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**The Evil Genius**

**By**

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Affectionately Dedicated to Holman Hunt

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## **BEFORE THE STORY.**

### **Miss Westerfield's Education**

#### **Chapter I. The Trial.**

THE gentlemen of the jury retired to consider their verdict.

Their foreman was a person doubly distinguished among his colleagues. He had the clearest head, and the readiest tongue. For once the right man was in the right place.

Of the eleven jurymen, four showed their characters on the surface. They were:

The hungry jurymen, who wanted his dinner.

The inattentive jurymen, who drew pictures on his blotting paper.

The nervous jurymen, who suffered from fidgets.

The silent jurymen, who decided the verdict.

Of the seven remaining members, one was a little drowsy man who gave no trouble; one was an irritable invalid who served under protest; and five represented that vast majority of the population--easily governed, tranquilly happy--which has no opinion of its own.

The foreman took his place at the head of the table. His colleagues seated themselves on either side of him. Then there fell upon that assembly of men a silence, never known among an assembly of women--the silence which proceeds from a general reluctance to be the person who speaks first.

It was the foreman's duty, under these circumstances, to treat his deliberative brethren as we treat our watches when they stop: he wound the jury up and set them going.

"Gentlemen," he began, "have you formed any decided opinion on the case--thus far?"

Some of them said "Yes," and some of them said "No." The little drowsy man said nothing. The fretful invalid cried, "Go on!" The nervous jurymen suddenly rose. His brethren all looked at him, inspired by the same fear of having got an orator among them. He was an essentially polite man; and he hastened to relieve their minds. "Pray don't be alarmed, gentlemen: I am not going to make a speech. I suffer from fidgets. Excuse me if I occasionally change my position." The hungry jurymen (who dined early) looked at his watch. "Half-past four," he said. "For Heaven's sake cut it short." He was the fattest person present; and he suggested a subject to the inattentive jurymen who drew pictures on his blotting-paper. Deeply interested in the progress of the likeness, his neighbors on either side looked over his shoulders. The little drowsy man woke with a start, and begged pardon of everybody. The fretful invalid said to himself, "Damned fools, all of them!" The patient foreman, biding his time, stated the case.

"The prisoner waiting our verdict, gentlemen, is the Honorable Roderick Westerfield, younger brother of the present Lord Le Basque. He is charged with willfully casting away the British bark John Jerniman, under his command, for the purpose of fraudulently obtaining a share of the insurance money; and further of possessing himself of certain Brazilian diamonds, which formed part of the cargo. In plain words, here is a gentleman born in the higher ranks of life accused of being a thief. Before we attempt to arrive at a decision, we shall only be doing him justice if we try to form some general estimate of his character, based on the evidence--and we may fairly begin by inquiring into his relations with the noble family to which he belongs. The evidence, so far, is not altogether creditable to him. Being at the time an officer of the Royal Navy, he appears to have outraged the feelings of his family by marrying a barmaid at a public-house."

The drowsy jurymen, happening to be awake at that moment, surprised the foreman by interposing a statement. "Talking of barmaids," he said, "I know a curate's daughter. She's in distressed circumstances, poor thing; and she's a barmaid somewhere in the north of England. Curiously enough, the name of the town has escaped my memory. If we had a map of England--" There he was interrupted, cruelly interrupted, by one of his brethren.

"And by what right," cried the greedy jurymen, speaking under the exasperating influence of hunger--"by what right does Mr. Westerfield's family dare to suppose that a barmaid may not be a perfectly virtuous woman?"

Hearing this, the restless gentleman (in the act of changing his position) was

suddenly inspired with interest in the proceedings. "Pardon me for putting myself forward," he said, with his customary politeness. "Speaking as an abstainer from fermented liquors, I must really protest against these allusions to barmaids."

"Speaking as a consumer of fermented liquors," the invalid remarked, "I wish I had a barmaid and a bottle of champagne before me now."

Superior to interruption, the admirable foreman went on:

"Whatever you may think, gentlemen, of the prisoner's marriage, we have it in evidence that his relatives turned their backs on him from that moment--with the one merciful exception of the head of the family. Lord Le Basque exerted his influence with the Admiralty, and obtained for his brother (then out of employment) an appointment to a ship. All the witnesses agree that Mr. Westerfield thoroughly understood his profession. If he could have controlled himself, he might have risen to high rank in the Navy. His temper was his ruin. He quarreled with one of his superior officers--"

"Under strong provocation," said a member of the jury.

"Under strong provocation," the foreman admitted. "But provocation is not an excuse, judged by the rules of discipline. The prisoner challenged the officer on duty to fight a duel, at the first opportunity, on shore; and, receiving a contemptuous refusal, struck him on the quarter-deck. As a matter of course, Mr. Westerfield was tried by court-martial, and was dismissed the service. Lord Le Basque's patience was not exhausted yet. The Merchant Service offered a last chance to the prisoner of retrieving his position, to some extent at least. He was fit for the sea, and fit for nothing else. At my lord's earnest request the owners of the John Jerniman, trading between Liverpool and Rio, took Mr. Westerfield on trial as first mate, and, to his credit be it said, he justified his brother's faith in him. In a tempest off the coast of Africa the captain was washed overboard and the first mate succeeded to the command. His seamanship and courage saved the vessel, under circumstances of danger which paralyzed the efforts of the other officers.. He was confirmed, rightly confirmed, in the command of the ship. And, so far, we shall certainly not be wrong if we view his character on the favorable side."

There the foreman paused, to collect his ideas.

Certain members of the assembly--led by the juryman who wanted his dinner, and supported by his inattentive colleague, then engaged in drawing

a ship in a storm, and a captain falling overboard--proposed the acquittal of the prisoner without further consideration. But the fretful invalid cried "Stuff!" and the five jurymen who had no opinions of their own, struck by the admirable brevity with which he expressed his sentiments, sang out in chorus, "Hear! hear! hear!" The silent jurymen, hitherto overlooked, now attracted attention. He was a bald-headed person of uncertain age, buttoned up tight in a long frockcoat, and wearing his gloves all through the proceedings. When the chorus of five cheered, he smiled mysteriously. Everybody wondered what that smile meant. The silent jurymen kept his opinion to himself. From that moment he began to exercise a furtive influence over the jury. Even the foreman looked at him, on resuming the narrative.

"After a certain term of service, gentlemen, during which we learn nothing to his disadvantage, the prisoner's merits appear to have received their reward. He was presented with a share in the ship which he commanded, in addition to his regular salary as master. With these improved prospects he sailed from Liverpool on his last voyage to Brazil; and no one, his wife included, had the faintest suspicion that he left England under circumstances of serious pecuniary embarrassment. The testimony of his creditors, and of other persons with whom he associated distinctly proves that his leisure hours on shore had been employed in card-playing and in betting on horse races. After an unusually long run of luck, his good fortune seems to have deserted him. He suffered considerable losses, and was at last driven to borrowing at a high rate of interest, without any reasonable prospect of being able to repay the money-lenders into whose hands he had fallen. When he left Rio on the homeward voyage, there is no sort of doubt that he was returning to England to face creditors whom he was unable to pay. There, gentlemen, is a noticeable side to his character which we may call the gambling side, and which (as I think) was too leniently viewed by the judge."

He evidently intended to add a word or two more. But the disagreeable invalid insisted on being heard.

"In plain English," he said, "you are for finding the prisoner guilty."

"In plain English," the foreman rejoined, "I refuse to answer that question."

"Why?"

"Because it is no part of my duty to attempt to influence the verdict."

"You have been trying to influence the verdict, sir, ever since you entered

this room. I appeal to all the gentlemen present."

The patience of the long-suffering foreman failed him at last. "Not another word shall pass my lips," he said, "until you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty among yourselves--and then I'll tell you if I agree to your verdict."

He folded his arms, and looked like the image of a man who intended to keep his word.

The hungry juryman laid himself back in his chair, and groaned. The amateur artist, who had thus far found a fund of amusement in his blotting-paper, yawned discontentedly and dropped his pen. The courteous gentleman who suffered from fidgets requested leave to walk up and down the room; and at the first turn he took woke the drowsy little man, and maddened the irritable invalid by the creaking of his boots. The chorus of five, further than ever from arriving at an opinion of their own, looked at the silent juryman. Once more he smiled mysteriously; and once more he offered an explanation of what was passing in his mind--except that he turned his bald head slowly in the direction of the foreman. Was he in sympathy with a man who had promised to be as silent as himself?

In the meantime, nothing was said or done. Helpless silence prevailed in every part of the room.

"Why the devil doesn't somebody begin?" cried the invalid. "Have you all forgotten the evidence?"

This startling question roused the jury to a sense of what was due to their oaths, if not to themselves. Some of them recollected the evidence in one way, and some of them recollected it in another; and each man insisted on doing justice to his own excellent memory, and on stating his own unanswerable view of the case.

The first man who spoke began at the middle of the story told by the witnesses in court. "I am for acquitting the captain, gentlemen; he ordered out the boats, and saved the lives of the crew."--"And I am for finding him guilty, because the ship struck on a rock in broad daylight, and in moderate weather."--"I agree with you, sir. The evidence shows that the vessel was steered dangerously near to the land, by direction of the captain, who gave the course."--"Come, come, gentlemen! let us do the captain justice. The defense declares that he gave the customary course, and that it was not followed when he left the deck. As for his leaving the ship in moderate weather, the evidence proves that he believed he saw signs of a storm



brewing."--"Yes, yes, all very well, but what were the facts? When the loss of the ship was reported, the Brazilian authorities sent men to the wreck, on the chance of saving the cargo; and, days afterward, there the ship was found, just as the captain and the crew had left her."--"Don't forget, sir, that the diamonds were missing when the salvors examined the wreck."--"All right, but that's no proof that the captain stole the diamonds; and, before they had saved half the cargo, a storm did come on and break the vessel up; so the poor man was only wrong in the matter of time, after all."--"Allow me to remind you, gentlemen that the prisoner was deeply in debt, and therefore had an interest in stealing the diamonds."--"Wait a little, sir. Fair play's a jewel. Who was in charge of the deck when the ship struck? The second mate. And what did the second mate do, when he heard that his owners had decided to prosecute? He committed suicide! Is there no proof of guilt in that act?"--"You are going a little too fast, sir. The coroner's jury declared that the second mate killed himself in a state of temporary insanity."--"Gently! gently! we have nothing to do with what the coroner's jury said. What did the judge say when he summed up?"--"Bother the judge! He said what they all say: 'Find the prisoner guilty, if you think he did it; and find him not guilty, if you think he didn't.' And then he went away to his comfortable cup of tea in his private room. And here are we perishing of hunger, and our families dining without us."--"Speak for yourself, sir, I haven't got a family."--"Consider yourself lucky, sir; I have got twelve, and my life is a burden to me, owing to the difficulty of making both ends meet."--"Gentlemen! gentlemen! we are wandering again. Is the captain guilty or not? Mr. Foreman, we none of us intended to offend you. Will you tell us what you think?"

No; the foreman kept his word. "Decide for yourselves first," was his only reply.

In this emergency, the member afflicted with fidgets suddenly assumed a position of importance. He started a new idea.

"Suppose we try a show of hands," he suggested. "Gentlemen who find the prisoner guilty will please hold up their hands."

Three votes were at once registered in this way, including the vote of the foreman. After a moment of doubt, the chorus of five decided on following the opinion which happened to be the first opinion expressed in point of time. Thereupon, the show of hands for the condemnation of the prisoner rose to eight. Would this result have an effect on the undecided minority of four? In any case, they were invited to declare themselves next. Only three hands were held up. One incomprehensible man abstained from expressing

his sentiments even by a sign. Is it necessary to say who that man was? A mysterious change had now presented itself in his appearance, which made him an object of greater interest than ever. His inexplicable smile had vanished. He sat immovable, with closed eyes. Was he meditating profoundly? or was he only asleep? The quick-witted foreman had long since suspected him of being simply the stupidest person present--with just cunning enough to conceal his own dullness by holding his tongue. The jury arrived at no such sensible conclusion. Impressed by the intense solemnity of his countenance, they believed him to be absorbed in reflections of the utmost importance to the verdict. After a heated conference among themselves, they decided on inviting the one independent member present--the member who had taken no part in their proceedings--to declare his opinion in the plainest possible form. "Which way does your view of the verdict incline, sir? Guilty or not guilty?"

The eyes of the silent juryman opened with the slow and solemn dilation of the eyes of an owl. Placed between the alternatives of declaring himself in one word or in two, his taciturn wisdom chose the shortest form of speech. "Guilty," he answered--and shut his eyes again, as if he had had enough of it already.

An unutterable sense of relief pervaded the meeting. Enmities were forgotten and friendly looks were exchanged. With one accord, the jury rose to return to court. The prisoner's fate was sealed. The verdict was Guilty.

## 2.--The Sentence.

The low hum of talk among the persons in court ceased when the jury returned to their places. Curiosity now found its center of attraction in the prisoner's wife--who had been present throughout the trial. The question of the moment was: How will she bear the interval of delay which precedes the giving of the verdict?

In the popular phrase, Mrs. Westerfield was a showy woman. Her commanding figure was finely robed in dark colors; her profuse light hair hung over her forehead in little clusters of ringlets; her features, firmly but not delicately shaped, were on a large scale. No outward betrayal of the wife's emotion rewarded the public curiosity: her bold light-gray eyes sustained the general gaze without flinching. To the surprise of the women present, she had brought her two young children with her to the trial. The eldest was a pretty little girl of ten years old; the second child (a boy) sat on his mother's knee. It was generally observed that Mrs. Westerfield took no notice of her eldest child. When she whispered a word from time to time, it

was always addressed to her son. She fondled him when he grew restless; but she never looked round to see if the girl at her side was as weary of the proceedings as the boy.

The judge took his seat, and the order was given to bring the prisoner up for judgment.

There was a long pause. The audience--remembering his ghastly face when he first appeared before them--whispered to each other, "He's taken ill"; and the audience proved to be right.

The surgeon of the prison entered the witness-box, and, being duly sworn, made his medical statement.

The prisoner's heart had been diseased for some time past, and the malady had been neglected. He had fainted under the prolonged suspense of waiting for the verdict. The swoon had proved to be of such a serious nature that the witness refused to answer for consequences if a second fainting-fit was produced by the excitement of facing the court and the jury.

Under these circumstances, the verdict was formally recorded, and sentence was deferred. Once more, the spectators looked at the prisoner's wife.

She had risen to leave the court. In the event of an adverse verdict, her husband had asked for a farewell interview; and the governor of the prison, after consultation with the surgeon, had granted the request. It was observed, when she retired, that she held her boy by the hand, and left the girl to follow. A compassionate lady near her offered to take care of the children while she was absent. Mrs. Westerfield answered quietly and coldly: "Thank you--their father wishes to see them."

The prisoner was dying; nobody could look at him and doubt it.

His eyes opened wearily, when his wife and children approached the bed on which he lay helpless--the wreck of a grandly-made man. He struggled for breath, but he could still speak a word or two at a time. "I don't ask you what the verdict is," he said to his wife; "I see it in your face."

Tearless and silent, she waited by her husband's side. He had only noticed her for a moment. All his interest seemed to be centered in his children. The girl stood nearest to him, he looked at her with a faint smile.

The poor child understood him. Crying piteously, she put her arms around

his neck and kissed him. "Dear papa," she said; "come home and let me nurse you."

The surgeon, watching the father's face, saw a change in him which the other persons present had not observed. The failing heart felt that parting moment, and sank under it. "Take the child away," the surgeon whispered to the mother. Brandy was near him; he administered it while he spoke, and touched the fluttering pulse. It felt, just felt, the stimulant. He revived for a moment, and looked wistfully for his son. "The boy," he murmured; "I want my boy." As his wife brought the child to him, the surgeon whispered to her again. "If you have anything to say to him be quick about it!" She shuddered; she took his cold hand. Her touch seemed to nerve him with new strength; he asked her to stoop over him. "They won't let me write here," he whispered, "unless they see my letter." He paused to get his breath again. "Lift up my left arm," he gasped. "Open the wrist-band."

She detached the stud which closed the wrist-band of the shirt. On the inner side of the linen there was a line written in red letters--red of the color of blood. She saw these words: Look in the lining of my trunk.

"What for?" she asked.

The fading light in his eyes flashed on her a dreadful look of doubt. His lips fell apart in the vain effort to answer. His last sigh fluttered the light ringlets of her hair as she bent over him.

The surgeon pointed to her children. "Take the poor things home," he said; "they have seen the last of their father."

Mrs. Westerfield obeyed in silence. She had her own reasons for being in a hurry to get home. Leaving the children under the servant's care, she locked herself up in the dead man's room, and emptied his trunk of the few clothes that had been left in it.

The lining which she was now to examine was of the customary material, and of the usual striped pattern in blue and white. Her fingers were not sufficiently sensitive to feel anything under the surface, when she tried it with her hand. Turning the empty trunk with the inner side of the lid toward the light, she discovered, on one of the blue stripes of the lining, a thin little shining stain which looked like a stain of dried gum. After a moment's consideration, she cut the gummed line with a penknife. Something of a white color appeared through the aperture. She drew out a folded sheet of paper.

It proved to be a letter in her husband's hand-writing. An inclosure dropped to the floor when she opened it, in the shape of a small slip of paper. She picked it up. The morsel of paper presented letters, figures, and crosses arranged in lines, and mingled together in what looked like hopeless confusion.

### 3.--The Letter.

Mrs. Westerfield laid the incomprehensible slip of paper aside, and, in search of an explanation, returned to the letter. Here again she found herself in a state of perplexity. Directed to "Mrs. Roderick Westerfield," the letter began abruptly, without the customary form of address. Did it mean that her husband was angry with her when he wrote? It meant that he doubted her.

In these terms he expressed himself:

"I write to you before my trial takes place. If the verdict goes in my favor, I shall destroy what I have written. If I am found guilty, I must leave it to you to do what I should otherwise have done for myself.

"The undeserved misfortune that has overtaken me began with the arrival of my ship in the port of Rio. Our second mate (his duty for the day being done) asked leave to go on shore--and never returned. What motive determined him on deserting, I am not able to say. It was my own wish to supply his place by promoting the best seaman on board. My owners' agents overruled me, and appointed a man of their own choosing.

"What nation he belonged to I don't know. The name he gave me was Beljames, and he was reported to be a broken-down gentleman. Whoever he might be, his manner and his talk were captivating. Everybody liked him.

"After the two calamities of the loss of the ship and the disappearance of the diamonds--these last being valued at five thousand pounds--I returned to England by the first opportunity that offered, having Beljames for a companion.

"Shortly after getting back to my house in London, I was privately warned by a good friend that my owners had decided to prosecute me for willfully casting away the ship, and (crueler still) for having stolen the missing

diamonds. The second mate, who had been in command of the vessel when she struck on the rock, was similarly charged along with me. Knowing myself to be innocent, I determined, of course, to stand my trial. My wonder was, what Beljames would do. Would he follow my example? or, if he got the chance, would he try to make his escape?

"I might have thought it only friendly to give this person a word of warning, if I had known where to find him. We had separated when the ship reached the port of Falmouth, in Cornwall, and had not met since. I gave him my address in London; but he gave me no address in return.

"On the voyage home, Beljames told me that a legacy had been left to him; being a small freehold house and garden in St. John's Wood, London. His agent, writing to him on the subject, had reported the place to be sadly out of repair, and had advised him to find somebody who would take it off his hands on reasonable terms. This seemed to point to a likelihood of his being still in London, trying to sell his house.

"While my mind was running on these recollections, I was told that a decent elderly woman wanted to see me. She proved to be the landlady of the house in which Beljames lodged; and she brought an alarming message. The man was dying, and desired to see me. I went to him immediately.

"Few words are best, when one has to write about one's own troubles.

"Beljames had heard of the intended prosecution. How he had been made aware of it, death left him no time to tell me. The miserable wretch had poisoned himself--whether in terror of standing his trial, or in remorse of conscience, it is not any business of mine to decide. Most unluckily for me, he first ordered the doctor and the landlady out of the room; and then, when we two were alone, owned that he had purposely altered the course of the ship, and had stolen the diamonds.

"To do him justice, he was eager to save me from suffering for his fault.

"Having eased his mind by confession, he gave me the slip of paper (written in cipher) which you will find inclosed in this. 'There is my note of the place where the diamonds are hidden,' he said. Among the many ignorant people who know nothing of ciphers, I am one--and I told him so. 'That's how I keep my secret,' he said; 'write from my dictation, and you shall know what it means. Lift me up first.' As I did it, he rolled his head to and fro, evidently in pain. But he managed to point to pen, ink, and paper, on a table hard by, on which his doctor had been writing. I left him for a moment, to pull the table

nearer to the bed--and in that moment he groaned, and cried out for help. I ran to the room downstairs where the doctor was waiting. When we got back to him he was in convulsions. It was all over with Beljames.

"The lawyers who are to defend me have tried to get Experts, as they call them, to interpret the cipher. The Experts have all failed. They will declare, if they are called as witnesses, that the signs on the paper are not according to any known rules, and are marks made at random, meaning nothing.

"As for any statement, on my part, of the confession made to me, the law refuses to hear it, except from the mouth of a witness. I might prove that the ship's course was changed, contrary to my directions, after I had gone below to rest, if I could find the man who was steering at the time. God only knows where that man is.

"On the other hand, the errors of my past life, and my being in debt, are circumstances dead against me. The lawyers seem to trust almost entirely in a famous counsel, whom they have engaged to defend me. For my own part, I go to my trial with little or no hope.

"If the verdict is guilty, and if you have any regard left for my character, never rest until you have found somebody who can interpret these cursed signs. Do for me, I say, what I cannot do for myself. Recover the diamonds; and, when you restore them, show my owners this letter.

"Kiss the children for me. I wish them, when they are old enough, to read this defense of myself and to know that their father, who loved them dearly, was an innocent man. My good brother will take care of you, for my sake. I have done.

"RODERICK WESTERFIELD."

Mrs. Westerfield took up the cipher once more. She looked at it as if it were a living thing that defied her.

"If I am able to read this gibberish," she decided, "I know what I'll do with the diamonds!"

4.--The Garret.

One year exactly after the fatal day of the trial, Mrs. Westerfield (secluded in the sanctuary of her bedroom) celebrated her release from the obligation of wearing widow's weeds.



The conventional graduations in the outward expression of grief, which lead from black clothing to gray, formed no part of this afflicted lady's system of mourning. She laid her best blue walking dress and her new bonnet to match on the bed, and admired them to her heart's content. Her discarded garments were left on the floor. "Thank Heaven, I've done with you!" she said--and kicked her rusty mourning out of the way as she advanced to the fireplace to ring the bell.

"Where is my little boy?" she asked, when the landlady entered the room.

"He's down with me in the kitchen, ma'am; I'm teaching him to make a plum cake for himself. He's so happy! I hope you don't want him just now?"

"Not the least in the world. I want you to take care of him while I am away. By-the-by, where's Syd?"

The elder child (the girl) had been christened Sydney, in compliment to one of her father's female relatives. The name was not liked by her mother--who had shortened it to Syd, by way of leaving as little of it as possible. With a look at Mrs. Westerfield which expressed ill-concealed aversion, the landlady answered: "She's up in the lumber-room, poor child. She says you sent her there to be out of the way."

"Ah, to be sure, I did."

"There's no fireplace in the garret, ma'am. I'm afraid the little girl must be cold and lonely."

It was useless to plead for Syd--Mrs. Westerfield was not listening. Her attention was absorbed by her own plump and pretty hands. She took a tiny file from the dressing-table, and put a few finishing touches to her nails. "Send me some hot water," she said; "I want to dress."

The servant girl who carried the hot water upstairs was new to the ways of the house. After having waited on Mrs. Westerfield, she had been instructed by the kind-hearted landlady to go on to the top floor. "You will find a pretty little girl in the garret, all by herself. Say you are to bring her down to my room, as soon as her mamma has gone out."

Mrs. Westerfield's habitual neglect of her eldest child was known to every person in the house. Even the new servant had heard of it. Interested by what she saw, on opening the garret door, she stopped on the threshold and



looked in.

The lumber in the room consisted of two rotten old trunks, a broken chair, and a dirty volume of sermons of the old-fashioned quarto size. The grimy ceiling, slanting downward to a cracked window, was stained with rain that had found its way through the roof. The faded wall-paper, loosened by damp, was torn away in some places, and bulged loose in others. There were holes in the skirting-board; and from one of them peeped the brightly timid eyes of the child's only living companion in the garret--a mouse, feeding on crumbs which she had saved from her breakfast.

Syd looked up when the mouse darted back into its hole, on the opening of the door. "Lizzie! Lizzie!" she said, gravely, "you ought to have come in without making a noise. You have frightened away my youngest child."

The good-natured servant burst out laughing. "Have you got a large family, miss?" she inquired, humoring the joke.

Syd failed to see the joke. "Only two more," she answered as gravely as ever--and lifted up from the floor two miserable dolls, reduced to the last extremity of dirt and dilapidation. "My two eldest," this strange child resumed, setting up the dolls against one of the empty trunks. "The eldest is a girl, and her name is Syd. The other is a boy, untidy in his clothes, as you see. Their kind mamma forgives them when they are naughty, and buys ponies for them to ride on, and always has something nice for them to eat when they are hungry. Have you got a kind mamma, Lizzie? And are you very fond of her?"

Those innocent allusions to the neglect which was the one sad experience of Syd's young life touched the servant's heart. A bygone time was present to her memory, when she too had been left without a playfellow to keep her company or a fire to warm her, and she had not endured it patiently.

"Oh, my dear," she said, "your poor little arms are red with cold. Come to me and let me rub them."

But Syd's bright imagination was a better protection against the cold than all the rubbing that the hands of a merciful woman could offer. "You are very kind, Lizzie," she answered. "I don't feel the cold when I am playing with my children. I am very careful to give them plenty of exercise, we are going to walk in the Park."

She gave a hand to each of the dolls, and walked slowly round and round

the miserable room, pointing out visionary persons of distinction and objects of interest. "Here's the queen, my dears, in her gilt coach, drawn by six horses. Do you see her scepter poking out of the carriage window? She governs the nation with that. Bow to the queen. And now look at the beautiful bright water. There's the island where the ducks live. Ducks are happy creatures. They have their own way in everything, and they're good to eat when they're dead. At least they used to be good, when we had nice dinners in papa's time. I try to amuse the poor little things, Lizzie. Their papa is dead. I'm obliged to be papa and mamma to them, both in one. Do you feel the cold, my dears?" She shivered as she questioned her imaginary children. "Now we are at home again," she said, and led the dolls to the empty fireplace. "Roaring fires always in my house," cried the resolute little creature, rubbing her hands cheerfully before the bleak blank grate.

Warm-hearted Lizzie could control herself no longer.

"If the child would only make some complaint," she burst out, "it wouldn't be so dreadful! Oh, what a shame! what a shame!" she cried, to the astonishment of little Syd. "Come down, my dear, to the nice warm room where your brother is. Oh, your mother? I don't care if your mother sees us; I should like to give your mother a piece of my mind. There! I don't mean to frighten you; I'm one of your bad children--I fly into a passion. You carry the dolls and I'll carry you. Oh, how she shivers! Give us a kiss."

Sympathy which expressed itself in this way was new to Syd. Her eyes opened wide in childish wonder--and suddenly closed again in childish terror, when her good friend the servant passed Mrs. Westerfield's door on the way downstairs. "If mamma bounces out on us," she whispered, "pretend we don't see her." The nice warm room received them in safety. Under no stress of circumstances had Mrs. Westerfield ever been known to dress herself in a hurry. A good half-hour more had passed before the house door was heard to bang--and the pleasant landlady, peeping through the window, said: "There she goes. Now, we'll enjoy ourselves!"

5.--The Landlord.

Mrs. Westerfield's destination was the public-house in which she had been once employed as a barmaid. Entering the place without hesitation, she sent in her card to the landlord. He opened the parlor door himself and invited her to walk in.

"You wear well," he said, admiring her. "Have you come back here to be my barmaid again?"

"Do you think I am reduced to that?" she answered.

"Well, my dear, more unlikely things have happened. They tell me you depend for your income on Lord Le Basque--and his lordship's death was in the newspapers last week."

"And his lordship's lawyers continue my allowance."

Having smartly set the landlord right in those words, she had not thought it necessary to add that Lady Le Basque, continuing the allowance at her husband's request, had also notified that it would cease if Mrs. Westerfield married again.

"You're a lucky woman," the landlord remarked. "Well, I'm glad to see you. What will you take to drink?"

"Nothing, thank you. I want to know if you have heard anything lately of James Bellbridge?"

The landlord was a popular person in his own circle--not accustomed to restrain himself when he saw his way to a joke. "Here's constancy!" he said. "She's sweet on James, after having jilted him twelve years ago!"

Mrs. Westerfield replied with dignity. "I am accustomed to be treated respectfully," she replied. "I wish you good-morning."

The easy landlord pressed her back into her chair. "Don't be a fool," he said; "James is in London--James is staying in my house. What do you think of that?"

Mrs. Westerfield's bold gray eyes expressed eager curiosity and interest. "You don't mean that he is going to be barman here again?"

"No such luck, my dear; he is a gentleman at large, who patronizes my house."

Mrs. Westerfield went on with her questions.

"Has he left America for good?"

"Not he! James Bellbridge is going back to New York, to open a saloon (as they call it) in partnership with another man. He's in England, he says, on

business. It's my belief that he wants money for this new venture on bad security. They're smart people in New York. His only chance of getting his bills discounted is to humbug his relations, down in the country."

"When does he go to the country?"

"He's there now."

"When does he come back?"

"You're determined to see him, it appears. He comes back to-morrow."

"Is he married?"

"Aha! now we're coming to the point. Make your mind easy. Plenty of women have set the trap for him, but he has not walked into it yet. Shall I give him your love?"

"Yes," she said, coolly. "As much love as you please."

"Meaning marriage?" the landlord inquired.

"And money," Mrs. Westerfield added.

"Lord Le Basque's money."

"Lord Le Basque's money may go to the Devil!"

"Hullo! Your language reminds me of the time when you were a barmaid. You don't mean to say you have had a fortune left you?"

"I do! Will you give a message to James?"

"I'll do anything for a lady with a fortune."

"Tell him to come and drink tea with his old sweetheart tomorrow, at six o'clock."

"He won't do it."

"He will."

With that difference of opinion, they parted.

6.--The Brute.

To-morrow came--and Mrs. Westerfield's faithful James justified her confidence in him.

"Oh, Jemmy, how glad I am to see you! You dear, dear fellow. I'm yours at last."

"That depends, my lady, on whether I want you. Let go of my neck."

The man who entered this protest against imprisonment in the arms of a fine woman, was one of the human beings who are grown to perfection on English soil. He had the fat face, the pink complexion, the hard blue eyes, the scanty yellow hair, the smile with no meaning in it, the tremendous neck and shoulders, the mighty fists and feet, which are seen in complete combination in England only. Men of this breed possess a nervous system without being aware of it; suffer affliction without feeling it; exercise courage without a sense of danger; marry without love; eat and drink without limit; and sink (big as they are), when disease attacks them, without an effort to live.

Mrs. Westerfield released her guest's bull-neck at the word of command. It was impossible not to submit to him--he was so brutal. Impossible not to admire him--he was so big.

"Have you no love left for me?" was all she ventured to say.

He took the reproof good-humoredly. "Love?" he repeated. "Come! I like that--after throwing me over for a man with a handle to his name. Which am I to call you: 'Mrs?' or 'My Lady'?"

"Call me your own. What is there to laugh at, Jemmy? You used to be fond of me; you would never have gone to America, when I married Westerfield, if I hadn't been dear to you. Oh, if I'm sure of anything, I'm sure of that! You wouldn't bear malice, dear, if you only knew how cruelly I have been disappointed."

He suddenly showed an interest in what she was saying: the brute became cheery and confidential. "So he made you a bad husband, did he? Up with his fist and knocked you down, I daresay, if the truth was known?"

"You're all in the wrong, dear. He would have been a good husband if I had

cared about him. I never cared about anybody but you. It wasn't Westerfield who tempted me to say Yes."

"That's a lie."

"No, indeed it isn't."

"Then why did you marry him?"

"When I married him, Jemmy, there was a prospect--oh, how could I resist it? Think of being one of the Le Basques! Held in honor, to the end of my life, by that noble family, whether my husband lived or died!"

To the barman's ears, this sounded like sheer nonsense. His experience in the public-house suggested an explanation. "I say, my girl, have you been drinking?"

Mrs. Westerfield's first impulse led her to rise and point indignantly to the door. He had only to look at her--and she sat down again a tamed woman. "You don't understand how the chance tempted me," she answered, gently.

"What chance do you mean?"

"The chance, dear, of being a lord's mother."

He was still puzzled, but he lowered his tone. The true-born Briton bowed by instinct before the woman who had jilted him, when she presented herself in the character of a lord's mother. "How do you make that out, Maria?" he asked politely.

She drew her chair nearer to him, when he called her by her Christian name for the first time.

"When Westerfield was courting me," she said, "his brother (my lord) was a bachelor. A lady--if one can call such a creature a lady!--was living under his protection. He told Westerfield he was very fond of her, and he hated the idea of getting married. 'If your wife's first child turns out to be a son,' he said, 'there is an heir to the title and estates, and I may go on as I am now.' We were married a month afterward--and when my first child was born it was a girl. I leave you to judge what the disappointment was! My lord (persuaded, as I suspect, by the woman I mentioned just now) ran the risk of waiting another year, and a year afterward, rather than be married. Through all that time, I had no other child or prospect of a child. His

lordship was fairly driven into taking a wife. Ah, how I hate her! Their first child was a boy--a big, bouncing, healthy brute of a boy! And six months afterward, my poor little fellow was born. Only think of it! And tell me, Jemmy, don't I deserve to be a happy woman, after suffering such a dreadful disappointment as that? Is it true that you're going back to America?"

"Quite true."

"Take me back with you."

"With a couple of children?"

"No. Only with one. I can dispose of the other in England. Wait a little before you say No. Do you want money?"

"You couldn't help me, if I did."

"Marry me, and I can help you to a fortune."

He eyed her attentively and saw that she was in earnest. "What do you call a fortune?" he asked.

"Five thousand pounds," she answered.

His eyes opened; his mouth opened; he scratched his head. Even his impenetrable nature proved to be capable of receiving a shock. Five thousand pounds! He asked faintly for "a drop of brandy."

She had a bottle of brandy ready for him.

"You look quite overcome," she said.

He was too deeply interested in the restorative influence of the brandy to take any notice of this remark. When he had recovered himself he was not disposed to believe in the five thousand pounds.

"Where's the proof of it?" he said, sternly.

She produced her husband's letter. "Did you read the Trial of Westerfield for casting away his ship?" she asked.

"I heard of it."

"Will you look at this letter?"

"Is it long?"

"Yes."

"Then suppose you read it to me."

He listened with the closest attention while she read. The question of stealing the diamonds (if they could only be found) did not trouble either of them. It was a settled question, by tacit consent on both sides. But the value in money of the precious stones suggested a doubt that still weighed on his mind.

"How do you know they're worth five thousand pounds?" he inquired.

"You dear old stupid! Doesn't Westerfield himself say so in his letter?"

"Read that bit again."

She read it again: "After the two calamities of the loss of the ship, and the disappearance of the diamonds--these last being valued at five thousand pounds--I returned to England."

Satisfied so far, he wanted to look at the cipher next. She handed it to him with a stipulation: "Yours, Jemmy, on the day when you marry me."

He put the slip of paper into his pocket. "Now I've got it," he said, "suppose I keep it?"

A woman who has been barmaid at a public-house is a woman not easily found at the end of her resources.

"In that case," she curtly remarked, "I should first call in the police, and then telegraph to my husband's employers in Liverpool."

He handed the cipher back. "I was joking," he said.

"So was I," she answered.

They looked at each other. They were made for each other--and they both felt it. At the same time, James kept his own interests steadily in view. He stated the obvious objection to the cipher. Experts had already tried to



interpret the signs, and had failed.

"Quite true," she added, "but other people may succeed."

"How are you to find them?"

"Leave me to try. Will you give me a fortnight from to-day?"

"All right. Anything else?"

"One thing more. Get the marriage license at once."

"Why?"

"To show that you are in earnest."

He burst out laughing. "It mightn't be much amiss," he said, "if I took you back with me to America; you're the sort of woman we want in our new saloon. I'll get the license. Good-night."

As he rose to go, there was a soft knock at the door. A little girl, in a shabby frock, ventured to show herself in the room.

"What do you want here?" her mother asked sharply.

Syd held out a small thin hand, with a letter in it, which represented her only excuse. Mrs. Westerfield read the letter, and crumpled it up in her pocket. "One of your secrets?" James asked. "Anything about the diamonds, for instance?"

"Wait till you are my husband," she said, "and then you may be as inquisitive as you please." Her amiable sweetheart's guess had actually hit the mark. During the year that had passed, she too had tried her luck among the Experts, and had failed. Having recently heard of a foreign interpreter of ciphers, she had written to ask his terms. The reply (just received) not only estimated his services at an extravagantly high rate, but asked cautious questions which it was not convenient to answer. Another attempt had been made to discover the mystery of the cipher, and made in vain.

James Bellbridge had his moments of good-humor, and was on those rare occasions easily amused. He eyed the child with condescending curiosity. "Looks half starved," he said--as if he were considering the case of a stray

cat. "Hollo, there! Buy a bit of bread." He tossed a penny to Syd as she left the room; and took the opportunity of binding his bargain with Syd's mother. "Mind! if I take you to New York, I'm not going to be burdened with both your children. Is that girl the one you leave behind you?"

Mrs. Westerfield smiled sweetly, and answered: "Yes, dear."

7.--The Cipher.

An advertisement in the newspapers, addressed to persons skilled in the interpretation of ciphers, now represented Mrs. Westerfield's only chance of discovering where the diamonds were hidden. The first answer that she received made some amends for previous disappointment. It offered references to gentlemen, whose names were in themselves a sufficient guarantee. She verified the references nevertheless, and paid a visit to her correspondent on the same day.

His personal appearance was not in his favor--he was old and dirty, infirm and poor. His mean room was littered with shabby books. None of the ordinary courtesies of life seemed to be known to him; he neither wished Mrs. Westerfield good-morning nor asked her to take a seat. When she attempted to enter into explanations relating to her errand, he rudely interrupted her.

"Show me your cipher," he said; "I don't promise to study it unless I find it worth my while."

Mrs. Westerfield was alarmed.

"Do you mean that you want a large sum of money?" she asked.

"I mean that I don't waste my time on easy ciphers invented by fools."

She laid the slip of paper on his desk.

"Waste your time on that," she said satirically, "and see how you like it!"

He examined it--first with his bleared red-rimmed eyes; then with a magnifying-glass. The only expression of opinion that escaped him was indicated by his actions. He shut up his book, and gloated over the signs and characters before him. On a sudden he looked at Mrs. Westerfield. "How did you come by this?" he asked.

"That's no business of yours."

"In other words, you have reasons of your own for not answering my question?"

"Yes."

Drawing his own inferences from that reply, he showed his three last-left yellow teeth in a horrid grin. "I understand!" he said, speaking to himself. He looked at the cipher once more, and put another question: "Have you got a copy of this?"

It had not occurred to her to take a copy. He rose and pointed to his empty chair. His opinion of the cipher was, to all appearance, forced to express itself by the discovery that there was no copy.

"Do you know what might happen?" he asked. "The only cipher that has puzzled me for the last ten years might be lost--or stolen--or burned if there was a fire in the house. You deserve to be punished for your carelessness. Make the copy yourself."

This desirable suggestion (uncivilly as it was expressed) had its effect upon Mrs. Westerfield. Her marriage depended on that precious slip of paper. She was confirmed in her opinion that this very disagreeable man might nevertheless be a man to be trusted.

"Shall you be long in finding out what it means?" she asked when her task was completed.

He carefully compared the copy with the original--and then he replied:

"Days may pass before I can find the clew; I won't attempt it unless you give me a week."

She pleaded for a shorter interval. He coolly handed back her papers; the original and the copy.

"Try somebody else," he suggested--and opened his book again. Mrs. Westerfield yielded with the worst possible grace. In granting him the week of delay, she approached the subject of his fee for the second time. "How much will it cost me?" she inquired.

"I'll tell you when I've done."

"That won't do! I must know the amount first."

He handed her back her papers for the second time. Mrs. Westerfield's experience of poverty had never been the experience of such independence as this. In sheer bewilderment, she yielded again. He took back the original cipher, and locked it up in his desk. "Call here this day week," he said--and returned to his book.

"You are not very polite," she told him, on leaving the room.

"At any rate," he answered, "I don't interrupt people when they are reading."

The week passed.

Repeating her visit, Mrs. Westerfield found him still seated at his desk, still surrounded by his books, still careless of the polite attentions that he owed to a lady.

"Well?" she asked, "have you earned your money?"

"I have found the clew."

"What is it?" she burst out. "Tell me the substance. I can't wait to read."

He went on impenetrably with what he had to say. "But there are some minor combinations, which I have still to discover to my own satisfaction. I want a few days more."

She positively refused to comply with this request. "Write down the substance of it," she repeated, "and tell me what I owe you."

He handed her back her cipher for the third time.

The woman who could have kept her temper, under such provocation as this, may be found when the mathematician is found who can square the circle, or the inventor who can discover perpetual motion. With a furious look, Mrs. Westerfield expressed her opinion of the philosopher in two words: "You brute!" She failed to produce the slightest impression on him.

"My work," he proceeded, "must be well done or not done at all. This is Saturday, eleventh of the month. We will say the evening of Wednesday next."

Mrs. Westerfield sufficiently controlled herself to be able to review her engagements for the coming week. On Thursday, the delay exacted by the marriage license would expire, and the wedding might take place. On Friday, the express train conveyed passengers to Liverpool, to be in time for the departure of the steamer for New York on Saturday morning. Having made these calculations, she asked, with sully submission, if she was expected to call again on the Wednesday evening.

"No. Leave me your name and address. I will send you the cipher, interpreted, at eight o'clock."

Mrs. Westerfield laid one of her visiting cards on his desk, and left him.

8.--The Diamonds.

The new week was essentially a week of events.

On the Monday morning, Mrs. Westerfield and her faithful James had their first quarrel. She took the liberty of reminding him that it was time to give notice of the marriage at the church, and to secure berths in the steamer for herself and her son. Instead of answering one way or another, James asked how the Expert was getting on.

"Has your old man found out where the diamonds are?"

"Not yet."

"Then we'll wait till he does."

"Do you believe my word?" Mrs. Westerfield asked curtly.

James Bellbridge answered, with Roman brevity, "No."

This was an insult; Mrs. Westerfield expressed her sense of it. She rose, and pointed to the door. "Go back to America, as soon as you please," she said; "and find the money you want--if you can."

As a proof that she was in earnest she took her copy of the cipher out of the bosom of her dress, and threw it into the fire. "The original is safe in my old man's keeping," she added. "Leave the room."

James rose with suspicious docility, and walked out, having his own private

ends in view.

Half an hour later, Mrs. Westerfield's old man was interrupted over his work by a person of bulky and blackguard appearance, whom he had never seen before.

The stranger introduced himself as a gentleman who was engaged to marry Mrs. Westerfield: he requested (not at all politely) to be permitted to look at the cipher. He was asked if he had brought a written order to that effect, signed by the lady herself. Mr. Bellbridge, resting his fists on the writing-table, answered that he had come to look at the cipher on his own sole responsibility, and that he insisted on seeing it immediately. "Allow me to show you something else first," was the reply he received to this assertion of his will and pleasure. "Do you know a loaded pistol, sir, when you see it?" The barrel of the pistol approached within three inches of the barman's big head as he leaned over the writing-table. For once in his life he was taken by surprise. It had never occurred to him that a professed interpreter of ciphers might sometimes be trusted with secrets which placed him in a position of danger, and might therefore have wisely taken measures to protect himself. No power of persuasion is comparable to the power possessed by a loaded pistol. James left the room; and expressed his sentiments in language which has not yet found its way into any English Dictionary.

But he had two merits, when his temper was in a state of repose. He knew when he was beaten; and he thoroughly appreciated the value of the diamonds. When Mrs. Westerfield saw him again, on the next day, he appeared with undeniable claims on her mercy. Notice of the marriage had been received at the church; and a cabin had been secured for her on board the steamer.

Her prospects being thus settled, to her own satisfaction, Mrs. Westerfield was at liberty to make her arrangements for the desertion of poor little Syd.

The person on whose assistance she could rely was an unmarried elder sister, distinguished as proprietor of a cheap girls' school in one of the suburbs of London. This lady--known to local fame as Miss Wigger--had already proposed to take Syd into training as a pupil teacher. "I'll force the child on," Miss Wigger promised, "till she can earn her board and lodging by taking my lowest class. When she gets older she will replace my regular governess, and I shall save the salary."

With this proposal waiting for a reply, Mrs. Westerfield had only to inform her sister that it was accepted. "Come here," she wrote, "on Friday next, at

any time before two o'clock, and Syd shall be ready for you. P.S.--I am to be married again on Thursday, and start for America with my husband and my boy by next Saturday's steamer."

The letter was posted; and the mother's anxious mind was, to use her own phrase, relieved of another worry.

As the hour of eight drew near on Wednesday evening, Mrs. Westerfield's anxiety forced her to find relief in action of some kind. She opened the door of her sitting-room and listened on the stairs. It still wanted for a few minutes to eight o'clock, when there was a ring at the house-bell. She ran down to open the door. The servant happened to be in the hall, and answered the bell. The next moment, the door was suddenly closed again.

"Anybody there?" Mrs. Westerfield asked.

"No, ma'am."

This seemed strange. Had the old wretch deceived her, after all? "Look in the letter-box," she called out. The servant obeyed, and found a letter. Mrs. Westerfield tore it open, standing on the stairs. It contained half a sheet of common note-paper. The interpretation of the cipher was written on it in these words:

"Remember Number 12, Purbeck Road, St. John's Wood. Go to the summer-house in the back garden. Count to the fourth plank in the floor, reckoning from the side wall on the right as you enter the summer-house. Prize up the plank. Look under the mould and rubbish. Find the diamonds."

Not a word of explanation accompanied these lines. Neither had the original cipher been returned. The strange old man had earned his money, and had not attended to receive it--had not even sent word where or how it might be paid! Had he delivered his letter himself? He (or his messenger) had gone before the house-door could be opened!

A sudden suspicion of him turned her cold. Had he stolen the diamonds? She was on the point of sending for a cab, and driving it to his lodgings, when James came in, eager to know if the interpretation had arrived.

Keeping her suspicions to herself, she merely informed him that the interpretation was in her hands. He at once asked to see it. She refused to show it to him until he had made her his wife. "Put a chisel in your pocket, when we go to church, to-morrow morning," was the one hint she gave him.

As thoroughly worthy of each other as ever, the betrothed lovers distrusted each other to the last.

At eleven o'clock the next morning they were united in the bonds of wedlock; the landlord and the landlady of the public-house in which they had both served being the only witnesses present. The children were not permitted to see the ceremony. On leaving the church door, the married pair began their honeymoon by driving to St. John's Wood.

A dirty printed notice, in a broken window, announced that the House was To Let; and a sour-tempered woman informed them that they were free to look at the rooms.

The bride was in the best of humors. She set the bridegroom the example of keeping up appearances by examining the dilapidated house first. This done, she said sweetly to the person in charge, "May we look at the garden?"

The woman made a strange answer to this request. "That's curious," she said.

James interfered for the first time. "What's curious?" he asked roughly.

"Among all the idle people who have come here, at one time or another, to see this house," the woman said, "only two have wanted to look at the garden."

James turned on his heel, and made for the summer-house, leaving it to his wife to pursue the subject or not as she pleased. She did pursue the subject.

"I am one of the persons, of course," she said. "Who is the other?"

"An old man came on Monday."

The bride's pleasant smile vanished.

"What sort of person was he?" she asked.

The sour-tempered woman became sourer than ever.

"Oh, how can I tell! A brute. There!"

"A brute!" The very words which the new Mrs. Bellbridge had herself used when the Expert had irritated her. With serious misgivings, she, too, turned



her steps in the direction of the garden.

James had already followed her instructions and used his chisel. The plank lay loose on the floor. With both his big hands he rapidly cleared away the mould and the rubbish. In a few minutes the hiding-place was laid bare.

They looked into it. They looked at each other. There was the empty hole, telling its own story. The diamonds were gone.

#### 9.--The Mother.

Mrs. Bellbridge eyed her husband, prepared for a furious outbreak of rage. He stood silent, staring stupidly straight before him. The shock that had fallen on his dull brain had stunned it. For the time, he was a big idiot--speechless, harmless, helpless.

She put back the rubbish, and replaced the plank, and picked up the chisel. "Come, James," she said; "pull yourself together." It was useless to speak to him. She took his arm and led him out to the cab that was waiting at the door.

The driver, helping him to get in, noticed a piece of paper lying on the front seat. Advertisements, seeking publicity under all possible circumstances, are occasionally sent flying into the open windows of vehicles. The driver was about to throw the paper away, when Mrs. Bellbridge (seeing it on the other side) took it out of his hand. "It isn't print," she said; "it's writing." A closer examination showed that the writing was addressed to herself. Her correspondent must have followed her to the church, as well as to the house in St. John's Wood. He distinguished her by the name which she had changed that morning, under the sanction of the clergy and the law.

This was what she read: "Don't trouble yourself, madam, about the diamonds. You have made a mistake--you have employed the wrong man."

Those words--and no more. Enough, surely, to justify the conclusion that he had stolen the diamonds. Was it worth while to drive to his lodgings? They tried the experiment. The Expert had gone away on business--nobody knew where.

The newspaper came as usual on Friday morning. To Mrs. Bellbridge's amazement it set the question of the theft at rest, on the highest authority. An article appeared, in a conspicuous position, thus expressed:

"Another of the many proofs that truth is stranger than fiction has just occurred at Liverpool. A highly respected firm of shipwreckers in that city received a strange letter at the beginning of the present week. Premising that he had some remarkable circumstances to communicate, the writer of the letter entered abruptly on the narrative which follows: A friend of his--connected with literature--had, it appeared, noticed a lady's visiting card on his desk, and had been reminded by it (in what way it was not necessary to explain) of a criminal case which had excited considerable public interest at the time; viz., the trial of Captain Westerfield for willfully casting away a ship under his command. Never having heard of the trial, the writer, at his friend's suggestion, consulted a file of newspapers--discovered the report--and became aware, for the first time, that a collection of Brazilian diamonds, consigned to the Liverpool firm, was missing from the wrecked vessel when she had been boarded by the salvage party, and had not been found since. Events, which it was impossible for him to mention (seeing that doing so would involve a breach of confidence placed in him in his professional capacity), had revealed to his knowledge a hiding-place in which these same diamonds, in all probability, were concealed. This circumstance had left him no alternative, as an honest man, but to be beforehand with the persons, who (as he believed) contemplated stealing the precious stones. He had, accordingly, taken them under his protection, until they were identified and claimed by the rightful owners. In now appealing to these gentlemen, he stipulated that the claim should be set forth in writing, addressed to him under initials at a post-office in London. If the lost property was identified to his satisfaction, he would meet--at a specified place and on a certain day and hour--a person accredited by the firm and would personally restore the diamonds, without claiming (or consenting to receive) a reward. The conditions being complied with, this remarkable interview took place; the writer of the letter, described as an infirm old man very poorly dressed, fulfilled his engagement, took his receipt, and walked away without even waiting to be thanked. It is only an act of justice to add that the diamonds were afterward counted, and not one of them was missing."

Miserable, deservedly-miserable married pair. The stolen fortune, on which they had counted, had slipped through their fingers. The berths in the steamer for New York had been taken and paid for. James had married a woman with nothing besides herself to bestow on him, except an incumbrance in the shape of a boy.

Late on the fatal wedding-day his first idea, when he was himself again after the discovery in the summer-house, was to get back his passage-money, to abandon his wife and his stepson, and to escape to America in a French steamer. He went to the office of the English company, and offered the

places which he had taken for sale. The season of the year was against him; the passenger-traffic to America was at its lowest ebb, and profits depended upon freights alone.

If he still contemplated deserting his wife, he must also submit to sacrifice his money. The other alternative was (as he expressed it himself) to "have his pennyworth for his penny, and to turn his family to good account in New York." He had not quite decided what to do when he got home again on the evening of his marriage.

At that critical moment in her life the bride was equal to the demand on her resources.

If she was foolish enough to allow James to act on his natural impulses, there were probably two prospects before her. In one state of his temper, he might knock her down. In another state of his temper, he might leave her behind him. Her only hope of protecting herself, in either case, was to tame the bridegroom. In his absence, she wisely armed herself with the most irresistible fascinations of her sex. Never yet had he seen her dressed as she was dressed when he came home. Never yet had her magnificent eyes looked at him as they looked now. Emotions for which he was not prepared overcame this much injured man; he stared at the bride in helpless surprise. That inestimable moment of weakness was all Mrs. Bellbridge asked for. Bewildered by his own transformation, James found himself reading the newspaper the next morning sentimentally, with his arm round his wife's waist.

By a refinement of cruelty, not one word had been said to prepare little Syd for the dreary change that was now close at hand in her young life. The poor child had seen the preparations for departure, and had tried to imitate her mother in packing up. She had collected her few morsels of darned and ragged clothing, and had gone upstairs to put them into one of the dilapidated old trunks in the garret play ground, when the servant was sent to bring her back to the sitting-room. There, enthroned in an easy-chair, sat a strange lady; and there, hiding behind the chair in undisguised dislike of the visitor, was her little brother Roderick. Syd looked timidly at her mother; and her mother said:

"Here is your aunt."

The personal appearance of Miss Wigger might have suggested a modest

distrust of his own abilities to Lavater, when that self-sufficient man wrote his famous work on Physiognomy. Whatever betrayal of her inner self her face might have presented, in the distant time when she was young, was now completely overlaid by a surface of a flabby fat which, assisted by green spectacles, kept the virtues (or vices) of this woman's nature a profound secret until she opened her lips. When she used her voice, she let out the truth. Nobody could hear her speak, and doubt for a moment that she was an inveterately ill-natured woman.

"Make your curtsy, child!" said Miss Wigger. Nature had so toned her voice as to make it worthy of the terrors of her face. But for her petticoats, it would have been certainly taken for the voice of a man.

The child obeyed, trembling.

"You are to go away with me," the school-mistress proceeded, "and to be taught to make yourself useful under my roof."

Syd seemed to be incapable of understanding the fate that was in store for her. She sheltered herself behind her merciless mother. "I'm going away with you, mamma," she said--"with you and Rick."

Her mother took her by the shoulders, and pushed her across the room to her aunt.

The child looked at the formidable female creature with the man's voice and the green spectacles.

"You belong to me," said Miss Wigger, by way of encouragement, "and I have come to take you away." At those dreadful words, terror shook little Syd from head to foot. She fell on her knees with a cry of misery that might have melted the heart of a savage. "Oh, mamma, mamma, don't leave me behind! What have I done to deserve it? Oh, pray, pray, pray have some pity on me!"

Her mother was as selfish and as cruel a woman as ever lived. But even her hard heart felt faintly the influence of the most intimate and most sacred of all human relationships. Her florid cheeks turned pale. She hesitated.

Miss Wigger marked (through her own green medium) that moment of maternal indecision--and saw that it was time to assert her experience as an instructress of youth.

"Leave it to me," she said to her sister. "You never did know, and you never

will know, how to manage children."

She advanced. The child threw herself shrieking on the floor. Miss Wigger's long arms caught her up--held her--shook her. "Be quiet, you imp!" It was needless to tell her to be quiet. Syd's little curly head sank on the schoolmistress's shoulder. She was carried into exile without a word or a cry--she had fainted.

#### 10.--The School.

Time's march moves slowly, where weary lives languish in dull places.

Dating from one unkempt and unacknowledged birthday to another, Sydney Westerfield had attained the sixth year of her martyrdom at School. In that long interval no news of her mother, her brother, or her stepfather had reached England; she had received no letter, she had not even heard a report. Without friends, and without prospects, Roderick Westerfield's daughter was, in the saddest sense of the word, alone in the world.

The hands of the ugly old clock in the school-room were approaching the time when the studies of the morning would come to an end. Wearily waiting for their release, the scholars saw an event happen which was a novelty in their domestic experience. The maid-of-all-work audaciously put her head in at the door, and interrupted Miss Wigger conducting the education of the first-class.

"If you please, miss, there's a gentleman--"

Having uttered these introductory words, she was reduced to silence by the tremendous voice of her mistress.

"Haven't I forbidden you to come here in school hours? Go away directly!"

Hardened by a life of drudgery, under conditions of perpetual scolding, the servant stood her ground, and recovered the use of her tongue.

"There's a gentleman in the drawing-room," she persisted. Miss Wigger tried to interrupt her again. "And here's his card!" she shouted, in a voice that was the louder of the two.

Being a mortal creature, the schoolmistress was accessible to the

promptings of curiosity. She snatched the card out of the girl's hand.

Mr. Herbert Linley, Mount Morven, Perthshire. "I don't know this person," Miss Wigger declared. "You wretch, have you let a thief into the house?"

"A gentleman, if ever I see one yet," the servant asserted.

"Hold your tongue! Did he ask for me? Do you hear?"

"You told me to hold my tongue. No; he didn't ask for you."

"Then who did he want to see?"

"It's on his card."

Miss Wigger referred to the card again, and discovered (faintly traced in pencil) these words: "To see Miss S.W."

The schoolmistress instantly looked at Miss Westerfield. Miss Westerfield rose from her place at the head of her class.

The pupils, astonished at this daring act, all looked at the teacher--their natural enemy, appointed to supply them with undesired information derived from hated books. They saw one of Mother Nature's favorite daughters; designed to be the darling of her family, and the conqueror of hearts among men of all tastes and ages. But Sydney Westerfield had lived for six weary years in the place of earthly torment, kept by Miss Wigger under the name of a school. Every budding beauty, except the unassailable beauty of her eyes and her hair, had been nipped under the frosty superintendence of her maternal aunt. Her cheeks were hollow, her delicate lips were pale; her shabby dress lay flat over her bosom. Observant people, meeting her when she was out walking with the girls, were struck by her darkly gentle eyes, and by the patient sadness of her expression. "What a pity!" they said to each other. "She would be a pretty girl, if she didn't look so wretched and so thin."

At a loss to understand the audacity of her teacher in rising before the class was dismissed, Miss Wigger began by asserting her authority. She did in two words: "Sit down!"

"I wish to explain, ma'am."

"Sit down."

"I beg, Miss Wigger, that you will allow me to explain."

"Sydney Westerfield, you are setting the worst possible example to your class. I shall see this man myself. Will you sit down?"

Pale already, Sydney turned paler still. She obeyed the word of command--to the delight of the girls of her class. It was then within ten minutes of the half hour after twelve--when the pupils were dismissed to the playground while the cloth was laid for dinner. What use would the teacher make of that half hour of freedom?

In the meanwhile Miss Wigger had entered her drawing-room. With the slightest possible inclination of her head, she eyed the stranger through her green spectacles. Even under that disadvantage his appearance spoke for itself. The servant's estimate of him was beyond dispute. Mr. Herbert Linley's good breeding was even capable of suppressing all outward expression of the dismay that he felt, on finding himself face to face with the formidable person who had received him.

"What is your business, if you please?" Miss Wigger began.

Men, animals, and buildings wear out with years, and submit to their hard lot. Time only meets with flat contradiction when he ventures to tell a woman that she is growing old. Herbert Linley had rashly anticipated that the "young lady," whom it was the object of his visit to see, would prove to be young in the literal sense of the word. When he and Miss Wigger stood face to face, if the door had been set open for him, he would have left the house with the greatest pleasure.

"I have taken the liberty of calling," he said, "in answer to an advertisement. May I ask"--he paused, and took out a newspaper from the pocket of his overcoat--"If I have the honor of speaking to the lady who is mentioned here?"

He opened the newspaper, and pointed to the advertisement.

Miss Wigger's eyes rested--not on the passage indicated, but on the visitor's glove. It fitted him to such perfection that it suggested the enviable position in life which has gloves made to order. He politely pointed again. Still inaccessible to the newspaper, Miss Wigger turned her spectacles next to the front window of the room, and discovered a handsome carriage waiting at the door. (Money evidently in the pockets of those beautiful trousers, worthy

of the gloves!) As patiently as ever, Linley pointed for the third time, and drew Miss Wigger's attention in the right direction at last. She read the advertisement.

"A Young Lady wishes to be employed in the education of a little girl. Possessing but few accomplishments, and having been only a junior teacher at a school, she offers her services on trial, leaving it to her employer to pay whatever salary she may be considered to deserve, if she obtains a permanent engagement. Apply by letter, to S.W., 14, Delta Gardens, N.E."

"Most impertinent," said Miss Wigger.

Mr. Linley looked astonished.

"I say, most impertinent!" Miss Wigger repeated.

Mr. Linley attempted to pacify this terrible woman. "It's very stupid of me," he said; "I am afraid I don't quite understand you."

"One of my teachers has issued an advertisement, and has referred to My address, without first consulting Me. Have I made myself understood, sir?" She looked at the carriage again, when she called him "sir."

Not even Linley's capacity for self-restraint could repress the expression of relief, visible in his brightening face, when he discovered that the lady of the advertisement and the lady who terrified him were two different persons.

"Have I made myself understood?" Miss Wigger repeated.

"Perfectly, madam. At the same time, I am afraid I must own that the advertisement has produced a favorable impression on me."

"I fail entirely to see why," Miss Wigger remarked.

"There is surely," Linley repeated, "something straightforward--I might almost say, something innocent--in the manner in which the writer expresses herself. She seems to be singularly modest on the subject of her own attainments, and unusually considerate of the interests of others. I hope you will permit me--?"

Before he could add, "to see the young lady," the door was opened: a young lady entered the room.



Was she the writer of the advertisement? He felt sure of it, for no better reason than this: the moment he looked at her she interested him. It was an interest new to Linley, in his experience of himself. There was nothing to appeal to his admiration (by way of his senses) in the pale, worn young creature who stood near the door, resigned beforehand to whatever reception she might meet with. The poor teacher made him think of his happy young wife at home--of his pretty little girl, the spoiled child of the household. He looked at Sydney Westerfield with a heartfelt compassion which did honor to them both.

"What do you mean by coming here?" Miss Wigger inquired.

She answered gently, but not timidly. The tone in which the mistress had spoken had evidently not shaken her resolution, so far.

"I wish to know," she said, "if this gentleman desires to see me on the subject of my advertisement?"

"Your advertisement?" Miss Wigger repeated. "Miss Westerfield! how dare you beg for employment in a newspaper, without asking my leave?"

"I only waited to tell you what I had done, till I knew whether my advertisement would be answered or not."

She spoke as calmly as before, still submitting to the insolent authority of the schoolmistress with a steady fortitude very remarkable in any girl--and especially in a girl whose face revealed a sensitive nature. Linley approached her, and said his few kind words before Miss Wigger could assert herself for the third time.

"I am afraid I have taken a liberty in answering you personally, when I ought to have answered by letter. My only excuse is that I have no time to arrange for an interview, in London, by correspondence. I live in Scotland, and I am obliged to return by the mail to-night."

He paused. She was looking at him. Did she understand him?

She understood him only too well. For the first time, poor soul, in the miserable years of her school life, she saw eyes that rested on her with the sympathy that is too truly felt to be uttered in words. The admirable resignation which had learned its first hard lesson under her mother's neglect--which had endured, in after-years, the daily persecution that heartless companionship so well knows how to inflict--failed to sustain her,

when one kind look from a stranger poured its balm into the girl's sore heart. Her head sank; her wasted figure trembled; a few tears dropped slowly on the bosom of her shabby dress. She tried, desperately tried, to control herself. "I beg your pardon, sir," was all she could say; "I am not very well."

Miss Wigger tapped her on the shoulder and pointed to the door. "Are you well enough to see your way out?" she asked.

Linley turned on the wretch with a mind divided between wonder and disgust. "Good God, what has she done to deserve being treated in that way?" he asked.

Miss Wigger's mouth widened; Miss Wigger's forehead developed new wrinkles. To own it plainly, the schoolmistress smiled.

When it is of serious importance to a man to become acquainted with a woman's true nature--say, when he contemplates marriage--his one poor chance of arriving at a right conclusion is to find himself provoked by exasperating circumstances, and to fly into a passion. If the lady flies into a passion on her side, he may rely on it that her faults are more than balanced by her good qualities. If, on the other hand, she exhibits the most admirable self-control, and sets him an example which ought to make him ashamed of himself, he has seen a bad sign, and he will do well to remember it.

Miss Wigger's self-control put Herbert Linley in the wrong, before she took the trouble of noticing what he had said.

"If you were not out of temper," she replied, "I might have told you that I don't allow my house to be made an office for the engagement of governesses. As it is, I merely remind you that your carriage is at the door."

He took the only course that was open to him; he took his hat.

Sydney turned away to leave the room. Linley opened the door for her. "Don't be discouraged," he whispered as she passed him; "you shall hear from me." Having said this, he made his parting bow to the schoolmistress. Miss Wigger held up a peremptory forefinger, and stopped him on his way out. He waited, wondering what she would do next. She rang the bell.

"You are in the house of a gentlewoman," Miss Wigger explained. "My servant attends visitors, when they leave me." A faint smell of soap made

itself felt in the room; the maid appeared, wiping her smoking arms on her apron. "Door. I wish you good-morning"--were the last words of Miss Wigger.

Leaving the house, Linley slipped a bribe into the servant's hand. "I am going to write to Miss Westerfield," he said. "Will you see that she gets my letter?"

"That I will!"

He was surprised by the fervor with which the girl answered him. Absolutely without vanity, he had no suspicion of the value which his winning manner, his kind brown eyes, and his sunny smile had conferred on his little gift of money. A handsome man was an eighth wonder of the world, at Miss Wigger's school.

At the first stationer's shop that he passed, he stopped the carriage and wrote his letter.

"I shall be glad indeed if I can offer you a happier life than the life you are leading now. It rests with you to help me do this. Will you send me the address of your parents, if they are in London, or the name of any friend with whom I can arrange to give you a trial as governess to my little girl? I am waiting your answer in the neighborhood. If any hinderance should prevent you from replying at once, I add the name of the hotel at which I am staying--so that you may telegraph to me, before I leave London to-night."

The stationer's boy, inspired by a private view of half-a-crown, set off at a run--and returned at a run with a reply.

"I have neither parents nor friends, and I have just been dismissed from my employment at the school. Without references to speak for me, I must not take advantage of your generous offer. Will you help me to bear my disappointment, permitting me to see you, for a few minutes only, at your hotel? Indeed, indeed, sir, I am not forgetful of what I owe to my respect for you, and my respect for myself. I only ask leave to satisfy you that I am not quite unworthy of the interest which you have been pleased to feel in--S.W."

In those sad words, Sydney Westerfield announced that she had completed her education.

THE STORY

FIRST BOOK.

Chapter I. Mrs. Presty Presents Herself.

NOT far from the source of the famous river, which rises in the mountains between Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond, and divides the Highlands and the Lowlands of Scotland, travelers arrive at the venerable gray walls of Mount Morven; and, after consulting their guide books, ask permission to see the house.

What would be called, in a modern place of residence, the first floor, is reserved for the occupation of the family. The great hall of entrance, and its quaint old fireplace; the ancient rooms on the same level opening out of it, are freely shown to strangers. Cultivated travelers express various opinions relating to the family portraits, and the elaborately carved ceilings. The uninstructed public declines to trouble itself with criticism. It looks up at the towers and the loopholes, the battlements and the rusty old guns, which still bear witness to the perils of past times when the place was a fortress--it enters the gloomy hall, walks through the stone-paved rooms, stares at the faded pictures, and wonders at the lofty chimney-pieces hopelessly out of reach. Sometimes it sits on chairs which are as cold and as hard as iron, or timidly feels the legs of immovable tables which might be legs of elephants so far as size is concerned. When these marvels have been duly admired, and the guide books are shut up, the emancipated tourists, emerging into the light and air, all find the same social problem presented by a visit to Mount Morven: "How can the family live in such a place as that?"

If these strangers on their travels had been permitted to ascend to the first floor, and had been invited (for example) to say good-night to Mrs. Linley's pretty little daughter, they would have seen the stone walls of Kitty's bed-chamber snugly covered with velvet hangings which kept out the cold; they would have trod on a doubly-laid carpet, which set the chilly influences of the pavement beneath it at defiance; they would have looked at a bright little bed, of the last new pattern, worthy of a child's delicious sleep; and they would only have discovered that the room was three hundred years old when they had drawn aside the window curtains, and had revealed the adamantine solidity of the outer walls. Or, if they had been allowed to pursue their investigations a little further, and had found their way next

into Mrs. Linley's sitting room, here again a transformation scene would have revealed more modern luxury, presented in the perfection which implies restraint within the limits of good taste. But on this occasion, instead of seeing the head of a lively little child on the pillow, side by side with the head of her doll, they would have encountered an elderly lady of considerable size, fast asleep and snoring in a vast armchair, with a book on her lap. The married men among the tourists would have recognized a mother-in-law, and would have set an excellent example to the rest; that is to say, the example of leaving the room.

The lady composed under the soporific influence of literature was a person of importance in the house--holding rank as Mrs. Linley's mother; and being otherwise noticeable for having married two husbands, and survived them both.

The first of these gentlemen--the Right Honorable Joseph Norman--had been a member of Parliament, and had taken office under Government. Mrs. Linley was his one surviving child. He died at an advanced age; leaving his handsome widow (young enough, as she was always ready to mention, to be his daughter) well provided for, and an object of matrimonial aspiration to single gentlemen who admired size in a woman, set off by money. After hesitating for some little time, Mrs. Norman accepted the proposal of the ugliest and dullest man among the ranks of her admirers. Why she became the wife of Mr. Presty (known in commercial circles as a merchant enriched by the sale of vinegar) she was never able to explain. Why she lamented him, with tears of sincere sorrow, when he died after two years of married life, was a mystery which puzzled her nearest and dearest friends. And why when she indulged (a little too frequently) in recollections of her married life, she persisted in putting obscure Mr. Presty on a level with distinguished Mr. Norman, was a secret which this remarkable woman had never been known to reveal. Presented by their widow with the strictest impartiality to the general view, the characters of these two husbands combined, by force of contrast, the ideal of manly perfection. That is to say, the vices of Mr. Norman were the virtues of Mr. Presty; and the vices of Mr. Presty were the virtues of Mr. Norman.

Returning to the sitting-room after bidding Kitty goodnight, Mrs. Linley discovered the old lady asleep, and saw that the book on her mother's lap was sliding off. Before she could check the downward movement, the book fell on the floor, and Mrs. Presty woke.

"Oh, mamma, I am so sorry! I was just too late to catch it."

"It doesn't matter, my dear. I daresay I should go to sleep again, if I went on with my novel."

"Is it really as dull as that?"

"Dull?" Mrs. Presty repeated. "You are evidently not aware of what the new school of novel writing is doing. The new school provides the public with soothing fiction."

"Are you speaking seriously, mamma?"

"Seriously, Catherine--and gratefully. These new writers are so good to old women. No story to excite our poor nerves; no improper characters to cheat us out of our sympathies, no dramatic situations to frighten us; exquisite management of details (as the reviews say), and a masterly anatomy of human motives which--I know what I mean, my dear, but I can't explain it."

"I think I understand, mamma. A masterly anatomy of human motives which is in itself a motive of human sleep. No; I won't borrow your novel just now. I don't want to go to sleep; I am thinking of Herbert in London."

Mrs. Presty consulted her watch.

"Your husband is no longer in London," she announced; "he has begun his journey home. Give me the railway guide, and I'll tell you when he will be here tomorrow. You may trust me, Catherine, to make no mistakes. Mr. Presty's wonderful knowledge of figures has been of the greatest use to me in later life. Thanks to his instructions, I am the only person in the house who can grapple with the intricacies of our railway system. Your poor father, Mr. Norman, could never understand time-tables and never attempted to conceal his deficiencies. He had none of the vanity (harmless vanity, perhaps) which led poor Mr. Presty to express positive opinions on matters of which he knew nothing, such as pictures and music. What do you want, Malcolm?"

The servant to whom this question was addressed answered: "A telegram, ma'am, for the mistress."

Mrs. Linley recoiled from the message when the man offered it to her. Not usually a very demonstrative person, the feeling of alarm which had seized on her only expressed itself in a sudden change of color. "An accident!" she said faintly. "An accident on the railway!"

Mrs. Presty opened the telegram.

"If you had been the wife of a Cabinet Minister," she said to her daughter, "you would have been too well used to telegrams to let them frighten you. Mr. Presty (who received his telegrams at his office) was not quite just to the memory of my first husband. He used to blame Mr. Norman for letting me see his telegrams. But Mr. Presty's nature had all the poetry in which Mr. Norman's nature was deficient. He saw the angelic side of women--and thought telegrams and business, and all that sort of thing, unworthy of our mission. I don't exactly understand what our mission is--"

"Mamma! mamma! is Herbert hurt?"

"Stuff and nonsense! Nobody is hurt; there has been no accident."

"They why does he telegraph to me?"

Hitherto, Mrs. Presty had only looked at the message. She now read it through attentively to the end. Her face assumed an expression of stern distrust. She shook her head.

"Read it yourself," she answered; "and remember what I told you, when you trusted your husband to find a governess for my grandchild. I said: 'You do not know men as I do.' I hope you may not live to repent it."

Mrs. Linley was too fond of her husband to let this pass. "Why shouldn't I trust him?" she asked. "He was going to London on business--and it was an excellent opportunity."

Mrs. Presty disposed of this weak defense of her daughter's conduct by waving her hand. "Read your telegram," she repeated with dignity, "and judge for yourself."

Mrs. Linley read:

"I have engaged a governess. She will travel in the same train with me. I think I ought to prepare you to receive a person whom you may be surprised to see. She is very young, and very inexperienced; quite unlike the ordinary run of governesses. When you hear how cruelly the poor girl has been used, I am sure you will sympathize with her as I do."

Mrs. Linley laid down the message, with a smile.

"Poor dear Herbert!" she said tenderly. "After we have been eight years married, is he really afraid that I shall be jealous? Mamma! Why are you looking so serious?"

Mrs. Presty took the telegram from her daughter and read extracts from it with indignant emphasis of voice and manner.

"Travels in the same train with him. Very young, and very inexperienced. And he sympathizes with her. Ha! I know the men, Catherine--I know the men!"