"

"What is it?"

"How did you find out about Geoffrey Delamayn?"

"It would occupy a long time," answered Sir Patrick, "to tell you how--and it

is not at all necessary to our purpose that you should know. My present obligation merely binds me to tell you--in strict confidence, mind!--that Miss Silvester's secrets are no secrets to Mr. Delamayn. I leave to your discretion the use you may make of that information. You are now entirely on a par with me in relation to your knowledge of the case of Miss Silvester. Let us return to the question which I asked you when we first came into the room. Do you see the connection, now, between that question, and what I have said since?"

Arnold was slow to see the connection. His mind was running on Sir Patrick's discovery. Little dreaming that he was indebted to Mrs. Inchb are's incomplete description of him for his own escape from detection, he was wondering how it had happened that he had remained unsuspected, while Geoffrey's position had been (in part at least) revealed to view.

"I asked you," resumed Sir Patrick, attempting to help him, "why the mere report that your friend was likely to marry Mrs. Glenarm roused your indignation, and you hesitated at giving an answer. Do you hesitate still?"

"It's not easy to give an answer, Sir Patrick."

"Let us put it in another way. I assume that your view of the report takes its rise in some knowledge, on your part, of Mr. Delamayn's private affairs, which the rest of us don't possess.--Is that conclusion correct?"

"Quite correct."

"Is what you know about Mr. Delamayn connected with any thing that you know about Miss Silvester?"

If Arnold had felt himself at liberty to answer that question, Sir Patrick's suspicions would have been aroused, and Sir Patrick's resolution would have forced a full disclosure from him before he left the house.

It was getting on to midnight. The first hour of the wedding-day was at hand, as the Truth made its final effort to struggle into light. The dark Phantoms of Trouble and Terror to come were waiting near them both at that moment. Arnold hesitated again--hesitated painfully. Sir Patrick paused for his answer. The clock in the hall struck the quarter to twelve.

"I can't tell you!" said Arnold.

"Is it a secret?"

"Yes."

"Committed to your honor?"

"Doubly committed to my honor."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Geoffrey and I have quarreled since he took me into his confidence. I am doubly bound to respect his confidence after that."

"Is the cause of your quarrel a secret also?"

"Yes."

Sir Patrick looked Arnold steadily in the face.

"I have felt an inveterate distrust of Mr. Delamayn from the first," he said. "Answer me this. Have you any reason to think--since we first talked about your friend in the summer-house at Windygates--that my opinion of him might have been the right one after all?"

"He has bitterly disappointed me," answered Arnold. "I can say no more."

"You have had very little experience of the world," proceeded Sir Patrick. "And you have just acknowledged that you have had reason to distrust your experience of your friend. Are you quite sure that you are acting wisely in keeping his secret from me? Are you quite sure that you will not repent the course you are taking to-night?" He laid a marked emphasis on those last words. "Think, Arnold," he added, kindly. "Think before you answer."

"I feel bound in honor to keep his secret," said Arnold. "No thinking can alter that."

Sir Patrick rose, and brought the interview to an end.

"There is nothing more to be said." With those words he gave Arnold his hand, and, pressing it cordially, wished him good-night.

Going out into the hall, Arnold found Blanche alone, looking at the barometer.

"The glass is at Set Fair, my darling," he whispered. "Good-night for the last time!"

He took her in his arms, and kissed her. At the moment when he released her Blanche slipped a little note into his hand.

"Read it," she whispered, "when you are alone at the inn."

So they parted on the eve of their wedding day.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIFTH. - THE DAY.

THE promise of the weather-glass was fulfilled. The sun shone on Blanche's marriage.

At nine in the morning the first of the proceedings of the day began. It was essentially of a clandestine nature. The bride and bridegroom evaded the restraints of lawful authority, and presumed to meet together privately, before they were married, in the conservatory at Ham Farm.

"You have read my letter, Arnold?"

"I have come here to answer it, Blanche. But why not have told me? Why write?"

"Because I put off telling you so long; and because I didn't know how you might take it; and for fifty other reasons. Never mind! I've made my confession. I haven't a single secret now which is not your secret too. There's time to say No, Arnold, if you think I ought to have no room in my heart for any body but you. My uncle tells me I am obstinate and wrong in refusing to give Anne up. If you agree with him, say the word, dear, before you make me your wife."

"Shall I tell you what I said to Sir Patrick last night?"

"About this?"

"Yes. The confession (as you call it) which you make in your pretty note, is the very thing that Sir Patrick spoke to me about in the dining-room before I went away. He told me your heart was set on finding Miss Silvester. And he asked me what I meant to do about it when we were married."

"And you said--?"

Arnold repeated his answer to Sir Patrick, with fervid embellishments of the original language, suitable to the emergency. Blanche's delight expressed itself in the form of two unblushing outrages on propriety, committed in close succession. She threw her arms round Arnold's neck; and she actually kissed him three hours before the consent of State and Church sanctioned her in taking that proceeding. Let us shudder--but let us not blame her. These are the consequences of free institutions.

"Now," said Arnold, "it's my turn to take to pen and ink. I have a letter to write before we are married as well as you. Only there's this difference between us--I want you to help me."

"Who are you going to write to?"

"To my lawyer in Edinburgh. There will be no time unless I do it now. We start for Switzerland this afternoon--don't we?'

"Yes."

"Very well. I want to relieve your mind, my darling before we go. Wouldn't you like to know--while we are away--that the right people are on the look-out for Miss Silvester? Sir Patrick has told me of the last place that she has been traced to--and my lawyer will set the right people at work. Come and help me to put it in the proper language, and the whole thing will be in train."

"Oh, Arnold! can I ever love you enough to reward you for this!"

"We shall see, Blanche--in Switzerland."

They audaciously penetrated, arm in arm, into Sir Patrick's own study--entirely at their disposal, as they well knew, at that hour of the morning. With Sir Patrick's pens and Sir Patrick's paper they produced a letter of instructions, deliberately reopening the investigation which Sir Patrick's superior wisdom had closed. Neither pains nor money were to be spared by the lawyer in at once taking measures (beginning at Glasgow) to find Anne. The report of the result was to be addressed to Arnold, under cover to Sir Patrick at Ham Farm. By the time the letter was completed the morning had advanced to ten o'clock. Blanche left Arnold to array herself in her bridal splendor--after another outrage on propriety, and more consequences of free institutions.

The next proceedings were of a public and avowable nature, and strictly followed the customary precedents on such occasions.

Village nymphs strewed flowers on the path to the church door (and sent in the bill the same day). Village swains rang the joy-bells (and got drunk on their money the same evening). There was the proper and awful pause while the bridegroom was kept waiting at the church. There was the proper and pitiless staring of all the female spectators when the bride was led to the

altar. There was the clergyman's preliminary look at the license--which meant official caution. And there was the clerk's preliminary look at the bridegroom--which meant official fees. All the women appeared to be in their natural element; and all the men appeared to be out of it.

Then the service began--rightly-considered, the most terrible, surely, of all mortal ceremonies--the service which binds two human beings, who know next to nothing of each other's natures, to risk the tremendous experiment of living together till death parts them--the service which says, in effect if not in words, Take your leap in the dark: we sanctify, but we don't insure, it!

The ceremony went on, without the slightest obstacle to mar its effect. There were no unforeseen interruptions. There were no ominous mistakes.

The last words were spoken, and the book was closed. They signed their names on the register; the husband was congratulated; the wife was embraced. They went back aga in to the house, with more flowers strewn at their feet. The wedding-breakfast was hurried; the wedding-speeches were curtailed: there was no time to be wasted, if the young couple were to catch the tidal train.

In an hour more the carriage had whirled them away to the station, and the guests had given them the farewell cheer from the steps of the house. Young, happy, fondly attached to each other, raised securely above all the sordid cares of life, what a golden future was theirs! Married with the sanction of the Family and the blessing of the Church--who could suppose that the time was coming, nevertheless, when the blighting question would fall on them, in the spring-time of their love: Are you Man and Wife?

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SIXTH. - THE TRUTH AT LAST.

Two days after the marriage--on Wednesday, the ninth of September a packet of letters, received at Windygates, was forwarded by Lady Lundie's steward to Ham Farm.

With one exception, the letters were all addressed either to Sir Patrick or to his sister-in-law. The one exception was directed to "Arnold Brinkworth, Esq., care of Lady Lundie, Windygates House, Perthshire"--and the envelope was specially protected by a seal.

Noticing that the post-mark was "Glasgow," Sir Patrick (to whom the letter had been delivered) looked with a certain distrust at the handwriting on the address. It was not known to him--but it was obviously the handwriting of a woman. Lady Lundie was sitting opposite to him at the table. He said, carelessly, "A letter for Arnold"--and pushed it across to her. Her ladyship took up the letter, and dropped it, the instant she looked at the handwriting, as if it had burned her fingers.

"The Person again!" exclaimed Lady Lundie. "The Person, presuming to address Arnold Brinkworth, at My house!"

"Miss Silvester?" asked Sir Patrick.

"No," said her ladyship, shutting her teeth with a snap. "The Person may insult me by addressing a letter to my care. But the Person's name shall not pollute my lips. Not even in your house, Sir Patrick. Not even to please you."

Sir Patrick was sufficiently answered. After all that had happened--after her farewell letter to Blanche--here was Miss Silvester writing to Blanche's husband, of her own accord! It was unaccountable, to say the least of it. He took the letter back, and looked at it again. Lady Lundie's steward was a methodical man. He had indorsed each letter received at Windygates with the date of its delivery. The letter addressed to Arnold had been delivered on Monday, the seventh of September--on Arnold's wedding day.

What did it mean?

It was pure waste of time to inquire. Sir Patrick rose to lock the letter up in one of the drawers of the writing-table behind him. Lady Lundie interfered (in the interest of morality).

"Sir Patrick!"

"Yes?"

"Don't you consider it your duty to open that letter?"

"My dear lady! what can you possibly be thinking of?"

The most virtuous of living women had her answer ready on the spot.

"I am thinking," said Lady Lundie, "of Arnold's moral welfare."

Sir Patrick smiled. On the long list of those respectable disguises under which we assert our own importance, or gratify our own love of meddling in our neighbor's affairs, a moral regard for the welfare of others figures in the foremost place, and stands deservedly as number one.

"We shall probably hear from Arnold in a day or two," said Sir Patrick, locking the letter up in the drawer. "He shall have it as soon as I know where to send it to him."

The next morning brought news of the bride and bridegroom.

They reported themselves to be too supremely happy to care where they lived, so long as they lived together. Every question but the question of Love was left in the competent hands of their courier. This sensible and trust-worthy man had decided that Paris was not to be thought of as a place of residence by any sane human being in the month of September. He had arranged that they were to leave for Baden--on their way to Switzerland--on the tenth. Letters were accordingly to be addressed to that place, until further notice. If the courier liked Baden, they would probably stay there for some time. If the courier took a fancy for the mountains, they would in that case go on to Switzerland. In the mean while nothing mattered to Arnold but Blanche--and nothing mattered to Blanche but Arnold.

Sir Patrick re-directed Anne Silvester's letter to Arnold, at the Poste Restante, Baden. A second letter, which had arrived that morning (addressed to Arnold in a legal handwriting, and bearing the post-mark of Edinburgh), was forwarded in the same way, and at the same time.

Two days later Ham Farm was deserted by the guests. Lady Lundie had gone back to Windygates. The rest had separated in their different directions. Sir

Patrick, who also contemplated returning to Scotland, remained behind for a week--a solitary prisoner in his own country house. Accumulated arrears of business, with which it was impossible for his steward to deal single-handed, obliged him to remain at his estates in Kent for that time. To a man without a taste for partridge-shooting the ordeal was a trying one. Sir Patrick got through the day with the help of his business and his books. In the evening the rector of a neighboring parish drove over to dinner, and engaged his host at the noble but obsolete game of Piquet. They arranged to meet at each other's houses on alternate days. The rector was an admirable player; and Sir Patrick, though a born Presbyterian, blessed the Church of England from the bottom of his heart.

Three more days passed. Business at Ham Farm began to draw to an end. The time for Sir Patrick's journey to Scotland came nearer. The two partners at Piquet agreed to meet for a final game, on the next night, at the rector's house. But (let us take comfort in remembering it) our superiors in Church and State are as completely at the mercy of circumstances as the humblest and the poorest of us. That last game of Piquet between the baronet and the parson was never to be played.

On the afternoon of the fourth day Sir Patrick came in from a drive, and found a letter from Arnold waiting for him, which had been delivered by the second post.

Judged by externals only, it was a letter of an unusually perplexing--possibly also of an unusually interesting--kind. Arnold was one of the last persons in the world whom any of his friends would have suspected of being a lengthy correspondent. Here, nevertheless, was a letter from him, of three times the customary bulk and weight--and, apparently, of more than common importance, in the matter of news, besides. At the top the envelope was marked "Immediate.." And at one side (also underlined) was the ominous word, "Private.."

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" thought Sir Patrick.

He opened the envelope.

Two inclosures fell out on the table. He looked at them for a moment. They were the two letters which he had forwarded to Baden. The third letter remaining in his hand and occupying a double sheet, was from Arnold himself. Sir Patrick read Arnold's letter first. It was dated "Baden," and it began as follows:

"My Dear Sir Patrick,--Don't be alarmed, if you can possibly help it. I am in a terrible mess."

Sir Patrick looked up for a moment from the letter. Given a young man who dates from "Baden," and declares himself to be in "a terrible mess," as representing the circumstances of the case--what is the interpretation to be placed on them? Sir Patrick drew the inevitable conclusion. Arnold had been gambling.

He shook his head, and went on with the letter.

"I must say, dreadful as it is, that I am not to blame--nor she either, poor thing."

Sir Patrick paused again. "She?" Blanche had apparently been gambling too? Nothing was wanting to complete the picture but an announcement in the next sentence, presenting the courier as carried away, in his turn, by the insatiate passion for play. Sir Patrick resumed:

"You can not, I am sure, expect me to have known the law. And as for poor Miss Silvester--"

"Miss Silvester?" What had Miss Silvester to do with it? And what could be the meaning of the reference to "the law?"

Sir Patrick had re ad the letter, thus far, standing up. A vague distrust stole over him at the appearance of Miss Silvester's name in connection with the lines which had preceded it. He felt nothing approaching to a clear prevision of what was to come. Some indescribable influence was at work in him, which shook his nerves, and made him feel the infirmities of his age (as it seemed) on a sudden. It went no further than that. He was obliged to sit down: he was obliged to wait a moment before he went on.

The letter proceeded, in these words:

"And, as for poor Miss Silvester, though she felt, as she reminds me, some misgivings--still, she never could have foreseen, being no lawyer either, how it was to end. I hardly know the best way to break it to you. I can't, and won't, believe it myself. But even if it should be true, I am quite sure you will find a way out of it for us. I will stick at nothing, and Miss Silvester (as you will see by her letter) will stick at nothing either, to set things right. Of course, I have not said one word to my darling Blanche, who is quite happy, and suspects nothing. All this, dear Sir Patrick, is very badly written, I am

afraid, but it is meant to prepare you, and to put the best side on matters at starting. However, the truth must be told--and shame on the Scotch law is what I say. This it is, in short: Geoffrey Delamayn is even a greater scoundrel than you think him; and I bitterly repent (as things have turned out) having held my tongue that night when you and I had our private talk at Ham Farm. You will think I am mixing two things up together. But I am not. Please to keep this about Geoffrey in your mind, and piece it together with what I have next to say. The worst is still to come. Miss Silvester's letter (inclosed) tells me this terrible thing. You must know that I went to her privately, as Geoffrey's messenger, on the day of the lawn-party at Windygates. Well--how it could have happened, Heaven only knows--but there is reason to fear that I married her, without being aware of it myself, in August last, at the Craig Fernie inn."

The letter dropped from Sir Patrick's hand. He sank back in the chair, stunned for the moment, under the shock that had fallen on him.

He rallied, and rose bewildered to his feet. He took a turn in the room. He stopped, and summoned his will, and steadied himself by main force. He picked up the letter, and read the last sentence again. His face flushed. He was on the point of yielding himself to a useless out burst of anger against Arnold, when his better sense checked him at the last moment. "One fool in the family is, enough," he said. "My business in this dreadful emergency is to keep my head clear for Blanche's sake."

He waited once more, to make sure of his own composure--and turned again to the letter, to see what the writer had to say for himself, in the way of explanation and excuse.

Arnold had plenty to say--with the drawback of not knowing how to say it. It was hard to decide which quality in his letter was most marked--the total absence of arrangement, or the total absence of reserve. Without beginning, middle, or end, he told the story of his fatal connection with the troubles of Anne Silvester, from the memorable day when Geoffrey Delamayn sent him to Craig Fernie, to the equally memorable night when Sir Patrick had tried vainly to make him open his lips at Ham Farm.

"I own I have behaved like a fool," the letter concluded, "in keeping Geoffrey Delamayn's secret for him--as things have turned out. But how could I tell upon him without compromising Miss Silvester? Read her letter, and you will see what she says, and how generously she releases me. It's no use saying I am sorry I wasn't more cautious. The mischief is done. I'll stick at nothing--as I have said before--to undo it. Only tell me what is the first step

I am to take; and, as long as it don't part me from Blanche, rely on my taking it. Waiting to hear from you, I remain, dear Sir Patrick, yours in great perplexity, Arnold Brinkworth."

Sir Patrick folded the letter, and looked at the two inclosures lying on the table. His eye was hard, his brow was frowning, as he put his hand to take up Anne's letter. The letter from Arnold's agent in Edinburgh lay nearer to him. As it happened, he took that first.

It was short enough, and clearly enough written, to invite a reading before he put it down again. The lawyer reported that he had made the necessary inquiries at Glasgow, with this result. Anne had been traced to The Sheep's Head Hotel. She had lain there utterly helpless, from illness, until the beginning of September. She had been advertised, without result, in the Glasgow newspapers. On the 5th of September she had sufficiently recovered to be able to leave the hotel. She had been seen at the railway station on the same day--but from that point all trace of her had been lost once more. The lawyer had accordingly stopped the proceedings, and now waited further instructions from his client.

This letter was not without its effect in encouraging Sir Patrick to suspend the harsh and hasty judgment of Anne, which any man, placed in his present situation, must have been inclined to form. Her illness claimed its small share of sympathy. Her friendless position--so plainly and so sadly revealed by the advertising in the newspapers--pleaded for merciful construction of faults committed, if faults there were. Gravely, but not angrily, Sir Patrick opened her letter--the letter that cast a doubt on his niece's marriage.

Thus Anne Silvester wrote:

"GLASGOW, September 5.

"DEAR MR. BRINKWORTH,--Nearly three weeks since I attempted to write to you from this place. I was seized by sudden illness while I was engaged over my letter; and from that time to this I have laid helpless in bed--very near, as they tell me, to death. I was strong enough to be dressed, and to sit up for a little while yesterday and the day before. To-day, I have made a better advance toward recovery. I can hold my pen and control my thoughts. The first use to which I put this improvement is to write these lines.

"I am going (so far as I know) to surprise--possibly to alarm--you. There is no escaping from it, for you or for me; it must be done.

"Thinking of how best to introduce what I am now obliged to say, I can find no better way than this. I must ask you to take your memory back to a day which we have both bitter reason to regret--the day when Geoffrey Delamayn sent you to see me at the inn at Craig Fernie.

"You may possibly not remember--it unhappily produced no impression on you at the time--that I felt, and expressed, more than once on that occasion, a very great dislike to your passing me off on the people of the inn as your wife. It was necessary to my being permitted to remain at Craig Fernie that you should do so. I knew this; but still I shrank from it. It was impossible for me to contradict you, without involving you in the painful consequences, and running the risk of making a scandal which might find its way to Blanche's ears. I knew this also; but still my conscience reproached me. It was a vague feeling. I was quite unaware of the actual danger in which you were placing yourself, or I would have spoken out, no matter what came of it. I had what is called a presentiment that you were not acting discreetly--nothing more. As I love and honor my mother's memory--as I trust in the mercy of God--this is the truth.

"You left the inn the next morning, and we have not met since.

"A few days after you went away my anxieties grew more than I could bear alone. I went secretly to Windygates, and had an interview with Blanche.

"She was absent for a few minutes from the room in which we had met. In that interval I saw Geoffrey Delamayn for the first time since I had left him at Lady Lundie's lawn-party. He treated me as if I was a stranger. He told me that he had found out all that had passed between us at the inn. He said he had taken a lawyer's opinion. Oh, Mr. Brinkworth! how can I break it to you? how can I write the words which repeat what he said to me next? It must be done. Cruel as it is, it must be done. He refused to my face to marr y me. He said I was married already. He said I was your wife.

"Now you know why I have referred you to what I felt (and confessed to feeling) when we were together at Craig Fernie. If you think hard thoughts, and say hard words of me, I can claim no right to blame you. I am innocent--and yet it is my fault.

"My head swims, and the foolish tears are rising in spite of me. I must leave off, and rest a little.

"I have been sitting at the window, and watching the people in the street as they go by. They are all strangers. But, somehow, the sight of them seems to rest my mind. The hum of the great city gives me heart, and helps me to go on.

"I can not trust myself to write of the man who has betrayed us both. Disgraced and broken as I am, there is something still left in me which lifts me above him. If he came repentant, at this moment, and offered me all that rank and wealth and worldly consideration can give, I would rather be what I am now than be his wife.

"Let me speak of you; and (for Blanche's sake) let me speak of myself.

"I ought, no doubt, to have waited to see you at Windygates, and to have told you at once of what had happened. But I was weak and ill and the shock of hearing what I heard fell so heavily on me that I fainted. After I came to myself I was so horrified, when I thought of you and Blanche that a sort of madness possessed me. I had but one idea--the idea of running away and hiding myself.

"My mind got clearer and quieter on the way to this place; and, arrived here, I did what I hope and believe was the best thing I could do. I consulted two lawyers. They differed in opinion as to whether we were married or not--according to the law which decides on such things in Scotland. The first said Yes. The second said No--but advised me to write immediately and tell you the position in which you stood. I attempted to write the same day, and fell ill as you know.

"Thank God, the delay that has happened is of no consequence. I asked Blanche, at Windygates, when you were to be married--and she told me not until the end of the autumn. It is only the fifth of September now. You have plenty of time before you. For all our sakes, make good use of it.

"What are you to do?

"Go at once to Sir Patrick Lundie, and show him this letter. Follow his advice--no matter how it may affect me. I should ill requite your kindness, I should be false indeed to the love I bear to Blanche, if I hesitated to brave any exposure that may now be necessary in your interests and in hers. You have been all that is generous, all that is delicate, all that is kind in this matter. You have kept my disgraceful secret--I am quite sure of it--with the fidelity of an honorable man who has had a woman's reputation placed in

his charge. I release you, with my whole heart, dear Mr. Brinkworth, from your pledge. I entreat you, on my knees, to consider yourself free to reveal the truth. I will make any acknowledgment, on my side, that is needful under the circumstances--no matter how public it may be. Release yourself at any price; and then, and not till then, give back your regard to the miserable woman who has laden you with the burden of her sorrow, and darkened your life for a moment with the shadow of her shame.

"Pray don't think there is any painful sacrifice involved in this. The quieting of my own mind is involved in it--and that is all.

"What has life left for me? Nothing but the barren necessity of living. When I think of the future now, my mind passes over the years that may be left to me in this world. Sometimes I dare to hope that the Divine Mercy of Christ--which once pleaded on earth for a woman like me--may plead, when death has taken me, for my spirit in Heaven. Sometimes I dare to hope that I may see my mother, and Blanche's mother, in the better world. Their hearts were bound together as the hearts of sisters while they were here; and they left to their children the legacy of their love. Oh, help me to say, if we meet again, that not in vain I promised to be a sister to Blanche! The debt I owe to her is the hereditary debt of my mother's gratitude. And what am I now? An obstacle in the way of the happiness of her life. Sacrifice me to that happiness, for God's sake! It is the one thing I have left to live for. Again and again I say it--I care nothing for myself. I have no right to be considered; I have no wish to be considered. Tell the whole truth about me, and call me to bear witness to it as publicly as you please!

"I have waited a little, once more, trying to think, before I close my letter, what there may be still left to write.

"I can not think of any thing left but the duty of informing you how you may find me if you wish to write--or if it is thought necessary that we should meet again.

"One word before I tell you this.

"It is impossible for me to guess what you will do, or what you will be advised to do by others, when you get my letter. I don't even know that you may not already have heard of what your position is from Geoffrey Delamayn himself. In this event, or in the event of your thinking it desirable to take Blanche into your confidence, I venture to suggest that you should appoint some person whom you can trust to see me on your behalf--or, if you can not do this that you should see me in the presence of a third person. The

man who has not hesitated to betray us both, will not hesitate to misrepresent us in the vilest way, if he can do it in the future. For your own sake, let us be careful to give lying tongues no opportunity of assailing your place in Blanche's estimation. Don't act so as to risk putting yourself in a false position again! Don't let it be possible that a feeling unworthy of her should be roused in the loving and generous nature of your future wife!

"This written, I may now tell you how to communicate with me after I have left this place.

"You will find on the slip of paper inclosed the name and address of the second of the two lawyers whom I consulted in Glasgow. It is arranged between us that I am to inform him, by letter, of the next place to which I remove, and that he is to communicate the information either to you or to Sir Patrick Lundie, on your applying for it personally or by writing. I don't yet know myself where I may find refuge. Nothing is certain but that I can not, in my present state of weakness, travel far.

"If you wonder why I move at all until I am stronger, I can only give a reason which may appear fanciful and overstrained.

"I have been informed that I was advertised in the Glasgow newspapers during the time when I lay at this hotel, a stranger at the point of death. Trouble has perhaps made me morbidly suspicious. I am afraid of what may happen if I stay here, after my place of residence has been made publicly known. So, as soon as I can move, I go away in secret. It will be enough for me, if I can find rest and peace in some quiet place, in the country round Glasgow. You need feel no anxiety about my means of living. I have money enough for all that I need--and, if I get well again, I know how to earn my bread.

"I send no message to Blanche--I dare not till this is over. Wait till she is your happy wife; and then give her a kiss, and say it comes from Anne.

"Try and forgive me, dear Mr. Brinkworth. I have said all. Yours gratefully,

"ANNE SILVESTER."

Sir Patrick put the letter down with unfeigned respect for the woman who had written it.

Something of the personal influence which Anne exercised more or less over all the men with whom she came in contact seemed to communicate itself to the old lawyer through the medium of her letter. His thoughts perversely wandered away from the serious and pressing question of his niece's position into a region of purely speculative inquiry relating to Anne. What infatuation (he asked himself) had placed that noble creature at the mercy of such a man as Geoffrey Delamayn?

We have all, at one time or another in our lives, been perplexed as Sir Patrick was perplexed now.

If we know any thing by experience, we know that women cast themselves away impulsively on unworthy men, and that men ruin themselves headlong for unworthy w omen. We have the institution of Divorce actually among us, existing mainly because the two sexes are perpetually placing themselves in these anomalous relations toward each other. And yet, at every fresh instance which comes before us, we persist in being astonished to find that the man and the woman have not chosen each other on rational and producible grounds! We expect human passion to act on logical principles; and human fallibility--with love for its guide--to be above all danger of making a mistake! Ask the wisest among Anne Silvester's sex what they saw to rationally justify them in choosing the men to whom they have given their hearts and their lives, and you will be putting a question to those wise women which they never once thought of putting to themselves. Nay, more still. Look into your own experience, and say frankly, Could you justify your own excellent choice at the time when you irrevocably made it? Could you have put your reasons on paper when you first owned to yourself that you loved him? And would the reasons have borne critical inspection if you had?

Sir Patrick gave it up in despair. The interests of his niece were at stake. He wisely determined to rouse his mind by occupying himself with the practical necessities of the moment. It was essential to send an apology to the rector, in the first place, so as to leave the evening at his disposal for considering what preliminary course of conduct he should advise Arnold to pursue.

After writing a few lines of apology to his partner at Piquet--assigning family business as the excuse for breaking his engagement--Sir Patrick rang the bell. The faithful Duncan appeared, and saw at once in his master s face that something had happened.

"Send a man with this to the Rectory," said Sir Patrick. "I can't dine out to-day. I must have a chop at home."

"I am afraid, Sir Patrick--if I may be excused for remarking it--you have had some bad news?"

"The worst possible news, Duncan. I can't tell you about it now. Wait within hearing of the bell. In the mean time let nobody interrupt me. If the steward himself comes I can't see him."

After thinking it over carefully, Sir Patrick decided that there was no alternative but to send a message to Arnold and Blanche, summoning them back to England in the first place. The necessity of questioning Arnold, in the minutest detail, as to every thing that had happened between Anne Silvester and himself at the Craig Fernie inn, was the first and foremost necessity of the case.

At the same time it appeared to be desirable, for Blanche's sake, to keep her in ignorance, for the present at least, of what had happened. Sir Patrick met this difficulty with characteristic ingenuity and readiness of resource.

He wrote a telegram to Arnold, expressed in the following terms:

"Your letter and inclosures received. Return to Ham Farm as soon as you conveniently can. Keep the thing still a secret from Blanche. Tell her, as the reason for coming back, that the lost trace of Anne Silvester has been recovered, and that there may be reasons for her returning to England before any thing further can be done."

Duncan having been dispatched to the station with this message, Duncan's master proceeded to calculate the question of time.

Arnold would in all probability receive the telegram at Baden, on the next day, September the seventeenth. In three days more he and Blanche might be expected to reach Ham Farm. During the interval thus placed at his disposal Sir Patrick would have ample time in which to recover himself, and to see his way to acting for the best in the alarming emergency that now confronted him.

On the nineteenth Sir Patrick received a telegram informing him that he might expect to see the young couple late in the evening on the twentieth.

Late in the evening the sound of carriage-wheels was audible on the drive; and Sir Patrick, opening the door of his room, heard the familiar voices in

the hall.

"Well!" cried Blanche, catching sight of him at the door, "is Anne found?"

"Not just yet, my dear."

"Is there news of her?"

"Yes."

"Am I in time to be of use?"

"In excellent time. You shall hear all about it to-morrow. Go and take off your traveling-things, and come down again to supper as soon as you can."

Blanche kissed him, and went on up stairs. She had, as her uncle thought in the glimpse he had caught of her, been improved by her marriage. It had quieted and steadied her. There were graces in her look and manner which Sir Patrick had not noticed before. Arnold, on his side, appeared to less advantage. He was restless and anxious; his position with Miss Silvester seemed to be preying on his mind. As soon as his young wife's back was turned, he appealed to Sir Patrick in an eager whisper.

"I hardly dare ask you what I have got it on my mind to say," he began. "I must bear it if you are angry with me, Sir Patrick. But--only tell me one thing. Is there a way out of it for us? Have you thought of that?"

"I can not trust myself to speak of it clearly and composedly to-night," said Sir Patrick. "Be satisfied if I tell you that I have thought it all out--and wait for the rest till to-morrow."

Other persons concerned in the coming drama had had past difficulties to think out, and future movements to consider, during the interval occupied by Arnold and Blanche on their return journey to England. Between the seventeenth and the twentieth of September Geoffrey Delamayn had left Swanhaven, on the way to his new training quarters in the neighborhood in which the Foot-Race at Fulham was to be run. Between the same dates, also, Captain Newenden had taken the opportunity, while passing through London on his way south, to consult his solicitors. The object of the conference was to find means of discovering an anonymous letter-writer in Scotland, who had presumed to cause serious annoyance to Mrs. Glenarm.

Thus, by ones and twos, converging from widely distant quarters, they were

now beginning to draw together, in the near neighborhood of the great city which was soon destined to assemble them all, for the first and the last time in this world, face to face.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SEVENTH. - THE WAY OUT.

BREAKFAST was just over. Blanche, seeing a pleasantly-idle morning before her, proposed to Arnold to take a stroll in the grounds.

The garden was blight with sunshine, and the bride was bright with good-humor. She caught her uncle's eye, looking at her admiringly, and paid him a little compliment in return. "You have no idea," she said, "how nice it is to be back at Ham Farm!"

"I am to understand then," rejoined Sir Patrick, "that I am forgiven for interrupting the honey-moon?"

"You are more than forgiven for interrupting it," said Blanche--"you are thanked. As a married woman," she proceeded, with the air of a matron of at least twenty years' standing, "I have been thinking the subject over; and I have arrived at the conclusion that a honey-moon which takes the form of a tour on the Continent, is one of our national abuses which stands in need of reform. When you are in love with each other (consider a marriage without love to be no marriage at all), what do you want with the excitement of seeing strange places? Isn't it excitement enough, and isn't it strange enough, to a newly-married woman to see such a total novelty as a husband? What is the most interesting object on the face of creation to a man in Arnold's position? The Alps? Certainly not! The most interesting object is the wife. And the proper time for a bridal tour is the time--say ten or a dozen years later--when you are beginning (not to get tired of each other, that's out of the question) but to get a little too well used to each other. Then take your tour to Switzerland--and you give the Alps a chance. A succession of honey-moon trips, in the autumn of married life--there is my proposal for an improvement on the present state of things! Come into the garden, Arnold; and let us calculate how long it will be before we get weary of each other, and want the beauties of nature to keep us company."

Arnold looked appealingly to Sir Patrick. Not a word had passed between them, as yet, on the serious subject of Anne Silvester's letter. Sir Patrick undertook the responsibility of making the necessary excuses to Blanche.

"Forgive me," he said, "if I ask leave to interfere with your monopoly of Arnold for a little while. I have something to say to him about his property in Scotland. Will you leave him with me, if I promise to release him as soon as possible?"

Blanche smiled graciously. "You shall have him as long as you like, uncle. There's your hat," she added, tossing it to her husband, gayly. "I brought it in for you when I got my own. You will find me on the lawn."

She nodded, and went out.

"Let me hear the worst at once, Sir Patrick," Arnold began. "Is it serious? Do you think I am to blame?"

"I will answer your last question first," said Sir Patrick. "Do I think you are to blame? Yes--in this way. You committed an act of unpardonable rashness when you consented to go, as Geoffrey Delamayn's messenger, to Miss Silvester at the inn. Having once placed yourself in that false position, you could hardly have acted, afterward, otherwise than you did. You could not be expected to know the Scotch law. And, as an honorable man, you were bound to keep a secret confided to you, in which the reputation of a woman was concerned. Your first and last error in this matter, was the fatal error of involving yourself in responsibilities which belonged exclusively to another man."

"The man had saved my life." pleaded Arnold--"and I believed I was giving service for service to my dearest friend."

"As to your other question," proceeded Sir Patrick. "Do I consider your position to be a serious one? Most assuredly, I do! So long as we are not absolutely certain that Blanche is your lawful wife, the position is more than serious: it is unendurable. I maintain the opinion, mind, out of which (thanks to your honorable silence) that scoundrel Delamayn contrived to cheat me. I told him, what I now tell you--that your sayings and doings at Craig Fernie, do not constitute a marriage, according to Scottish law. But," pursued Sir Patrick, holding up a warning forefinger at Arnold, "you have read it in Miss Silvester's letter, and you may now take it also as a result of my experience, that no individual opinion, in a matter of this kind, is to be relied on. Of two lawyers, consulted by Miss Silvester at Glasgow, one draws a directly opposite conclusion to mine, and decides that you and she are married. I believe him to be wrong, but in our situation, we have no other choice than to boldly encounter the view of the case which he represents. In plain English, we must begin by looking the worst in the face."

Arnold twisted the traveling hat which Blanche had thrown to him, nervously, in both hands. "Supposing the worst comes to the worst," he asked, "what will happen?"

Sir Patrick shook his head.

"It is not easy to tell you," he said, "without entering into the legal aspect of the case. I shall only puzzle you if I do that. Suppose we look at the matter in its social bearings--I mean, as it may possibly affect you and Blanche, and your unborn children?"

Arnold gave the hat a tighter twist than ever. "I never thought of the children," he said, with a look of consternation.

"The children may present themselves," returned Sir Patrick, dryly, "for all that. Now listen. It may have occurred to your mind that the plain way out of our present dilemma is for you and Miss Silvester, respectively, to affirm what we know to be the truth--namely, that you never had the slightest intention of marrying each other. Beware of founding any hopes on any such remedy as that! If you reckon on it, you reckon without Geoffrey Delamayn. He is interested, remember, in proving you and Miss Silvester to be man and wife. Circumstances may arise--I won't waste time in guessing at what they may be--which will enable a third person to produce the landlady and the waiter at Craig Fernie in evidence against you--and to assert that your declaration and Miss Silvester's declaration are the result of collusion between you two. Don't start! Such things have happened before now. Miss Silvester is poor; and Blanche is rich. You may be made to stand in the awkward position of a man who is denying his marriage with a poor woman, in order to establish his marriage with an heiress: Miss Silvester presumably aiding the fraud, with two strong interests of her own as inducements--the interest of asserting the claim to be the wife of a man of rank, and the interest of earning her reward in money for resigning you to Blanche. There is a case which a scoundrel might set up--and with some appearance of truth too--in a court of justice!"

"Surely, the law wouldn't allow him to do that?"

"The law will argue any thing, with any body who will pay the law for the use of its brains and its time. Let that view of the matter alone now. Delamayn can set the case going, if he likes, without applying to any lawyer to help him. He has only to cause a report to reach Blanche's ears which publicly asserts that she is not your lawful wife. With her temper, do you suppose she would leave us a minute's peace till the matter was cleared up? Or take it the other way. Comfort yourself, if you will, with the idea that this affair will trouble nobody in the present. How are we to know it may not turn up in the future under circumstances which may place the legitimacy of your

children in doubt? We have a man to deal with who sticks at nothing. We have a state of the law which can only be described as one scandalous uncertainty from beginning to end. And we have two people (Bishopriggs and Mrs. Inchbare) who can, and will, speak to what took place between you and Anne Silvester at the inn. For Blanche's sake, and for the sake of your unborn children, we must face this matter on the spot--and settle it at once and forever. The question before us now is this. Shall we open the proceedings by communicating with Miss Silvester or not?"

At that important point in the conversation they were interrupted by the reappearance of Blanche. Had she, by any accident, heard what they had been saying?

No; it was the old story of most interruptions. Idleness that considers nothing, had come to look at Industry that bears every thing. It is a law of nature, apparently, that the people in this world who have nothing to do can not support the sight of an uninterrupted occupation in the hands of their neighbors. Blanche produced a new specimen from Arnold's collection of hats. "I have been thinking about it in the garden," she said, quite seriously. "Here is the brown one with the high crown. You look better in this than in the white one with the low crown. I have come to change them, that's all." She changed the hats with Arnold, and went on, without the faintest suspicion that she was in the way. "Wear the brown one when you come out--and come soon, dear. I won't stay an instant longer, uncle--I wouldn't interrupt you for the world." She kissed her hand to Sir Patrick, and smiled at her husband, and went out.

"What were we saying?" asked Arnold. "It's awkward to be interrupted in this way, isn't it?"

"If I know any thing of female human nature," returned Sir Patrick, composedly, "your wife will be in and out of the room, in that way, the whole morning. I give her ten minutes, Arnold, before she changes her mind again on the serious and weighty subject of the white hat and the brown. These little interruptions--otherwise quite charming--raised a doubt in my mind. Wouldn't it be wise (I ask myself), if we made a virtue of necessity, and took Blanche into the conversation? What do you say to calling her back and telling her the truth?"

Arnold started, and changed color.

"There are difficulties in the way," he said.

"My good fellow! at every step of this business there are difficulties in the way. Sooner or later, your wife must know what has happened. The time for telling her is, no doubt, a matter for your decision, not mine. All I say is this. Consider whether the disclosure won't come from you with a better grace, if you make it before you are fairly driven to the wall, and obliged to open your lips."

Arnold rose to his fee t--took a turn in the room--sat down again--and looked at Sir Patrick, with the expression of a thoroughly bewildered and thoroughly helpless man.

"I don't know what to do," he said. "It beats me altogether. The truth is, Sir Patrick, I was fairly forced, at Craig Fernie, into deceiving Blanche--in what might seem to her a very unfeeling, and a very unpardonable way."

"That sounds awkward! What do you mean?"

"I'll try and tell you. You remember when you went to the inn to see Miss Silvester? Well, being there privately at the time, of course I was obliged to keep out of your way."

"I see! And, when Blanche came afterward, you were obliged to hide from Blanche, exactly as you had hidden from me?"

"Worse even than that! A day or two later, Blanche took me into her confidence. She spoke to me of her visit to the inn, as if I was a perfect stranger to the circumstances. She told me to my face, Sir Patrick, of the invisible man who had kept so strangely out of her way--without the faintest suspicion that I was the man. And I never opened my lips to set her right! I was obliged to be silent, or I must have betrayed Miss Silvester. What will Blanche think of me, if I tell her now? That's the question!"

Blanche's name had barely passed her husband's lips before Blanche herself verified Sir Patrick's prediction, by reappearing at the open French window, with the superseded white hat in her hand.

"Haven't you done yet!" she exclaimed. "I am shocked, uncle, to interrupt you again--but these horrid hats of Arnold's are beginning to weigh upon my mind. On reconsideration, I think the white hat with the low crown is the

most becoming of the two. Change again, dear. Yes! the brown hat is hideous. There's a beggar at the gate. Before I go quite distracted, I shall give him the brown hat, and have done with the difficulty in that manner. Am I very much in the way of business? I'm afraid I must appear restless? Indeed, I am restless. I can't imagine what is the matter with me this morning."

"I can tell you," said Sir Patrick, in his gravest and dryest manner. "You are suffering, Blanche, from a malady which is exceedingly common among the young ladies of England. As a disease it is quite incurable--and the name of it is Nothing-to-Do."

Blanche dropped her uncle a smart little courtesy. "You might have told me I was in the way in fewer words than that." She whisked round, kicked the disgraced brown hat out into the veranda before her, and left the two gentlemen alone once more.

"Your position with your wife, Arnold," resumed Sir Patrick, returning gravely to the matter in hand, "is certainly a difficult one." He paused, thinking of the evening when he and Blanche had illustrated the vagueness of Mrs. Inchbare's description of the man at the inn, by citing Arnold himself as being one of the hundreds of innocent people who answered to it! "Perhaps," he added, "the situation is even more difficult than you suppose. It would have been certainly easier for you--and it would have looked more honorable in her estimation--if you had made the inevitable confession before your marriage. I am, in some degree, answerable for your not having done this--as well as for the far more serious dilemma with Miss Silvester in which you now stand. If I had not innocently hastened your marriage with Blanche, Miss Silvester's admirable letter would have reached us in ample time to prevent mischief. It's useless to dwell on that now. Cheer up, Arnold! I am bound to show you the way out of the labyrinth, no matter what the difficulties may be--and, please God, I will do it!"

He pointed to a table at the other end of the room, on which writing materials were placed. "I hate moving the moment I have had my breakfast," he said. "We won't go into the library. Bring me the pen and ink here."

"Are you going to write to Miss Silvester?"

"That is the question before us which we have not settled yet. Before I decide, I want to be in possession of the facts--down to the smallest detail of

what took place between you and Miss Silvester at the inn. There is only one way of getting at those facts. I am going to examine you as if I had you before me in the witness-box in court."

With that preface, and with Arnold's letter from Baden in his hand as a brief to speak from, Sir Patrick put his questions in clear and endless succession; and Arnold patiently and faithfully answered them all.

The examination proceeded uninterruptedly until it had reached that point in the progress of events at which Anne had crushed Geoffrey Delamayn's letter in her hand, and had thrown it from her indignantly to the other end of the room. There, for the first time, Sir Patrick dipped his pen in the ink, apparently intending to take a note. "Be very careful here," he said; "I want to know every thing that you can tell me about that letter."

"The letter is lost," said Arnold.

"The letter has been stolen by Bishopriggs," returned Sir Patrick, "and is in the possession of Bishopriggs at this moment."

"Why, you know more about it than I do!" exclaimed Arnold.

"I sincerely hope not. I don't know what was inside the letter. Do you?"

"Yes. Part of it at least."

"Part of it?"

"There were two letters written, on the same sheet of paper," said Arnold. "One of them was written by Geoffrey Delamayn--and that is the one I know about."

Sir Patrick started. His face brightened; he made a hasty note. "Go on," he said, eagerly. "How came the letters to be written on the same sheet? Explain that!"

Arnold explained that Geoffrey, in the absence of any thing else to write his excuses on to Anne, had written to her on the fourth or blank page of a letter which had been addressed to him by Anne herself.

"Did you read that letter?" asked Sir Patrick.

"I might have read it if I had liked."

"And you didn't read it?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Out of delicacy."

Even Sir Patrick's carefully trained temper was not proof against this. "That is the most misplaced act of delicacy I ever heard of in my life!" cried the old gentleman, warmly. "Never mind! it's useless to regret it now. At any rate, you read Delamayn's answer to Miss Silvester's letter?"

"Yes--I did."

"Repeat it--as nearly as you can remember at this distance of time."

"It was so short," said Arnold, "that there is hardly any thing to repeat. As well as I remember, Geoffrey said he was called away to London by his father's illness. He told Miss Silvester to stop where she was; and he referred her to me, as messenger. That's all I recollect of it now."

"Cudgel your brains, my good fellow! this is very important. Did he make no allusion to his engagement to marry Miss Silvester at Craig Fernie? Didn't he try to pacify her by an apology of some sort?"

The question roused Arnold's memory to make another effort.

"Yes," he answered. "Geoffrey said something about being true to his engagement, or keeping his promise or words to that effect."

"You're sure of what you say now?"

"I am certain of it."

Sir Patrick made another note.

"Was the letter signed?" he asked, when he had done.

"Yes."

"And dated?"

"Yes." Arnold's memory made a second effort, after he had given his second affirmative answer. "Wait a little," he said. "I remember something else about the letter. It was not only dated. The time of day at which it was written was put as well."

"How came he to do that?"

"I suggested it. The letter was so short I felt ashamed to deliver it as it stood. I told him to put the time--so as to show her that he was obliged to write in a hurry. He put the time when the train started; and (I think) the time when the letter was written as well."

"And you delivered that letter to Miss Silvester, with your own hand, as soon as you saw her at the inn?"

"I did."

Sir Patrick made a third note, and pushed the paper away from him with an air of supreme satisfaction.

"I always suspected that lost letter to be an important document," he said--"or Bishopriggs would never have stolen it. We must get possession of it, Arnold, at any sacrifice. The first thing to be done (exactly as I anticipated), is to write to the Glasgow lawyer, and find Miss Silvester."

"Wait a little!" cried a voice at the veranda. "Don't forget that I have come back from Baden to help you!"

Sir Patrick and Arnold both looked up. This time Blanche had heard the last words that had passed between them. She sat down at the table by Sir Patrick's side, and laid her hand caressingly on his shoulder.

"You are quite right, uncle," she said. "I am suffering this morning from the malady of having nothing to do. Are you going to write to Anne? Don't. Let me write instead."

Sir Patrick declined to resign the pen.

"The person who knows Miss Silvester's address," he said, "is a lawyer in Glasgow. I am going to write to the lawyer. When he sends us word where she is--then, Blanche, will be the time to employ your good offices in winning back your friend."

He drew the writing materials once more with in his reach, and, suspending the remainder of Arnold's examination for the present, began his letter to Mr. Crum.

Blanche pleaded hard for an occupation of some sort. "Can nobody give me something to do?" she asked. "Glasgow is such a long way off, and waiting is such weary work. Don't sit there staring at me, Arnold! Can't you suggest something?"

Arnold, for once, displayed an unexpected readiness of resource.

"If you want to write," he said, "you owe Lady Lundie a letter. It's three days since you heard from her--and you haven't answered her yet."

Sir Patrick paused, and looked up quickly from his writing-desk.

"Lady Lundie?" he muttered, inquiringly.

"Yes," said Blanche. "It's quite true; I owe her a letter. And of course I ought to tell her we have come back to England. She will be finely provoked when she hears why!"

The prospect of provoking Lady Lundie seemed to rouse Blanche s dormant energies. She took a sheet of her uncle's note-paper, and began writing her answer then and there.

Sir Patrick completed his communication to the lawyer--after a look at Blanche, which expressed any thing rather than approval of her present employment. Having placed his completed note in the postbag, he silently signed to Arnold to follow him into the garden. They went out together, leaving Blanche absorbed over her letter to her step-mother.

"Is my wife doing any thing wrong?" asked Arnold, who had noticed the look which Sir Patrick had cast on Blanche.

"Your wife is making mischief as fast as her fingers can spread it."

Arnold stared. "She must answer Lady Lundie's letter," he said.

"Unquestionably."

"And she must tell Lady Lundie we have come back."

"I don't deny it."

"Then what is the objection to her writing?"

Sir Patrick took a pinch of snuff--and pointed with his ivory cane to the bees humming busily about the flower-beds in the sunshine of the autumn morning.

"I'll show you the objection," he said. "Suppose Blanche told one of those inveterately intrusive insects that the honey in the flowers happens, through an unexpected accident, to have come to an end--do you think he would take the statement for granted? No. He would plunge head-foremost into the nearest flower, and investigate it for himself."

"Well?" said Arnold.

"Well--there is Blanche in the breakfast-room telling Lady Lundie that the bridal tour happens, through an unexpected accident, to have come to an end. Do you think Lady Lundie is the sort of person to take the statement for granted? Nothing of the sort! Lady Lundie, like the bee, will insist on investigating for herself. How it will end, if she discovers the truth--and what new complications she may not introduce into a matter which, Heaven knows, is complicated enough already--I leave you to imagine. My poor powers of prevision are not equal to it."

Before Arnold could answer, Blanche joined them from the breakfast-room.

"I've done it," she said. "It was an awkward letter to write--and it's a comfort to have it over."

"You have done it, my dear," remarked Sir Patrick, quietly. "And it may be a comfort. But it's not over."

"What do you mean?"

"I think, Blanche, we shall hear from your step-mother by return of post."

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-EIGHTH. - THE NEWS FROM GLASGOW.

THE letters to Lady Lundie and to Mr. Crum having been dispatched on Monday, the return of the post might be looked for on Wednesday afternoon at Ham Farm.

Sir Patrick and Arnold held more than one private consultation, during the interval, on the delicate and difficult subject of admitting Blanche to a knowledge of what had happened. The wise elder advised and the inexperienced junior listened. "Think of it," said Sir Patrick; "and do it." And Arnold thought of it--and left it undone.

Let those who feel inclined to blame him remember that he had only been married a fortnight. It is hard, surely, after but two weeks' possession of your wife, to appear before her in the character of an offender on trial--and to find that an angel of retribution has been thrown into the bargain by the liberal destiny which bestowed on you the woman whom you adore!

They were all three at home on the Wednesday afternoon, looking out for the postman.

The correspondence delivered included (exactly as Sir Patrick had foreseen) a letter from Lady Lundie. Further investigation, on the far more interesting subject of the expected news from Glasgow, revealed--nothing. The lawyer had not answered Sir Patrick's inquiry by return of post.

"Is that a bad sign?" asked Blanche.

"It is a sign that something has happened," answered her uncle. "Mr. Crum is possibly expecting to receive some special information, and is waiting on the chance of being able to communicate it. We must hope, my dear, in to-morrow's post."

"Open Lady Lundie's letter in the mean time," said Blanche. "Are you sure it is for you--and not for me?"

There was no doubt about it. Her ladyship's reply was ominously addressed to her ladyship's brother-in-law. "I know what that means." said Blanche, eying her uncle eagerly while he was reading the letter. "If you mention Anne's name you insult my step-mother. I have mentioned it freely. Lady Lundie is mortally offended with me."

Rash judgment of youth! A lady who takes a dignified attitude, in a family emergency, is never mortally offended--she is only deeply grieved. Lady Lundie took a dignified attitude. "I well know," wrote this estimable and Christian woman, "that I have been all along regarded in the light of an intruder by the family connections of my late beloved husband. But I was hardly prepared to find myself entirely shut out from all domestic confidence, at a time when some serious domestic catastrophe has but too evidently taken place. I have no desire, dear Sir Patrick, to intrude. Feeling it, however, to be quite inconsistent with a due regard for my own position--after what has happened--to correspond with Blanche, I address myself to the head of the family, purely in the interests of propriety. Permit me to ask whether--under circumstances which appear to be serious enough to require the recall of my step-daughter and her husband from their wedding tour--you think it DECENT to keep the widow of the late Sir Thomas Lundie entirely in the dark? Pray consider this--not at all out of regard for Me!--but out of regard for your own position with Society. Curiosity is, as you know, foreign to my nature. But when this dreadful scandal (whatever it may be) comes out--which, dear Sir Patrick, it can not fail to do--what will the world think, when it asks for Lady Lundie's, opinion, and hears that Lady Lundie knew nothing about it? Whichever way you may decide I shall take no offense. I may possibly be wounded--but that won't matter. My little round of duties will find me still earnest, still cheerful. And even if you shut me out, my best wishes will find their way, nevertheless, to Ham Farm. May I add--without encountering a sneer--that the prayers of a lonely woman are offered for the welfare of all?"

"Well?" said Blanche.

Sir Patrick folded up the letter, and put it in his pocket.

"You have your step-mother's best wishes, my dear." Having answered in those terms, he bowed to his niece with his best grace, and walked out of the room.

"Do I think it decent," he repeated to himself, as he closed the door, "to leave the widow of the late Sir Thomas Lundie in the dark? When a lady's temper is a little ruffled, I think it more than decent, I think it absolutely desirable, to let that lady have the last word." He went into the library, and dropped his sister-in-law's remonstrance into a box, labeled "Unanswered Letters." Having got rid of it in that way, he hummed his favorite little Scotch air--and put on his hat, and went out to sun himself in the garden.

Meanwhile, Blanche was not quite satisfied with Sir Patrick's reply. She appealed to her husband. "There is something wrong," she said--"and my uncle is hiding it from me."

Arnold could have desired no better opportunity than she had offered to him, in those words, for making the long-deferred disclosure to her of the truth. He lifted his eyes to Blanche's face. By an unhappy fatality she was looking charmingly that morning. How would she look if he told her the story of the hiding at the inn? Arnold was still in love with her--and Arnold said nothing.

The next day's post brought not only the anticipated letter from Mr. Crum, but an unexpected Glasgow newspaper as well.

This time Blanche had no reason to complain that her uncle kept his correspondence a secret from her. After reading the lawyer's letter, with an interest and agitation which showed that the contents had taken him by surprise, he handed it to Arnold and his niece. "Bad news there," he said. "We must share it together."

After acknowledging the receipt of Sir Patrick's letter of inquiry, Mr. Crum began by stating all that he knew of Miss Silvester's movements--dating from the time when she had left the Sheep's Head Hotel. About a fortnight since he had received a letter from her informing him that she had found a suitable place of residence in a village near Glasgow. Feeling a strong interest in Miss Silvester, Mr. Crum had visited her some few days afterward. He had satisfied himself that she was lodging with respectable people, and was as comfortably situated as circumstances would permit. For a week more he had heard nothing from the lady. At the expiration of that time he had received a letter from her, telling him that she had read something in a Glasgow newspaper, of that day's date, which seriously concerned herself, and which would oblige her to travel northward immediately as fast as her strength would permit. At a later period, when she would be more certain of her own movements, she engaged to write again, and let Mr. Crum know where he might communicate with her if necessary. In the mean time, she could only thank him for his kindness, and beg him to take care of any letters or messages which might be left for her. Since the receipt of this communication the lawyer had heard nothing further. He had waited for the morning's post in the hope of being able to report that he had received some further intelligence. The hope had not been realized. He had now stated all that he knew himself thus far--and he had

forwarded a copy of the newspaper alluded to by Miss Silvester, on the chance that an examination of it by Sir Patrick might possibly lead to further discoveries. In conclusion, he pledged himself to write again the moment he had any information to send.

Blanche snatched up the newspaper, and opened it. "Let me look!" she said. "I can find what Anne saw here if any body can!"

She ran her eye eagerly over column after column and page after page--and dropped the newspaper on her lap with a gesture of despair.

"Nothing!" she exclaimed. "Nothing any where, that I can see, to interest Anne. Nothing to interest any body--except Lady Lundie," she went on, brushing the newspaper off her lap. "It turns out to be all true, Arnold, at Swanhaven. Geoffrey Delamayn is going to marry Mrs. Glenarm."

"What!" cried Arnold; the idea instantly flashing on him that this was the news which Anne had seen.

Sir Patrick gave him a warning look, and picked up the newspaper from the floor.

"I may as well run through it, Blanche, and make quite sure that you have missed nothing," he said.

The report to which Blanche had referred was among the paragraphs arranged under the heading of "Fashionable News." "A matrimonial alliance" (the Glasgow journal announced) "was in prospect between the Honorable Geoffrey Delamayn and the lovely and accomplished relict of the late Mathew Glenarm, Esq., formerly Miss Newenden." The marriage would, in all probability, "be solemnized in Scotland, before the end of the present autumn;" and the wedding breakfast, it was whispered, "would collect a large and fashionable party at Swanhaven Lodge."

Sir Patrick handed the newspaper silently to Arnold. It was plain to any one who knew Anne Silvester's story that those were the words which had found their fatal way to her in her place of rest. The inference that followed seemed to be hardly less clear. But one intelligible object, in the opinion of Sir Patrick, could be at the end of her journey to the north. The deserted woman had rallied the last relics of her old energy--and had devoted herself to the desperate purpose of stopping the marriage of Mrs. Glenarm.

Blanche was the first to break the silence.

"It seems like a fatality," she said. "Perpetual failure! Perpetual disappointment! Are Anne and I doomed never to meet again?"

She looked at her uncle. Sir Patrick showed none of his customary cheerfulness in the face of disaster.

"She has promised to write to Mr. Crum," he said. "And Mr. Crum has promised to let us know when he hears from her. That is the only prospect before us. We must accept it as resignedly as we can."

Blanche wandered out listlessly among the flowers in the conservatory. Sir Patrick made no secret of the impression produced upon him by Mr. Crum's letter, when he and Arnold were left alone.

"There is no denying," he said, "that matters have taken a very serious turn. My plans and calculations are all thrown out. It is impossible to foresee what new mischief may not come of it, if those two women meet; or what desperate act Delamayn may not commit, if he finds himself driven to the wall. As things are, I own frankly I don't know what to do next. A great light of the Presbyterian Church," he added, with a momentary outbreak of his whimsical humor, "once declared, in my hearing, that the invention of printing was nothing more or less than a proof of the intellectual activity of the Devil. Upon my honor, I feel for the first time in my life inclined to agree with him."

He mechanically took up the Glasgow journal, which Arnold had laid aside, while he spoke.

"What's this!" he exclaimed, as a name caught his eye in the first line of the newspaper at which he happened to look. "Mrs. Glenarm again! Are they turning the iron-master's widow into a public character?"

There the name of the widow was, unquestionably; figuring for the second time in type, in a letter of the gossiping sort, supplied by an "Occasional Correspondent," and distinguished by the title of "Sayings and Doings in the North." After tattling pleasantly of the prospects of the shooting season, of the fashions from Paris, of an accident to a tourist, and of a scandal in the Scottish Kirk, the writer proceeded to the narrative of a case of interest, relating to a marriage in the sphere known (in the language of footmen) as the sphere of "high life."

Considerable sensation (the correspondent announced) had been caused in

Perth and its neighborhood, by the exposure of an anonymous attempt at extortion, of which a lady of distinction had lately been made the object. As her name had already been publicly mentioned in an application to the magistrates, there could be no impropriety in stating that the lady in question was Mrs. Glenarm--whose approaching union with the Honorable Geoffrey Delamayn was alluded to in another column of the journal.

Mrs. Glenarm had, it appeared, received an anonymous letter, on the first day of her arrival as guest at the house of a friend, residing in the neighborhood of Perth. The letter warned her that there was an obstacle, of which she was herself probably not aware, in the way of her projected marriage with Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn. That gentleman had seriously compromised himself with another lady; and the lady would oppose his marriage to Mrs. Glenarm, with proof in writing to produce in support of her claim. The proof was contained in two letters exchanged between the parties, and signed by their names; and the correspondence was placed at Mrs. Glenarm's disposal, on two conditions, as follows:

First, that she should offer a sufficiently liberal price to induce the present possessor of the letters to part with them. Secondly, that she should consent to adopt such a method of paying the money as should satisfy the person that he was in no danger of finding himself brought within reach of the law. The answer to these two proposals was directed to be made through the medium of an advertisement in the local newspaper--distinguished by this address, "To a Friend in the Dark."

Certain turns of expression, and one or two mistakes in spelling, pointed to this insolent letter as being, in all probability, the production of a Scotchman, in the lower ranks of life. Mrs. Glenarm had at once shown it to her nearest relative, Captain Newenden. The captain had sought legal advice in Perth. It had been decided, after due consideration, to insert the advertisement demanded, and to take measures to entrap the writer of the letter into revealing himself--without, it is needless to add, allowing the fellow really to profit by his attempted act of extortion.

The cunning of the "Friend in the Dark" (whoever he might be) had, on trying the proposed experiment, proved to be more than a match for the lawyers. He had successfully eluded not only the snare first set for him, but others subsequently laid. A second, and a third, anonymous letter, one more impudent than the other had been received by Mrs. Glenarm, assuring that lady and the friends who were acting for her that they were only wasting time and raising the price which would be asked for the correspondence, by the course they were taking. Captain Newenden had thereupon, in default of

knowing what other course to pursue, appealed publicly to the city magistrates, and a reward had been offered, under the sanction of the municipal authorities, for the discovery of the man. This proceeding also having proved quite fruitless, it was understood that the captain had arranged, with the concurrence of his English solicitors, to place the matter in the hands of an experienced officer of the London police.

Here, so far as the newspaper correspondent was aware, the affair rested for the present.

It was only necessary to add, that Mrs. Glenarm had left the neighborhood of Perth, in order to escape further annoyance; and had placed herself under the protection of friends in another part of the county. Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn, whose fair fame had been assailed (it was needless, the correspondent added in parenthesis, to say how groundlessly), was understood to have expressed, not only the indignation natural under the circumstances but also his extreme regret at not finding himself in a position to aid Captain Newenden's efforts to bring the anonymous slanderer to justice. The honorable gentleman was, as the sporting public were well aware, then in course of strict training for his forthcoming appearance at the Fulham Foot-Race. So important was it considered that his mind should not be harassed by annoyances, in his present responsible position, that his trainer and his principal backers had thought it desirable to hasten his removal to the neighborhood of Fulham--where the exercises which were to prepare him for the race were now being continued on the spot.

"The mystery seems to thicken," said Arnold.

"Quite the contrary," returned Sir Patrick, briskly. "The mystery is clearing fast--thanks to the Glasgow newspaper. I shall be spared the trouble of dealing with Bishopriggs for the stolen letter. Miss Silvester has gone to Perth, to recover her correspondence with Geoffrey Delamayn."

"Do you think she would recognize it," said Arnold, pointing to the newspaper, "in the account given of it here?"

"Certainly! And she could hardly fail, in my opinion, to get a step farther than that. Unless I am entirely mistaken, the authorship of the anonymous letters has not mystified her."

"How could she guess at that?"

"In this way, as I think. Whatever she may have previously thought, she must suspect, by this time, that the missing correspondence has been stolen, and not lost. Now, there are only two persons whom she can think of, as probably guilty of the theft--Mrs. Inchbare or Bishopriggs. The newspaper description of the style of the anonymous letters declares it to be the style of a Scotchman in the lower ranks of life--in other words, points plainly to Bishopriggs. You see that? Very well. Now suppose she recovers the stolen property. What is likely to happen then? She will be more or less than woman if she doesn't make her way next, provided with her proofs in writing, to Mrs. Glenarm. She may innocently help, or she may innocently frustrate, the end we have in view--either way, our course is clear before us again. Our interest in communicating with Miss Silvester remains precisely the same interest that it was before we received the Glasgow newspaper. I propose to wait till Sunday, on the chance that Mr. Crum may write again. If we don't hear from him, I shall start for Scotland on Monday morning, and take my chance of finding my way to Miss Silvester, through Mrs. Glenarm."

"Leaving me behind?"

"Leaving you behind. Somebody must stay with Blanche. After having only been a fortnight married, must I remind you of that?"

"Don't you think Mr. Crum will write before Monday?"

"It will be such a fortunate circumstance for us, if he does write, that I don't venture to anticipate it."

"You are down on our luck, Sir."

"I detest slang, Arnold. But slang, I own, expresses my state of mind, in this instance, with an accuracy which almost reconciles me to the use of it--for once in a way."

"Every body's luck turns sooner or later," persisted Arnold. "I can't help thinking our luck is on the turn at last. Would you mind taking a bet, Sir Patrick?"

"Apply at the stables. I leave betting, as I leave cleaning the horses, to my groom."

With that crabbed answer he closed the conversation for the day.

The hours passed, and time brought the post again in due course--and the post decided in Arnold's favor! Sir Patrick's want of confidence in the favoring patronage of Fortune was practically rebuked by the arrival of a second letter from the Glasgow lawyer on the next day.

"I have the pleasure of announcing" (Mr. Crum wrote) "that I have heard from Miss Silvester, by the next postal delivery ensuing, after I had dispatched my letter to Ham Farm. She writes, very briefly, to inform me that she has decided on establishing her next place of residence in London. The reason assigned for taking this step--which she certainly did not contemplate when I last saw her--is that she finds herself approaching the end of her pecuniary resources. Having already decided on adopting, as a means of living, the calling of a concert-singer, she has arranged to place her interests in the hands of an old friend of her late mother (who appears to have belonged also to the musical profession): a dramatic and musical agent long established in the metropolis, and well known to her as a trustworthy and respectable man. She sends me the name and address of this person--a copy of which you will find on the inclosed slip of paper--in the event of my having occasion to write to her, before she is settled in London. This is the whole substance of her letter. I have only to add, that it does not contain the slightest allusion to the nature of the errand on which she left Glasgow."

Sir Patrick happened to be alone when he opened Mr. Crum's letter.

His first proceeding, after reading it, was to consult the railway time-table hanging in the hall. Having done this, he returned to the library--wrote a short note of inquiry, addressed to the musical agent--and rang the bell.

"Miss Silvester is expected in London, Duncan. I want a discreet person to communicate with her. You are the person."

Duncan bowed. Sir Pa trick handed him the note.

"If you start at once you will be in time to catch the train. Go to that address, and inquire for Miss Silvester. If she has arrived, give her my compliments, and say I will have the honor of calling on her (on Mr. Brinkworth's behalf) at the earliest date which she may find it convenient to appoint. Be quick about it--and you will have time to get back before the last train. Have Mr. and Mrs. Brinkworth returned from their drive?"

"No, Sir Patrick."

Pending the return of Arnold and Blanche, Sir Patrick looked at Mr. Crum's letter for the second time.

He was not quite satisfied that the pecuniary motive was really the motive at the bottom of Anne's journey south. Remembering that Geoffrey's trainers had removed him to the neighborhood of London, he was inclined to doubt whether some serious quarrel had not taken place between Anne and Mrs. Glenarm--and whether some direct appeal to Geoffrey himself might not be in contemplation as the result. In that event, Sir Patrick's advice and assistance would be placed, without scruple, at Miss Silvester's disposal. By asserting her claim, in opposition to the claim of Mrs. Glenarm, she was also asserting herself to be an unmarried woman, and was thus serving Blanche's interests as well as her own. "I owe it to Blanche to help her," thought Sir Patrick. "And I owe it to myself to bring Geoffrey Delamayn to a day of reckoning if I can."

The barking of the dogs in the yard announced the return of the carriage. Sir Patrick went out to meet Arnold and Blanche at the gate, and tell them the news.

Punctual to the time at which he was expected, the discreet Duncan reappeared with a note from the musical agent.

Miss Silvester had not yet reached London; but she was expected to arrive not later than Tuesday in the ensuing week. The agent had already been favored with her instructions to pay the strictest attention to any commands received from Sir Patrick Lundie. He would take care that Sir Patrick's message should be given to Miss Silvester as soon as she arrived.

At last, then, there was news to be relied on! At last there was a prospect of seeing her! Blanche was radiant with happiness, Arnold was in high spirits for the first time since his return from Baden.

Sir Patrick tried hard to catch the infection of gayety from his young friends; but, to his own surprise, not less than to theirs, the effort proved fruitless. With the tide of events turning decidedly in his favor--relieved of the necessity of taking a doubtful journey to Scotland; assured of obtaining his interview with Anne in a few days' time--he was out of spirits all through the evening.

"Still down on our luck!" exclaimed Arnold, as he and his host finished their last game of billiards, and parted for the night. "Surely, we couldn't wish for a more promising prospect than our prospect next week?"

Sir Patrick laid his hand on Arnold's shoulder.

"Let us look indulgently together," he said, in his whimsically grave way, "at the humiliating spectacle of an old man's folly. I feel, at this moment, Arnold, as if I would give every thing that I possess in the world to have passed over next week, and to be landed safely in the time beyond it."

"But why?"

"There is the folly! I can't tell why. With every reason to be in better spirits than usual, I am unaccountably, irrationally, invincibly depressed. What are we to conclude from that? Am I the object of a supernatural warning of misfortune to come? Or am I the object of a temporary derangement of the functions of the liver? There is the question. Who is to decide it? How contemptible is humanity, Arnold, rightly understood! Give me my candle, and let's hope it's the liver."