BOOK THE FOURTH.

I. MISS GWILT'S DIARY.

"NAPLES, October 10th.--It is two months to-day since I declared that I had closed my Diary, never to open it again.

"Why have I broken my resolution? Why have I gone back to this secret friend of my wretchedest and wickedest hours? Because I am more friendless than ever; because I am more lonely than ever, though my husband is sitting writing in the next room to me. My misery is a woman's misery, and it will speak--here, rather than nowhere; to my second self, in this book, if I have no one else to hear me.

"How happy I was in the first days that followed our marriage, and how happy I made him! Only two months have passed, and that time is a by-gone time already! I try to think of anything I might have said or done wrongly, on my side--of anything he might have said or done wrongly, on his; and I can remember nothing unworthy of my husband, nothing unworthy of myself. I cannot even lay my finger on the day when the cloud first rose between us.

"I could bear it, if I loved him less dearly than I do. I could conquer the misery of our estrangement, if he only showed the change in him as brutally as other men would show it.

"But this never has happened--never will happen. It is not in his nature to inflict suffering on others. Not a hard word, not a hard look, escapes him. It is only at night, when I hear him sighing in his sleep, and sometimes when I see him dreaming in the morning hours, that I know how hopelessly I am losing the love he once felt for me. He hides, or tries to hide, it in the day, for my sake. He is all gentleness, all kindness; but his heart is not on his lips when he kisses me now; his hand tells me nothing when it touches mine. Day after day the hours that he gives to his hateful writing grow longer and longer; day after day he becomes more and more silent in the hours that he gives to me.

"And, with all this, there is nothing that I can complain of--nothing marked

enough to justify me in noticing it. His disappointment shrinks from all open confession; his resignation collects itself by such fine degrees that even my watchfulness fails to see the growth of it. Fifty times a day I feel the longing in me to throw my arms round his neck, and say: 'For God's sake, do anything to me, rather than treat me like this!' and fifty times a day the words are forced back into my heart by the cruel considerateness of his conduct; which gives me no excuse for speaking them. I thought I had suffered the sharpest pain that I could feel when my first husband laid his whip across my face. I thought I knew the worst that despair could do on the day when I knew that the other villain, the meaner villain still, had cast me off. Live and learn. There is sharper pain than I felt under Waldron's whip; there is bitterer despair than the despair I knew when Manuel deserted me.

"Am I too old for him? Surely not yet! Have I lost my beauty? Not a man passes me in the street but his eyes tell me I am as handsome as ever.

"Ah, no! no! the secret lies deeper than that! I have thought and thought about it till a horrible fancy has taken possession of me. He has been noble and good in his past life, and I have been wicked and disgraced. Who can tell what a gap that dreadful difference may make between us, unknown to him and unknown to me? It is folly, it is madness; but, when I lie awake by him in the darkness, I ask myself whether any unconscious disclosure of the truth escapes me in the close intimacy that now unites us? Is there an unutterable Something left by the horror of my past life, which clings invisibly to me still? And is he feeling the influence of it, sensibly, and yet incomprehensibly to himself? Oh me! is there no purifying power in such love as mine? Are there plague-spots of past wickedness on my heart which no after-repentance can wash out?

"Who can tell? There is something wrong in our married life--I can only come back to that. There is some adverse influence that neither he nor I can trace which is parting us further and further from each other day by day. Well! I suppose I shall be hardened in time, and learn to bear it.

"An open carriage has just driven by my window, with a nicely dressed lady in it. She had her husband by her side, and her children on the seat opposite. At the moment when I saw her she was laughing and talking in high spirits--a sparkling, light-hearted, happy woman. Ah, my lady, when you were a few years younger, if you had been left to yourself, and thrown on the world like me--"

"October 11th.--The eleventh day of the month was the day (two months

since) when we were married. He said nothing about it to me when we woke, nor I to him. But I thought I would make it the occasion, at breakfast-time, of trying to win him back.

"I don't think I ever took such pains with my toilet before. I don't think I ever looked better than I looked when I went downstairs this morning. He had breakfasted by himself, and I found a little slip of paper on the table with an apology written on it. The post to England, he said, went out that day and his letter to the newspaper must be finished. In his place I would have let fifty posts go out rather than breakfast without him. I went into his room. There he was, immersed body and soul in his hateful writing! 'Can't you give me a little time this morning?' I asked. He got up with a start. 'Certainly, if you wish it.' He never even looked at me as he said the words. The very sound of his voice told me that all his interest was centered in the pen that he had just laid down. 'I see you are occupied,' I said; 'I don't wish it.' Before I had closed the door on him he was back at his desk. I have often heard that the wives of authors have been for the most part unhappy women. And now I know why.

"I suppose, as I said yesterday, I shall learn to bear it. (What stuff, by-the-by, I seem to have written yesterday! How ashamed I should be if anybody saw it but myself!) I hope the trumpery newspaper he writes for won't succeed! I hope his rubbishing letter will be well cut up by some other newspaper as soon as it gets into print!

"What am I to do with myself all the morning? I can't go out, it's raining. If I open the piano, I shall disturb the industrious journalist who is scribbling in the next room. Oh, dear, it was lonely enough in my lodging in Thorpe Ambrose, but how much lonelier it is here! Shall I read? No; books don't interest me; I hate the whole tribe of authors. I think I shall look back through these pages, and live my life over again when I was plotting and planning, and finding a new excitement to occupy me in every new hour of the day.

"He might have looked at me, though he was so busy with his writing.--He might have said, 'How nicely you are dressed this morning!' He might have remembered--never mind what! All he remembers is the newspaper."

"Twelve o'clock.--I have been reading and thinking; and, thanks to my Diary, I have got through an hour.

"What a time it was--what a life it was, at Thorpe Ambrose! I wonder I kept my senses. It makes my heart beat, it makes my face flush, only to read

about it now!

"The rain still falls, and the journalist still scribbles. I don't want to think the thoughts of that past time over again. And yet, what else can I do?

"Supposing--I only say supposing--I felt now, as I felt when I traveled to London with Armadale; and when I saw my way to his life as plainly as I saw the man himself all through the journey...?

"I'll go and look out of the window. I'll go and count the people as they pass by.

"A funeral has gone by, with the penitents in their black hoods, and the wax torches sputtering in the wet, and the little bell ringing, and the priests droning their monotonous chant. A pleasant sight to meet me at the window! I shall go back to my Diary.

"Supposing I was not the altered woman I am--I only say, supposing--how would the Grand Risk that I once thought of running look now? I have married Midwinter in the name that is really his own. And by doing that I have taken the first of those three steps which were once to lead me, through Armadale's life, to the fortune and the station of Armadale's widow. No matter how innocent my intentions might have been on the wedding-day--and they were innocent--this is one of the unalterable results of the marriage. Well, having taken the first step, then, whether I would or no, how--supposing I meant to take the second step, which I don't--how would present circumstances stand toward me? Would they warn me to draw back, I wonder? or would they encourage me to go on?

"It will interest me to calculate the chances; and I can easily tear the leaf out, and destroy it, if the prospect looks too encouraging.

"We are living here (for economy's sake) far away from the expensive English quarter, in a suburb of the city, on the Portici side. We have made no traveling acquaintances among our own country people. Our poverty is against us; Midwinter's shyness is against us; and (with the women) my personal appearance is against us. The men from whom my husband gets his information for the newspaper meet him at the cafe, and never come here. I discourage his bringing any strangers to see me; for, though years have passed since I was last at Naples, I cannot be sure that some of the many people I once knew in this place may not be living still. The moral of all this is (as the children's storybooks say), that not a single witness has come to this house who could declare, if any after-inquiry took place in

England, that Midwinter and I had been living here as man and wife. So much for present circumstances as they affect me.

"Armadale next. Has any unforeseen accident led him to communicate with Thorpe Ambrose? Has he broken the conditions which the major imposed on him, and asserted himself in the character of Miss Milroy's promised husband since I saw him last?

"Nothing of the sort has taken place. No unforeseen accident has altered his position--his tempting position--toward myself. I know all that has happened to him since he left England, through the letters which he writes to Midwinter, and which Midwinter shows to me.

"He has been wrecked, to begin with. His trumpery little yacht has actually tried to drown him, after all, and has failed! It happened (as Midwinter warned him it might happen with so small a vessel) in a sudden storm. They were blown ashore on the coast of Portugal. The yacht went to pieces, but the lives, and papers, and so on, were saved. The men have been sent back to Bristol, with recommendations from their master which have already got them employment on board an outward-bound ship. And the master himself is on his way here, after stopping first at Lisbon, and next at Gibraltar, and trying ineffectually in both places to supply himself with another vessel. His third attempt is to be made at Naples, where there is an English yacht 'laid up,' as they call it, to be had for sale or hire. He has had no occasion to write home since the wreck; for he took away from Coutts's the whole of the large sum of money lodged there for him, in circular notes. And he has felt no inclination to go back to England himself; for, with Mr. Brock dead, Miss Milroy at school, and Midwinter here, he has not a living creature in whom he is interested to welcome him if he returned. To see us, and to see the new yacht, are the only two present objects he has in view. Midwinter has been expecting him for a week past, and he may walk into this very room in which I am writing, at this very moment, for all I know to the contrary.

"Tempting circumstances, these--with all the wrongs I have suffered at his mother's hands and at his, still alive in my memory; with Miss Milroy confidently waiting to take her place at the head of his household; with my dream of living happy and innocent in Midwinter's love dispelled forever, and with nothing left in its place to help me against myself. I wish it wasn't raining; I wish I could go out.

"Perhaps something may happen to prevent Armadale from coming to Naples? When he last wrote, he was waiting at Gibraltar for an English steamer in the Mediterranean trade to bring him on here. He may get tired

of waiting before the steamer comes, or he may hear of a yacht at some other place than this. A little bird whispers in my ear that it may possibly be the wisest thing he ever did in his life if he breaks his engagement to join us at Naples.

"Shall I tear out the leaf on which all these shocking things have been written? No. My Diary is so nicely bound--it would be positive barbarity to tear out a leaf. Let me occupy myself harmlessly with something else. What shall it be? My dressing-case--I will put my dressing-case tidy, and polish up the few little things in it which my misfortunes have still left in my possession.

"I have shut up the dressing-case again. The first thing I found in it was Armadale's shabby present to me on my marriage--the rubbishing little ruby ring. That irritated me, to begin with. The second thing that turned up was my bottle of Drops. I caught myself measuring the doses with my eye, and calculating how many of them would be enough to take a living creature over the border-land between sleep and death. Why I should have locked the dressing-case in a fright, before I had quite completed my calculation, I don't know; but I did lock it. And here I am back again at my Diary, with nothing, absolutely nothing, to write about. Oh, the weary day! the weary day! Will nothing happen to excite me a little in this horrible place?"

"October 12th.--Midwinter's all-important letter to the newspaper was dispatched by the post last night. I was foolish enough to suppose that I might be honored by having some of his spare attention bestowed on me to-day. Nothing of the sort! He had a restless night, after all his writing, and got up with his head aching, and his spirits miserably depressed. When he is in this state, his favorite remedy is to return to his old vagabond habits, and go roaming away by himself nobody knows where. He went through the form this morning (knowing I had no riding habit) of offering to hire a little broken-kneed brute of a pony for me, in case I wished to accompany him! I preferred remaining at home. I will have a handsome horse and a handsome habit, or I won't ride at all. He went away, without attempting to persuade me to change my mind. I wouldn't have changed it, of course; but he might have tried to persuade me all the same.

"I can open the piano in his absence--that is one comfort. And I am in a fine humor for playing--that is another. There is a sonata of Beethoven's (I forget the number), which always suggests to me the agony of lost spirits in a place of torment. Come, my fingers and thumbs, and take me among the lost spirits this morning!"

"October 13th.--Our windows look out on the sea. At noon to-day we saw a steamer coming in, with the English flag flying. Midwinter has gone to the port, on the chance that this may be the vessel from Gibraltar, with Armadale on board.

"Two o'clock.--It is the vessel from Gibraltar. Armadale has added one more to the long list of his blunders: he has kept his engagement to join us at Naples.

"How will it end now?

"Who knows?"

"October 16th.--Two days missed out of my Diary! I can hardly tell why, unless it is that Armadale irritates me beyond all endurance. The mere sight of him takes me back to Thorpe Ambrose. I fancy I must have been afraid of what I might write about him, in the course of the last two days, if I indulged myself in the dangerous luxury of opening these pages.

"This morning I am afraid of nothing, and I take up my pen again accordingly.

"Is there any limit, I wonder, to the brutish stupidity of some men? I thought I had discovered Armadale's limit when I was his neighbor in Norfolk; but my later experience at Naples shows me that I was wrong. He is perpetually in and out of this house (crossing over to us in a boat from the hotel at Santa Lucia, where he sleeps); and he has exactly two subjects of conversation--the yacht for sale in the harbor here, and Miss Milroy. Yes! he selects ME as the confidante of his devoted attachment to the major's daughter! 'It's so nice to talk to a woman about it!' That is all the apology he has thought it necessary to make for appealing to my sympathies--my sympathies!--on the subject of 'his darling Neelie,' fifty times a day. He is evidently persuaded (if he thinks about it at all) that I have forgotten, as completely as he has forgotten, all that once passed between us when I was first at Thorpe Ambrose. Such an utter want of the commonest delicacy and the commonest tact, in a creature who is, to all appearance, possessed of a skin, and not a hide, and who does, unless my ears deceive me, talk, and not bray, is really quite incredible when one comes to think of it. But it is, for all that, quite true. He asked me--he actually asked me, last night--how many hundreds a year the wife of a rich man could spend on her dress. 'Don't put it too low,' the idiot added, with his intolerable grin. 'Neelie shall be one of the best-dressed women in England when I have married her.' And this to me, after having had him at my feet, and then losing him again

through Miss Milroy! This to me, with an alpaca gown on, and a husband whose income must be helped by a newspaper!

"I had better not dwell on it any longer. I had better think and write of something else.

"The yacht. As a relief from hearing about Miss Milroy, I declare the yacht in the harbor is quite an interesting subject to me! She (the men call a vessel 'She'; and I suppose, if the women took an interest in such things, they would call a vessel 'He')--she is a beautiful model; and her 'top-sides' (whatever they may be) are especially distinguished by being built of mahogany. But, with these merits, she has the defect, on the other hand, of being old--which is a sad drawback--and the crew and the sailing-master have been 'paid off,' and sent home to England--which is additionally distressing. Still, if a new crew and a new sailing-master can be picked up here, such a beautiful creature (with all her drawbacks), is not to be despised. It might answer to hire her for a cruise, and to see how she behaves. (If she is of my mind, her behavior will rather astonish her new master!) The cruise will determine what faults she has, and what repairs, through the unlucky circumstance of her age, she really stands in need of. And then it will be time to settle whether to buy her outright or not. Such is Armadale's conversation when he is not talking of 'his darling Neelie.' And Midwinter, who can steal no time from his newspaper work for his wife, can steal hours for his friend, and can offer them unreservedly to my irresistible rival, the new yacht.

"I shall write no more to-day. If so lady-like a person as I am could feel a tigerish tingling all over her to the very tips of her fingers, I should suspect myself of being in that condition at the present moment. But, with my manners and accomplishments, the thing is, of course, out of the question. We all know that a lady has no passions."

"October 17th.--A letter for Midwinter this morning from the slave-owners--I mean the newspaper people in London--which has set him at work again harder than ever. A visit at luncheon-time and another visit at dinner-time from Armadale. Conversation at luncheon about the yacht. Conversation at dinner about Miss Milroy. I have been honored, in regard to that young lady, by an invitation to go with Armadale to-morrow to the Toledo, and help him to buy some presents for the beloved object. I didn't fly out at him--I only made an excuse. Can words express the astonishment I feel at my own patience? No words can express it."

"October 18th.--Armadale came to breakfast this morning, by way of

catching Midwinter before he shuts himself up over his work.

"Conversation the same as yesterday's conversation at lunch. Armadale has made his bargain with the agent for hiring the yacht. The agent (compassionating his total ignorance of the language) has helped him to find an interpreter, but can't help him to find a crew. The interpreter is civil and willing, but doesn't understand the sea. Midwinter's assistance is indispensable; and Midwinter is requested (and consents!) to work harder than ever, so as to make time for helping his friend. When the crew is found, the merits and defects of the vessel are to be tried by a cruise to Sicily, with Midwinter on board to give his opinion. Lastly (in case she should feel lonely), the ladies' cabin is most obligingly placed at the disposal of Midwinter's wife. All this was settled at the breakfast-table; and it ended with one of Armadale's neatly-turned compliments, addressed to myself: 'I mean to take Neelie sailing with me, when we are married. And you have such good taste, you will be able to tell me everything the ladies' cabin wants between that time and this.'

"If some women bring such men as this into the world, ought other women to allow them to live? It is a matter of opinion. I think not.

"What maddens me is to see, as I do see plainly, that Midwinter finds in Armadale's company, and in Armadale's new yacht, a refuge from me. He is always in better spirits when Armadale is here. He forgets me in Armadale almost as completely as he forgets me in his work. And I bear it! What a pattern wife, what an excellent Christian I am!"

"October 19th.--Nothing new. Yesterday over again."

"October 20th.--One piece of news. Midwinter is suffering from nervous headache; and is working in spite of it, to make time for his holiday with his friend."

"October 21st.--Midwinter is worse. Angry and wild and unapproachable, after two bad nights, and two uninterrupted days at his desk. Under any other circumstances he would take the warning and leave off. But nothing warns him now. He is still working as hard as ever, for Armadale's sake. How much longer will my patience last?"

"October 22d.--Signs, last night, that Midwinter is taxing his brains beyond what his brains will bear. When he did fall asleep, he was frightfully restless; groaning and talking and grinding his teeth. From some of the words I heard, he seemed at one time to be dreaming of his life when he was a boy,

roaming the country with the dancing dogs. At another time he was back again with Armadale, imprisoned all night on the wrecked ship. Toward the early morning hours he grew quieter. I fell asleep; and, waking after a short interval, found myself alone. My first glance round showed me a light burning in Midwinter's dressing-room. I rose softly, and went to look at him.

"He was seated in the great, ugly, old-fashioned chair, which I ordered to be removed into the dressing-room out of the way when we first came here. His head lay back, and one of his hands hung listlessly over the arm of the chair. The other hand was on his lap. I stole a little nearer, and saw that exhaustion had overpowered him while he was either reading or writing, for there were books, pens, ink, and paper on the table before him. What had he got up to do secretly, at that hour of the morning? I looked closer at the papers on the table. They were all neatly folded (as he usually keeps them), with one exception; and that exception, lying open on the rest, was Mr. Brock's letter.

"I looked round at him again, after making this discovery, and then noticed for the first time another written paper, lying under the hand that rested on his lap. There was no moving it away without the risk of waking him. Part of the open manuscript, however, was not covered by his hand. I looked at it to see what he had secretly stolen away to read, besides Mr. Brock's letter; and made out enough to tell me that it was the Narrative of Armadale's Dream.

"That second discovery sent me back at once to my bed--with something serious to think of.

"Traveling through France, on our way to this place, Midwinter's shyness was conquered for once, by a very pleasant man--an Irish doctor--whom we met in the railway carriage, and who quite insisted on being friendly and sociable with us all through the day's journey. Finding that Midwinter was devoting himself to literary pursuits, our traveling companion warned him not to pass too many hours together at his desk. 'Your face tells me more than you think,' the doctor said: 'If you are ever tempted to overwork your brain, you will feel it sooner than most men. When you find your nerves playing you strange tricks, don't neglect the warning--drop your pen.'

"After my last night's discovery in the dressing-room, it looks as if Midwinter's nerves were beginning already to justify the doctor's opinion of them. If one of the tricks they are playing him is the trick of tormenting him again with his old superstitious terrors, there will be a change in our lives here before long. I shall wait curiously to see whether the conviction that we two are destined to bring fatal danger to Armadale takes possession of

Midwinter's mind once more. If it does, I know what will happen. He will not stir a step toward helping his friend to find a crew for the yacht; and he will certainly refuse to sail with Armadale, or to let me sail with him, on the trial cruise."

"October 23d.--Mr. Brock's letter has, apparently, not lost its influence yet. Midwinter is working again to-day, and is as anxious as ever for the holiday-time that he is to pass with his friend.

"Two o'clock.--Armadale here as usual; eager to know when Midwinter will be at his service. No definite answer to be given to the question yet, seeing that it all depends on Midwinter's capacity to continue at his desk. Armadale sat down disappointed; he yawned, and put his great clumsy hands in his pockets. I took up a book. The brute didn't understand that I wanted to be left alone; he began again on the unendurable subject of Miss Milroy, and of all the fine things she was to have when he married her. Her own riding-horse; her own pony-carriage; her own beautiful little sitting-room upstairs at the great house, and so on. All that I might have had once Miss Milroy is to have now--if I let her."

"Six o'clock.--More of the everlasting Armadale! Half an hour since, Midwinter came in from his writing, giddy and exhausted. I had been pining all day for a little music, and I knew they were giving 'Norma' at the theater here. It struck me that an hour or two at the opera might do Midwinter good, as well as me; and I said: 'Why not take a box at the San Carlo to-night?' He answered, in a dull, uninterested manner, that he was not rich enough to take a box. Armadale was present, and flourished his well-filled purse in his usual insufferable way. 'I'm rich enough, old boy, and it comes to the same thing.' With those words he took up his hat, and trampled out on his great elephant's feet to get the box. I looked after him from the window as he went down the street. 'Your widow, with her twelve hundred a year,' I thought to myself, 'might take a box at the San Carlo whenever she pleased, without being beholden to anybody.' The empty-headed wretch whistled as he went his way to the theater, and tossed his loose silver magnificently to every beggar who ran after him."

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"Midnight.--I am alone again at last. Have I nerve enough to write the history of this terrible evening, just as it has passed? I have nerve enough, at any rate, to turn to a new leaf, and try."

II. THE DIARY CONTINUED.

"We went to the San Carlo. Armadale's stupidity showed itself, even in such a simple matter as taking a box. He had confounded an opera with a play, and had chosen a box close to the stage, with the idea that one's chief object at a musical performance is to see the faces of the singers as plainly as possible! Fortunately for our ears, Bellini's lovely melodies are, for the most part, tenderly and delicately accompanied--or the orchestra might have deafened us.

"I sat back in the box at first, well out of sight; for it was impossible to be sure that some of my old friends of former days at Naples might not be in the theater. But the sweet music gradually tempted me out of my seclusion. I was so charmed and interested that I leaned forward without knowing it, and looked at the stage.

"I was made aware of my own imprudence by a discovery which, for the moment, literally chilled my blood. One of the singers, among the chorus of Druids, was looking at me while he sang with the rest. His head was disguised in the long white hair, and the lower part of his face was completely covered with the flowing white beard proper to the character. But the eyes with which he looked at me were the eyes of the one man on earth whom I have most reason to dread ever seeing again--Manuel!

"If it had not been for my smelling-bottle, I believe I should have lost my senses. As it was, I drew back again into the shadow. Even Armadale noticed the sudden change in me: he, as well as Midwinter, asked if I was ill. I said I felt the heat, but hoped I should be better presently; and then leaned back in the box, and tried to rally my courage. I succeeded in recovering self-possession enough to be able to look again at the stage (without showing myself) the next time the chorus appeared. There was the man again! But to my infinite relief he never looked toward our box a second time. This welcome indifference, on his part, helped to satisfy me that I had seen an extraordinary accidental resemblance, and nothing more. I still hold to this conclusion, after having had leisure to think; but my mind would be more completely at ease than it is if I had seen the rest of the man's face without the stage disguises that hid it from all investigation.

"When the curtain fell on the first act, there was a tiresome ballet to be performed (according to the absurd Italian custom), before the opera went on. Though I had got over my first fright, I had been far too seriously startled to feel comfortable in the theater. I dreaded all sorts of impossible accidents; and when Midwinter and Armadale put the question to me, I told

them I was not well enough to stay through the rest of the performance.

"At the door of the theater Armadale proposed to say good-night. But Midwinter--evidently dreading the evening with me--asked him to come back to supper, if I had no objection. I said the necessary words, and we all three returned together to this house.

"Ten minutes' quiet in my own room (assisted by a little dose of eau-de-cologne and water) restored me to myself. I joined the men at the supper-table. They received my apologies for taking them away from the opera, with the complimentary assurance that I had not cost either of them the slightest sacrifice of his own pleasure. Midwinter declared that he was too completely worn out to care for anything but the two great blessings, unattainable at the theater, of quiet and fresh air. Armadale said--with an Englishman's exasperating pride in his own stupidity wherever a matter of art is concerned--that he couldn't make head or tail of the performance. The principal disappointment, he was good enough to add, was mine, for I evidently understood foreign music, and enjoyed it. Ladies generally did. His darling little Neelie--

"I was in no humor to be persecuted with his 'Darling Neelie' after what I had gone through at the theater. It might have been the irritated state of my nerves, or it might have been the eau-de-cologne flying to my head, but the bare mention of the girl seemed to set me in a flame. I tried to turn Armadale's attention in the direction of the supper-table. He was much obliged, but he had no appetite for more. I offered him wine next, the wine of the country, which is all that our poverty allows us to place on the table. He was much obliged again. The foreign wine was very little more to his taste than the foreign music; but he would take some because I asked him; and he would drink my health in the old-fashioned way, with his best wishes for the happy time when we should all meet again at Thorpe Ambrose, and when there would be a mistress to welcome me at the great house.

"Was he mad to persist in this way? No; his face answered for him. He was under the impression that he was making himself particularly agreeable to me.

"I looked at Midwinter. He might have seen some reason for interfering to change the conversation, if he had looked at me in return. But he sat silent in his chair, irritable and overworked, with his eyes on the ground, thinking.

"I got up and went to the window. Still impenetrable to a sense of his own clumsiness, Armadale followed me. If I had been strong enough to toss him

out of the window into the sea, I should certainly have done it at that moment. Not being strong enough, I looked steadily at the view over the bay, and gave him a hint, the broadest and rudest I could think of, to go.

"'A lovely night for a walk,' I said, 'if you are tempted to walk back to the hotel.'

"I doubt if he heard me. At any rate, I produced no sort of effect on him. He stood staring sentimentally at the moonlight; and--there is really no other word to express it--blew a sigh. I felt a presentiment of what was coming, unless I stopped his mouth by speaking first.

"'With all your fondness for England,' I said, 'you must own that we have no such moonlight as that at home.'

"He looked at me vacantly, and blew another sigh.

"'I wonder whether it is fine to-night in England as it is here?' he said. 'I wonder whether my dear little girl at home is looking at the moonlight, and thinking of me?'

"I could endure it no longer. I flew out at him at last.

"'Good heavens, Mr. Armadale!' I exclaimed, 'is there only one subject worth mentioning, in the narrow little world you live in? I'm sick to death of Miss Milroy. Do pray talk of something else?'

"His great, broad, stupid face colored up to the roots of his hideous yellow hair. 'I beg your pardon,' he stammered, with a kind of sulky surprise. 'I didn't suppose--' He stopped confusedly, and looked from me to Midwinter. I understood what the look meant. 'I didn't suppose she could be jealous of Miss Milroy after marrying you!' That is what he would have said to Midwinter, if I had left them alone together in the room!

"As it was, Midwinter had heard us. Before I could speak again--before Armadale could add another word--he finished his friend's uncompleted sentence, in a tone that I now heard, and with a look that I now saw, for the first time.

"'You didn't suppose, Allan,' he said, 'that a lady's temper could be so easily provoked.'

"The first bitter word of irony, the first hard look of contempt, I had ever had

from him! And Armadale the cause of it!

"My anger suddenly left me. Something came in its place which steadied me in an instant, and took me silently out of the room.

"I sat down alone in the bedroom. I had a few minutes of thought with myself, which I don't choose to put into words, even in these secret pages. I got up, and unlocked--never mind what. I went round to Midwinter's side of the bed, and took--no matter what I took. The last thing I did before I left the room was to look at my watch. It was half-past ten, Armadale's usual time for leaving us. I went back at once and joined the two men again.

"I approached Armadale good-humoredly, and said to him:

"No! On second thoughts. I won't put down what I said to him, or what I did afterward. I'm sick of Armadale! he turns up at every second word I write. I shall pass over what happened in the course of the next hour--the hour between half-past ten and half-past eleven--and take up my story again at the time when Armadale had left us. Can I tell what took place, as soon as our visitor's back was turned, between Midwinter and me in our own room? Why not pass over what happened, in that case as well as in the other? Why agitate myself by writing it down? I don't know! Why do I keep a diary at all? Why did the clever thief the other day (in the English newspaper) keep the very thing to convict him in the shape of a record of everything he stole? Why are we not perfectly reasonable in all that we do? Why am I not always on my guard and never inconsistent with myself, like a wicked character in a novel? Why? why? why?

"I don't care why! I must write down what happened between Midwinter and me to-night, because I must. There's a reason that nobody can answer--myself included."

* * * * * * *

"It was half-past eleven. Armadale had gone. I had put on my dressing-gown, and had just sat down to arrange my hair for the night, when I was surprised by a knock at the door, and Midwinter came in.

"He was frightfully pale. His eyes looked at me with a terrible despair in them. He never answered when I expressed my surprise at his coming in so much sooner than usual; he wouldn't even tell me, when I asked the question, if he was ill. Pointing peremptorily to the chair from which I had risen on his entering the room, he told me to sit down again; and then, after

a moment, added these words: 'I have something serious to say to you.'

"I thought of what I had done--or, no, of what I had tried to do--in that interval between half-past ten and half-past eleven, which I have left unnoticed in my diary--and the deadly sickness of terror, which I never felt at the time, came upon me now. I sat down again, as I had been told, without speaking to Midwinter, and without looking at him.

"He took a turn up and down the room, and then came and stood over me.

"'If Allan comes here to-morrow,' he began, 'and if you see him--'

"His voice faltered, and he said no more. There was some dreadful grief at his heart that was trying to master him. But there are times when his will is a will of iron. He took another turn in the room, and crushed it down. He came back, and stood over me again.

"'When Allan comes here to-morrow,' he resumed, 'let him come into my room, if he wants to see me. I shall tell him that I find it impossible to finish the work I now have on hand as soon as I had hoped, and that he must, therefore, arrange to find a crew for the yacht without any assistance on my part. If he comes, in his disappointment, to appeal to you, give him no hope of my being free in time to help him if he waits. Encourage him to take the best assistance he can get from strangers, and to set about manning the yacht without any further delay. The more occupation he has to keep him away from this house, and the less you encourage him to stay here if he does come, the better I shall be pleased. Don't forget that, and don't forget one last direction which I have now to give you. When the vessel is ready for sea, and when Allan invites us to sail with him, it is my wish that you should positively decline to go. He will try to make you change your mind; for I shall, of course, decline, on my side, to leave you in this strange house, and in this foreign country, by yourself. No matter what he says, let nothing persuade you to alter your decision. Refuse, positively and finally! Refuse, I insist on it, to set your foot on the new yacht!'

"He ended quietly and firmly, with no faltering in his voice, and no signs of hesitation or relenting in his face. The sense of surprise which I might otherwise have felt at the strange words he had addressed to me was lost in the sense of relief that they brought to my mind. The dread of those other words that I had expected to hear from him left me as suddenly as it had come. I could look at him, I could speak to him once more.

"'You may depend,' I answered, 'on my doing exactly what you order me to

do. Must I obey you blindly? Or may I know your reason for the extraordinary directions you have just given to me?'

"His, face darkened, and he sat down on the other side of my dressing-table, with a heavy, hopeless sigh.

"'You may know the reason,' he said, 'if you wish it.' He waited a little, and considered. 'You have a right to know the reason,' he resumed, 'for you yourself are concerned in it.' He waited a little again, and again went on. 'I can only explain the strange request I have just made to you in one way,' he said. 'I must ask you to recall what happened in the next room, before Allan left us to-night.'

"He looked at me with a strange mixture of expressions in his face. At one moment I thought he felt pity for me. At another, it seemed more like horror of me. I began to feel frightened again; I waited for his next words in silence.

"'I know that I have been working too hard lately,' he went on, 'and that my nerves are sadly shaken. It is possible, in the state I am in now, that I may have unconsciously misinterpreted, or distorted, the circumstances that really took place. You will do me a favor if you will test my recollection of what has happened by your own. If my fancy has exaggerated anything, if my memory is playing me false anywhere, I entreat you to stop me, and tell me of it.'

"I commanded myself sufficiently to ask what the circumstances were to which he referred, and in what way I was personally concerned in them.

"'You were personally concerned in them in this way,' he answered. 'The circumstances to which I refer began with your speaking to Allan about Miss Milroy, in what I thought a very inconsiderate and very impatient manner. I am afraid I spoke just as petulantly on my side, and I beg your pardon for what I said to you in the irritation of the moment. You left the room. After a short absence, you came back again, and made a perfectly proper apology to Allan, which he received with his usual kindness and sweetness of temper. While this went on, you and he were both standing by the supper-table; and Allan resumed some conversation which had already passed between you about the Neapolitan wine. He said he thought he should learn to like it in time, and he asked leave to take another glass of the wine we had on the table. Am I right so far?'

"The words almost died on my lips; but I forced them out, and answered him that he was right so far.

"'You took the flask out of Allan's hand,' he proceeded. 'You said to him, good-humoredly, "You know you don't really like the wine, Mr. Armadale. Let me make you something which may be more to your taste. I have a recipe of my own for lemonade. Will you favor me by trying it?" In those words, you made your proposal to him, and he accepted it. Did he also ask leave to look on, and learn how the lemonade was made? and did you tell him that he would only confuse you, and that you would give him the recipe in writing, if he wanted it?'

"This time the words did really die on my lips. I could only bow my head, and answer 'Yes' mutely in that way. Midwinter went on.

"'Allan laughed, and went to the window to look out at the Bay, and I went with him. After a while Allan remarked, jocosely, that the mere sound of the liquids you were pouring out made him thirsty. When he said this, I turned round from the window. I approached you, and said the lemonade took a long time to make. You touched me, as I was walking away again, and handed me the tumbler filled to the brim. At the same time, Allan turned round from the window; and I, in my turn, handed the tumbler to him.--Is there any mistake so far?'

"The quick throbbing of my heart almost choked me. I could just shake my head--I could do no more.

"'I saw Allan raise the tumbler to his lips.--Did you see it? I saw his face turn white in an instant.--Did you? I saw the glass fall from his hand on the floor. I saw him stagger, and caught him before he fell. Are these things true? For God's sake, search your memory, and tell me--are these things true?'

"The throbbing at my heart seemed, for one breathless instant, to stop. The next moment something fiery, something maddening, flew through me. I started to my feet, with my temper in a flame, reckless of all consequences, desperate enough to say anything.

"'Your questions are an insult! Your looks are an insult!' I burst out. 'Do you think I tried to poison him?'

"The words rushed out of my lips in spite of me. They were the last words under heaven that any woman, in such a situation as mine, ought to have spoken. And yet I spoke them!

"He rose in alarm and gave me my smelling-bottle. 'Hush! hush!' he said. 'You, too, are overwrought--you, too, are overexcited by all that has happened to-night. You are talking wildly and shockingly. Good God! how can you have so utterly misunderstood me? Compose yourself--pray, compose yourself.'

"He might as well have told a wild animal to compose herself. Having been mad enough to say the words, I was mad enough next to return to the subject of the lemonade, in spite of his entreaties to me to be silent.

"'I told you what I had put in the glass, the moment Mr. Armadale fainted,' I went on; insisting furiously on defending myself, when no attack was made on me. 'I told you I had taken the flask of brandy which you kept at your bedside, and mixed some of it with the lemonade. How could I know that he had a nervous horror of the smell and taste of brandy? Didn't he say to me himself, when he came to his senses, It's my fault; I ought to have warned you to put no brandy in it? Didn't he remind you afterward of the time when you and he were in the Isle of Man together, and when the doctor there innocently made the same mistake with him that I made to-night?'"

["I laid a great stress on my innocence--and with some reason too. Whatever else I may be, I pride myself on not being a hypocrite. I was innocent--so far as the brandy was concerned. I had put it into the lemonade, in pure ignorance of Armadale's nervous peculiarity, to disguise the taste of--never mind what! Another of the things I pride myself on is that I never wander from my subject. What Midwinter said next is what I ought to be writing about now."]

"He looked at me for a moment, as if he thought I had taken leave of my senses. Then he came round to my side of the table and stood over me again.

"'If nothing else will satisfy you that you are entirely misinterpreting my motives,' he said, 'and that I haven't an idea of blaming you in the matter--read this.'

"He took a paper from the breast-pocket of his coat, and spread it open under my eyes. It was the Narrative of Armadale's Dream.

"In an instant the whole weight on my mind was lifted off it. I felt mistress of myself again--I understood him at last.

"'Do you know what this is?' he asked. 'Do you remember what I said to you

at Thorpe Ambrose about Allan's Dream? I told you then that two out of the three Visions had already come true. I tell you now that the third Vision has been fulfilled in this house to-night.'

"He turned over the leaves of the manuscript, and pointed to the lines that he wished me to read.

"I read these, or nearly read these words, from the Narrative of the Dream, as Midwinter had taken it down from Armadale's own lips:

"'The darkness opened for the third time, and showed me the Shadow of the Man and the Shadow of the Woman together. The Man-Shade was the nearest; the Woman-Shadow stood back. From where she stood, I heard a sound like the pouring out of a liquid softly. I saw her touch the Shadow of the Man with one hand, and give him a glass with the other. He took the glass and handed it to me. At the moment when I put it to my lips, a deadly faintness overcame me. When I recovered my senses again, the Shadows had vanished, and the Vision was at an end.'

"For the moment, I was as completely staggered by this extraordinary coincidence as Midwinter himself.

"He put one hand on the open narrative and laid the other heavily on my arm.

"'Now do you understand my motive in coming here?' he asked. 'Now do you see that the last hope I had to cling to was the hope that your memory of the night's events might prove my memory to be wrong? Now do you know why I won't help Allan? Why I won't sail with him? Why I am plotting and lying, and making you plot and lie too, to keep my best and dearest friend out of the house?'

"'Have you forgotten Mr. Brock's letter?' I asked.

"He struck his hand passionately on the open manuscript. 'If Mr. Brook had lived to see what we have seen to-night he would have felt what I feel, he would have said what I say!' His voice sank mysteriously, and his great black eyes glittered at me as he made that answer. 'Thrice the Shadows of the Vision warned Allan in his sleep,' he went on; 'and thrice those Shadows have been embodied in the after-time by You and by Me! You, and no other, stood in the Woman's place at the pool. I, and no other, stood in the Man's place at the window. And you and I together, when the last Vision showed the Shadows together, stand in the Man's place and the Woman's place still!

For this, the miserable day dawned when you and I first met. For this, your influence drew me to you, when my better angel warned me to fly the sight of your face. There is a curse on our lives! there is a fatality in our footsteps! Allan's future depends on his separation from us at once and forever. Drive him from the place we live in, and the air we breathe. Force him among strangers--the worst and wickedest of them will be more harmless to him than we are! Let his yacht sail, though he goes on his knees to ask us, without you and without me; and let him know how I loved him in another world than this, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest!'

"His grief conquered him; his voice broke into a sob when he spoke those last words. He took the Narrative of the Dream from the table, and left me as abruptly as he had come in.

"As I heard his door locked between us, my mind went back to what he had said to me about myself. In remembering 'the miserable day' when we first saw each other, and 'the better angel' that had warned him to 'fly the sight of my face,' I forgot all else. It doesn't matter what I felt--I wouldn't own it, even if I had a friend to speak to. Who cares for the misery of such a woman as I am? who believes in it? Besides, he spoke under the influence of a mad superstition that has got possession of him again. There is every excuse for him--there is no excuse for me. If I can't help being fond of him through it all, I must take the consequences and suffer. I deserve to suffer; I deserve neither love nor pity from anybody.--Good heavens, what a fool I am! And how unnatural all this would be, if it was written in a book!

"It has struck one. I can hear Midwinter still, pacing to and fro in his room.

"He is thinking, I suppose? Well! I can think too. What am I to do next? I shall wait and see. Events take odd turns sometimes; and events may justify the fatalism of the amiable man in the next room, who curses the day when he first saw my face. He may live to curse it for other reasons than he has now. If I am the Woman pointed at in the Dream, there will be another temptation put in my way before long; and there will be no brandy in Armadale's lemonade if I mix it for him a second time."

"October 24th.--Barely twelve hours have passed since I wrote my yesterday's entry; and that other temptation has come, tried, amid conquered me already!

"This time there was no alternative. Instant exposure and ruin stared me in the face: I had no choice but to yield in my own defense. In plainer words

still, it was no accidental resemblance that startled me at the theater last night. The chorus-singer at the opera was Manuel himself!

"Not ten minutes after Midwinter had left the sitting-room for his study, the woman of the house came in with a dirty little three-cornered note in her hand. One look at the writing on the address was enough. He had recognized me in the box; and the ballet between the acts of the opera had given him time to trace me home. I drew that plain conclusion in the moment that elapsed before I opened the letter. It informed me, in two lines, that he was waiting in a by-street leading to the beach; and that, if I failed to make my appearance in ten minutes, he should interpret my absence as my invitation to him to call at the house.

"What I went through yesterday must have hardened me, I suppose. At any rate, after reading the letter, I felt more like the woman I once was than I have felt for months past. I put on my bonnet and went downstairs, and left the house as if nothing had happened.

"He was waiting for me at the entrance to the street.

"In the instant when we stood face to face, all my wretched life with him came back to me. I thought of my trust that he had betrayed; I thought of the cruel mockery of a marriage that he had practiced on me, when he knew that he had a wife living; I thought of the time when I had felt despair enough at his desertion of me to attempt my own life. When I recalled all this, and when the comparison between Midwinter and the mean, miserable villain whom I had once believed in forced itself into my mind, I knew for the first time what a woman feels when every atom of respect for herself has left her. If he had personally insulted me at that moment, I believe I should have submitted to it.

"But he had no idea of insulting me, in the more brutal meaning of the word. He had me at his mercy, and his way of making me feel it was to behave with an elaborate mockery of penitence and respect. I let him speak as he pleased, without interrupting him, without looking at him a second time, without even allowing my dress to touch him, as we walked together toward the quieter part of the beach. I had noticed the wretched state of his clothes, and the greedy glitter in his eyes, in my first look at him. And I knew it would end--as it did end--in a demand on me for money.

"Yes! After taking from me the last farthing I possessed of my own, and the last farthing I could extort for him from my old mistress, he turned on me as we stood by the margin of the sea, and asked if I could reconcile it to my

conscience to let him be wearing such a coat as he then had on his back, and earning his miserable living as a chorus-singer at the opera!

"My disgust, rather than my indignation, roused me into speaking to him at last.

"'You want money,' I said. 'Suppose I am too poor to give it to you?'

"'In that case,' he replied, 'I shall be forced to remember that you are a treasure in yourself. And I shall be under the painful necessity of pressing my claim to you on the attention of one of those two gentlemen whom I saw with you at the opera--the gentleman, of course, who is now honored by your preference, and who lives provisionally in the light of your smiles.'

"I made him no answer, for I had no answer to give. Disputing his right to claim me from anybody would have been a mere waste of words. He knew as well as I did that he had not the shadow of a claim on me. But the mere attempt to raise it would, as he was well aware, lead necessarily to the exposure of my whole past life.

"Still keeping silence, I looked out over the sea. I don't know why, except that I instinctively looked anywhere rather than look at him.

"A little sailing-boat was approaching the shore. The man steering was hidden from me by the sail; but the boat was so near that I thought I recognized the flag on the mast. I looked at my watch. Yes! It was Armadale coming over from Santa Lucia at his usual time, to visit us in his usual way.

"Before I had put my watch back in my belt, the means of extricating myself from the frightful position I was placed in showed themselves to me as plainly as I see them now.

"I turned and led the way to the higher part of the beach, where some fishing-boats were drawn up which completely screened us from the view of any one landing on the shore below. Seeing probably that I had a purpose of some kind, Manuel followed me without uttering a word. As soon as we were safely under the shelter of the boats, I forced myself, in my own defense, to look at him again.

"'What should you say,' I asked, 'if I was rich instead of poor? What should you say if I could afford to give you a hundred pounds?'

"He started. I saw plainly that he had not expected so much as half the sum

I had mentioned. It is needless to add that his tongue lied, while his face spoke the truth, and that when he replied to me the answer was, 'Nothing like enough.'

"'Suppose,' I went on, without taking any notice of what he had said, 'that I could show you a way of helping yourself to twice as much--three times as much--five times as much as a hundred pounds, are you bold enough to put out your hand and take it?'

"The greedy glitter came into his eyes once more. His voice dropped low, in breathless expectation of my next words.

"'Who is the person?' he asked. 'And what is the risk?'

"I answered him at once, in the plainest terms. I threw Armadale to him, as I might have thrown a piece of meat to a wild beast who was pursuing me.

"'The person is a rich young Englishman,' I said. 'He has just hired the yacht called the Dorothea, in the harbor here; and he stands in need of a sailing-master and a crew. You were once an officer in the Spanish navy--you speak English and Italian perfectly--you are thoroughly well acquainted with Naples and all that belongs to it. The rich young Englishman is ignorant of the language, and the interpreter who assists him knows nothing of the sea. He is at his wits' end for want of useful help in this strange place; he has no more knowledge of the world than that child who is digging holes with a stick there in the sand; and he carries all his money with him in circular notes. So much for the person. As for the risk, estimate it for yourself.'

"The greedy glitter in his eyes grew brighter and brighter with every word I said. He was plainly ready to face the risk before I had done speaking.

"'When can I see the Englishman?' he asked, eagerly.

"I moved to the seaward end of the fishing-boat, and saw that Armadale was at that moment disembarking on the shore.

"'You can see him now,' I answered, and pointed to the place.

"After a long look at Armadale walking carelessly up the slope of the beach, Manuel drew back again under the shelter of the boat. He waited a moment, considering something carefully with himself, and put another question to me, in a whisper this time.

"'When the vessel is manned,' he said, 'and the Englishman sails from Naples, how many friends sail with him?'

"'He has but two friends here,' I replied; 'that other gentleman whom you saw with me at the opera, and myself. He will invite us both to sail with him; and when the time comes, we shall both refuse.'

"'Do you answer for that?'

"'I answer for it positively.'

"He walked a few steps away, and stood with his face hidden from me, thinking again. All I could see was that he took off his hat and passed his handkerchief over his forehead. All I could hear was that he talked to himself excitedly in his own language.

"There was a change in him when he came back. His face had turned to a livid yellow, and his eyes looked at me with a hideous distrust.

"'One last question,' he said, and suddenly came closer to me, suddenly spoke with a marked emphasis on his next words: 'What is your interest in this?'

"I started back from him. The question reminded me that I had an interest in the matter, which was entirely unconnected with the interest of keeping Manuel and Midwinter apart. Thus far I had only remembered that Midwinter's fatalism had smoothed the way for me, by abandoning Armadale beforehand to any stranger who might come forward to help him. Thus far the sole object I had kept in view was to protect myself, by the sacrifice of Armadale, from the exposure that threatened me. I tell no lies to my Diary. I don't affect to have felt a moment's consideration for the interests of Armadale's purse or the safety of Armadale's life. I hated him too savagely to care what pitfalls my tongue might be the means of opening under his feet. But I certainly did not see (until that last question was put to me) that, in serving his own designs, Manuel might--if he dared go all lengths for the money--be serving my designs too. The one overpowering anxiety to protect myself from exposure before Midwinter had (I suppose) filled all my mind, to the exclusion of everything else.

"Finding that I made no reply for the moment, Manuel reiterated his question, putting it in a new form.

"'You have cast your Englishman at me,' he said, 'like the sop to Cerberus.

Would you have been quite so ready to do that if you had not had a motive of your own? I repeat my question. You have an interest in this--what is it?'

"'I have two interests,' I answered. 'The interest of forcing you to respect my position here, and the interest of ridding myself of the sight of you at once and forever!' I spoke with a boldness he had not yet heard from me. The sense that I was making the villain an instrument in my hands, and forcing him to help my purpose blindly, while he was helping his own, roused my spirits, and made me feel like myself again.

"He laughed. 'Strong language, on certain occasions, is a lady's privilege,' he said. 'You may, or may not, rid yourself of the sight of me, at once and forever. We will leave that question to be settled in the future. But your other interest in this matter puzzles me. You have told me all I need know about the Englishman and his yacht, and you have made no conditions before you opened your lips. Pray, how are you to force me, as you say, to respect your position here?'

"'I will tell you how,' I rejoined. 'You shall hear my conditions first. I insist on your leaving me in five minutes more. I insist on your never again coming near the house where I live; and I forbid your attempting to communicate in any way either with me or with that other gentleman whom you saw with me at the theater--'

"'And suppose I say no?' he interposed. 'In that case, what will you do?'

"'In that case,' I answered, 'I shall say two words in private to the rich young Englishman, and you will find yourself back again among the chorus at the opera.'

"'You are a bold woman to take it for granted that I have my designs on the Englishman already, and that I am certain to succeed in them. How do you know--?'

"'I know you,' I said. 'And that is enough.'

"There was a moment's silence between us. He looked at me, and I looked at him. We understood each other.

"He was the first to speak. The villainous smile died out of his face, and his voice dropped again distrustfully to its lowest tones.

"'I accept your terms,' he said. 'As long as your lips are closed, my lips shall

be closed too--except in the event of my finding that you have deceived me; in which case the bargain is at an end, and you will see me again. I shall present myself to the Englishman to-morrow, with the necessary credentials to establish me in his confidence. Tell me his name?'

"I told it.

"'Give me his address?'

"I gave it, and turned to leave him. Before I had stepped out of the shelter of the boats, I heard him behind me again.

"'One last word,' he said. 'Accidents sometimes happen at sea. Have you interest enough in the Englishman--if an accident happens in his case--to wish to know what has become of him?'

"I stopped, and considered on my side. I had plainly failed to persuade him that I had no secret to serve in placing Armadale's money and (as a probable consequence) Armadale's life at his mercy. And it was now equally clear that he was cunningly attempting to associate himself with my private objects (whatever they might be) by opening a means of communication between us in the future. There could be no hesitation about how to answer him under such circumstances as these. If the 'accident' at which he hinted did really happen to Armadale, I stood in no need of Manuel's intervention to give me the intelligence of it. An easy search through the obituary columns of the English papers would tell me the news--with the great additional advantage that the papers might be relied on, in such a matter as this, to tell the truth. I formally thanked Manuel, and declined to accept his proposal. 'Having no interest in the Englishman,' I said, 'I have no wish whatever to know what becomes of him.'

"He looked at me for a moment with steady attention, and with an interest in me which he had not shown yet.

"'What the game you are playing may be,' he rejoined, speaking slowly and significantly, 'I don't pretend to know. But I venture on a prophecy, nevertheless--you will win it! If we ever meet again, remember I said that.' He took off his hat, and bowed to me gravely. 'Go your way, madam. And leave me to go mine!'

"With those words, he released me from the sight of him. I waited a minute alone, to recover myself in the air, and then returned to the house.

"The first object that met my eyes, on entering the sitting-room, was--Armadale himself!

"He was waiting on the chance of seeing me, to beg that I would exert my influence with his friend. I made the needful inquiry as to what he meant, and found that Midwinter had spoken as he had warned me he would speak when he and Armadale next met. He had announced that he was unable to finish his work for the newspaper as soon as he had hoped; and he had advised Armadale to find a crew for the yacht without waiting for any assistance on his part.

"All that it was necessary for me to do, on hearing this, was to perform the promise I had made to Midwinter, when he gave me my directions how to act in the matter. Armadale's vexation on finding me resolved not to interfere expressed itself in the form of all others that is most personally offensive to me. He declined to believe my reiterated assurances that I possessed no influence to exert in his favor. 'If I was married to Neelie,' he said, 'she could do anything she liked with me; and I am sure, when you choose, you can do anything you like with Midwinter.' If the infatuated fool had actually tried to stifle the last faint struggles of remorse and pity left stirring in my heart, he could have said nothing more fatally to the purpose than this! I gave him a look which effectually silenced him, so far as I was concerned. He went out of the room grumbling and growling to himself. 'It's all very well to talk about manning the yacht. I don't speak a word of their gibberish here; and the interpreter thinks a fisherman and a sailor means the same thing. Hang me if I know what to do with the vessel, now I have got her!'

"He will probably know by to-morrow. And if he only comes here as usual, I shall know too!"

"October 25th.--Ten at night.--Manuel has got him!

"He has just left us, after staying here more than an hour, and talking the whole time of nothing but his own wonderful luck in finding the very help he wanted, at the time when he needed it most.

"At noon to-day he was on the Mole, it seems, with his interpreter, trying vainly to make himself understood by the vagabond population of the water-side. Just as he was giving it up in despair, a stranger standing by (Manuel had followed him, I suppose, to the Mole from his hotel) kindly interfered to put things right. He said, 'I speak your language and their language, sir. I know Naples well; and I have been professionally accustomed to the sea. Can I help you?' The inevitable result followed. Armadale shifted all his

difficulties on to the shoulders of the polite stranger, in his usual helpless, headlong way. His new friend, however, insisted, in the most honorable manner, on complying with the customary formalities before he would consent to take the matter into his own hands. He begged leave to wait on Mr. Armadale, with his testimonials to character and capacity. The same afternoon he had come by appointment to the hotel, with all his papers, and with 'the saddest story' of his sufferings and privations as 'a political refugee' that Armadale had ever heard. The interview was decisive. Manuel left the hotel, commissioned to find a crew for the yacht, and to fill the post of sailing-master on the trial cruise.

"I watched Midwinter anxiously, while Armadale was telling us these particulars, and afterward, when he produced the new sailing-master's testimonials, which he had brought with him for his friend to see.

"For the moment, Midwinter's superstitious misgivings seemed to be all lost in his natural anxiety for his friend. He examined the stranger's papers--after having told me that the sooner Armadale was in the hands of strangers the better!--with the closest scrutiny and the most business-like distrust. It is needless to say that the credentials were as perfectly regular and satisfactory as credentials could be. When Midwinter handed them back, his color rose: he seemed to feel the inconsistency of his conduct, and to observe for the first time that I was present noticing it. 'There is nothing to object to in the testimonials, Allan: I am glad you have got the help you want at last.' That was all he said at parting. As soon as Armadale's back was turned, I saw no more of him. He has locked himself up again for the night, in his own room.

"There is now--so far as I am concerned--but one anxiety left. When the yacht is ready for sea, and when I decline to occupy the lady's cabin, will Midwinter hold to his resolution, and refuse to sail without me?"

"October 26th.--Warnings already of the coming ordeal. A letter from Armadale to Midwinter, which Midwinter has just sent in to me. Here it is:

"'DEAR MID--I am too busy to come to-day. Get on with your work, for Heaven's sake! The new sailing-master is a man of ten thousand. He has got an Englishman whom he knows to serve as mate on board already; and he is positively certain of getting the crew together in three or four days' time. I am dying for a whiff of the sea, and so are you, or you are no sailor. The rigging is set up, the stores are coming on board, and we shall bend the sails to-morrow or next day. I never was in such spirits in my life. Remember me to your wife, and tell her she will be doing me a favor if she

will come at once, and order everything she wants in the lady's cabin. Yours affectionately, A. A.'

"Under this was written, in Midwinter's hand: 'Remember what I told you. Write (it will break it to him more gently in that way), and beg him to accept your apologies, and to excuse you from sailing on the trial cruise.'

"I have written without a moment's loss of time. The sooner Manuel knows (which he is certain to do through Armadale) that the promise not to sail in the yacht is performed already, so far as I am concerned, the safer I shall feel."

"October 27th.--A letter from Armadale, in answer to mine. He is full of ceremonious regrets at the loss of my company on the cruise; and he politely hopes that Midwinter may yet induce me to alter my mind. Wait a little, till he finds that Midwinter won't sail with him either!....

"October 30th.--Nothing new to record until to-day. To-day the change in our lives here has come at last!

"Armadale presented himself this morning, in his noisiest high spirits, to announce that the yacht was ready for sea, and to ask when Midwinter would be able to go on board. I told him to make the inquiry himself in Midwinter's room. He left me, with a last request that I would consider my refusal to sail with him. I answered by a last apology for persisting in my resolution, and then took a chair alone at the window to wait the event of the interview in the next room.

"My whole future depended now on what passed between Midwinter and his friend! Everything had gone smoothly up to this time. The one danger to dread was the danger of Midwinter's resolution, or rather of Midwinter's fatalism, giving way at the last moment. If he allowed himself to be persuaded into accompanying Armadale on the cruise, Manuel's exasperation against me would hesitate at nothing--he would remember that I had answered to him for Armadale's sailing from Naples alone; and he would be capable of exposing my whole past life to Midwinter before the vessel left the port. As I thought of this, and as the slow minutes followed each other, and nothing reached my ears but the hum of voices in the next room, my suspense became almost unendurable. It was vain to try and fix my attention on what was going on in the street. I sat looking mechanically out of the window, and seeing nothing.

"Suddenly--I can't say in how long or how short a time--the hum of voices

ceased; the door opened; and Armadale showed himself on the threshold, alone.

"'I wish you good-by,' he said, roughly. 'And I hope, when I am married, my wife may never cause Midwinter the disappointment that Midwinter's wife has caused me!'

"He gave me an angry look, and made me an angry bow, and, turning sharply, left the room.

"I saw the people in the street again! I saw the calm sea, and the masts of the shipping in the harbor where the yacht lay! I could think, I could breathe freely once more! The words that saved me from Manuel--the words that might be Armadale's sentence of death--had been spoken. The yacht was to sail without Midwinter, as well as without me!

"My first feeling of exultation was almost maddening. But it was the feeling of a moment only. My heart sank in me again when I thought of Midwinter alone in the next room.

"I went out into the passage to listen, and heard nothing. I tapped gently at his door, and got no answer. I opened the door and looked in. He was sitting at the table, with his face hidden in his hands. I looked at him in silence, and saw the glistening of the tears as they trickled through his fingers.

"'Leave me,' he said, without moving his hands. 'I must get over it by myself.'

"I went back into the sitting-room. Who can understand women? we don't even understand ourselves. His sending me away from him in that manner cut me to the heart. I don't believe the most harmless and most gentle woman living could have felt it more acutely than I felt it. And this, after what I have been doing! this, after what I was thinking of, the moment before I went into his room! Who can account for it? Nobody--I least of all!

"Half an hour later his door opened, and I heard him hurrying down the stairs. I ran on without waiting to think, and asked if I might go with him. He neither stopped nor answered. I went back to the window, and saw him pass, walking rapidly away, with his back turned on Naples and the sea.

"I can understand now that he might not have heard me. At the time I thought him inexcusably and brutally unkind to me. I put on my bonnet, in a frenzy of rage with him; I sent out for a carriage, and told the man to take me where he liked. He took me, as he took other strangers, to the Museum

to see the statues and the pictures. I flounced from room to room, with my face in a flame, and the people all staring at me. I came to myself again, I don't know how. I returned to the carriage, and made the man drive me back in a violent hurry, I don't know why. I tossed off my cloak and bonnet, and sat down once more at the window. The sight of the sea cooled me. I forgot Midwinter, and thought of Armadale and his yacht. There wasn't a breath of wind; there wasn't a cloud in the sky; the wide waters of the Bay were as smooth as the surface of a glass.

"The sun sank; the short twilight came and went. I had some tea, and sat at the table thinking and dreaming over it. When I roused myself and went back to the window, the moon was up; but the quiet sea was as quiet as ever.

"I was still looking out, when I saw Midwinter in the street below, coming back. I was composed enough by this time to remember his habits, and to guess that he had been trying to relieve the oppression on his mind by one of his long solitary walks. When I heard him go into his own room, I was too prudent to disturb him again: I waited his pleasure where I was.

"Before long I heard his window opened, and I saw him, from my window, step into the balcony, and, after a look at the sea, hold up his hand to the air. I was too stupid, for the moment, to remember that he had once been a sailor, and to know what this meant. I waited, and wondered what would happen next.

"He went in again; and, after an interval, came out once more, and held up his hand as before to the air. This time he waited, leaning on the balcony rail, and looking out steadily, with all his attention absorbed by the sea.

"For a long, long time he never moved. Then, on a sudden, I saw him start. The next moment he sank on his knees, with his clasped hands resting on the balcony rail. 'God Almighty bless and keep you, Allan!' he said, fervently. 'Good-by, forever!'

"I looked out to the sea. A soft, steady breeze was blowing, and the rippled surface of the water was sparkling in the quiet moonlight. I looked again, and there passed slowly, between me and the track of the moon, a long black vessel with tall, shadowy, ghostlike sails, gliding smooth and noiseless through the water, like a snake.

"The wind had come fair with the night; and Armadale's yacht had sailed on the trial cruise."

III. THE DIARY BROKEN OFF.

"London, November 19th.--I am alone again in the Great City; alone, for the first time since our marriage. Nearly a week since I started on my homeward journey, leaving Midwinter behind me at Turin.

"The days have been so full of events since the month began, and I have been so harassed, in mind and body both, for the greater part of the time, that my Diary has been wretchedly neglected. A few notes, written in such hurry and confusion that I can hardly understand them myself, are all that I possess to remind me of what has happened since the night when Armadale's yacht left Naples. Let me try if I can set this right without more loss or time; let me try if I can recall the circumstances in their order as they have followed each other from the beginning of the month.

"On the 3d of November--being then still at Naples--Midwinter received a hurried letter from Armadale, date 'Messina.' 'The weather,' he said, 'had been lovely, and the yacht had made one of the quickest passages on record. The crew were rather a rough set to look at; but Captain Manuel and his English mate' (the latter described as 'the best of good fellows') 'managed them admirably.' After this prosperous beginning, Armadale had arranged, as a matter of course, to prolong the cruise; and, at the sailing-master's suggestion, he had decided to visit some of the ports in the Adriatic, which the captain had described as full of character, and well worth seeing.

"A postscript followed, explaining that Armadale had written in a hurry to catch the steamer to Naples, and that he had opened his letter again, before sending it off, to add something that he had forgotten. On the day before the yacht sailed, he had been at the banker's to get 'a few hundreds in gold,' and he believed he had left his cigar-case there. It was an old friend of his, and he begged that Midwinter would oblige him by endeavoring recover it, and keeping it for him till they met again.

"That was the substance of the letter.

"I thought over it carefully when Midwinter had left me alone again, after reading it. My idea was then (and is still) that Manuel had not persuaded Armadale to cruise in a sea like the Adriatic, so much less frequented by ships than the Mediterranean, for nothing. The terms, too, in which the trifling loss of the cigar-case was mentioned struck me as being equally suggestive of what was coming. I concluded that Armadale's circular notes had not been transformed into those 'few hundreds in gold' through any forethought or business knowledge of his own. Manuel's influence, I

suspected, had been exerted in this matter also, and once more not without reason. At intervals through the wakeful night these considerations came back again and again to me; and time after time they pointed obstinately (so far as my next movements were concerned) in one and the same way--the way back to England.

"How to get there, and especially how to get there unaccompanied by Midwinter, was more than I had wit enough to discover that night. I tried and tried to meet the difficulty, and fell asleep exhausted toward the morning without having met it.

"Some hours later, as soon as I was dressed, Midwinter came in, with news received by that morning's post from his employers in London. The proprietors of the newspaper had received from the editor so favorable a report of his correspondence from Naples that they had determined on advancing him to a place of greater responsibility and greater emolument at Turin. His instructions were inclosed in the letter, and he was requested to lose no time in leaving Naples for his new post.

"On hearing this, I relieved his mind, before he could put the question, of all anxiety about my willingness to remove. Turin had the great attraction, in my eyes, of being on the road to England. I assured him at once that I was ready to travel as soon as he pleased.

"He thanked me for suiting myself to his plans, with more of his old gentleness and kindness than I had seen in him for some time past. The good news from Armadale on the previous day seemed to have roused him a little from the dull despair in which he had been sunk since the sailing of the yacht. And now the prospect of advancement in his profession, and, more than that, the prospect of leaving the fatal place in which the Third Vision of the Dream had come true, had (as he owned himself) additionally cheered and relieved him. He asked, before he went away to make the arrangements for our journey, whether I expected to hear from my 'family' in England, and whether he should give instructions for the forwarding of my letters with his own to the poste restante at Turin. I instantly thanked him, and accepted the offer. His proposal had suggested to me, the moment he made it, that my fictitious 'family circumstances' might be turned to good account once more, as a reason for unexpectedly summoning me from Italy to England.

"On the ninth of the month we were installed at Turin.

"On the thirteenth, Midwinter--being then very busy--asked if I would save

him a loss of time by applying for any letters which might have followed us from Naples. I had been waiting for the opportunity he now offered me; and I determined to snatch at it without allowing myself time to hesitate. There were no letters at the poste restante for either of us. But when he put the question on my return, I told him that there had been a letter for me, with alarming news from 'home.' My 'mother' was dangerously ill, and I was entreated to lose no time in hurrying back to England to see her.

"It seems quite unaccountable--now that I am away from him--but it is none the less true, that I could not, even yet, tell him a downright premeditated falsehood, without a sense of shrinking and shame, which other people would think, and which I think myself, utterly inconsistent with such a character as mine. Inconsistent or not, I felt it. And what is stranger--perhaps I ought to say madder--still, if he had persisted in his first resolution to accompany me himself to England rather than allow me to travel alone, I firmly believe I should have turned my back on temptation for the second time, and have lulled myself to rest once more in the old dream of living out my life happy and harmless in my husband's love.

"Am I deceiving myself in this? It doesn't matter--I dare say I am. Never mind what might have happened. What did happen is the only thing of any importance now.

"It ended in Midwinter's letting me persuade him that I was old enough to take care of myself on the journey to England, and that he owed it to the newspaper people, who had trusted their interests in his hands, not to leave Turin just as he was established there. He didn't suffer at taking leave of me as he suffered when he saw the last of his friend. I saw that, and set down the anxiety he expressed that I should write to him at its proper value. I have quite got over my weakness for him at last. No man who really loved me would have put what he owed to a peck of newspaper people before what he owed to his wife. I hate him for letting me convince him! I believe he was glad to get rid of me. I believe he has seen some woman whom he likes at Turin. Well, let him follow his new fancy, if he pleases! I shall be the widow of Mr. Armadale of Thorpe Ambrose before long; and what will his likes or dislikes matter to me then?

"The events on the journey were not worth mentioning, and my arrival in London stands recorded already on the top of the new page.

"As for to-day, the one thing of any importance that I have done since I got to the cheap and quiet hotel at which I am now staying, has been to send for the landlord, and ask him to help me to a sight of the back numbers of The

Times newspaper. He has politely offered to accompany me himself to-morrow morning to some place in the City where all the papers are kept, as he calls it, in file. Till to-morrow, then, I must control my impatience for news of Armadale as well as I can. And so good-night to the pretty reflection of myself that appears in these pages!"

"November 20th.--Not a word of news yet, either in the obituary column or in any other part of the paper. I looked carefully through each number in succession, dating from the day when Armadale's letter was written at Messina to this present 20th of the month, and I am certain, whatever may have happened, that nothing is known in England as yet. Patience! The newspaper is to meet me at the breakfast-table every morning till further notice; and any day now may show me what I most want to see."

"November 21st.--No news again. I wrote to Midwinter to-day, to keep up appearances.

"When the letter was done, I fell into wretchedly low spirits--I can't imagine why--and felt such a longing for a little company that, in despair of knowing where else to go, I actually went to Pimlico, on the chance that Mother Oldershaw might have returned to her old quarters.

"There were changes since I had seen the place during my former stay in London. Doctor Downward's side of the house was still empty. But the shop was being brightened up for the occupation of a milliner and dress-maker. The people, when I went in to make inquiries, were all strangers to me. They showed, however, no hesitation in giving me Mrs. Oldershaw's address when I asked for it--from which I infer that the little 'difficulty' which forced her to be in hiding in August last is at an end, so far as she is concerned. As for the doctor, the people at the shop either were, or pretended to be, quite unable to tell me what had become of him.

"I don't know whether it was the sight of the place at Pimlico that sickened me, or whether it was my own perversity, or what. But now that I had got Mrs. Oldershaw's address, I felt as if she was the very last person in the world that I wanted to see. I took a cab, and told the man to drive to the street she lived in, and then told him to drive back to the hotel. I hardly know what is the matter with me--unless it is that I am getting more impatient every hour for information about Armadale. When will the future look a little less dark, I wonder? To-morrow is Saturday. Will to-morrow's newspaper lift the veil?"

"November 22d.--Saturday's newspaper has lifted the veil! Words are vain to

express the panic of astonishment in which I write. I never once anticipated it; I can't believe it or realize it, now it has happened. The winds and waves themselves have turned my accomplices! The yacht has foundered at sea, and every soul on board has perished!

"Here is the account cut out of this morning's newspaper:

"'DISASTER AT SEA.--Intelligence has reached the Royal Yacht Squadron and the insurers which leaves no reasonable doubt, we regret to say, of the total loss, on the fifth of the present month, of the yacht Dorothea, with every soul on board. The particulars are as follows: At daylight, on the morning of the sixth, the Italian brig Speranza, bound from Venice to Marsala for orders, encountered some floating objects off Cape Spartivento (at the southernmost extremity of Italy) which attracted the curiosity of the people of the brig. The previous day had been marked by one of the most severe of the sudden and violent storms, peculiar to these southern seas, which has been remembered for years. The Speranza herself having been in danger while the gale lasted, the captain and crew concluded that they were on the traces of a wreck, and a boat was lowered for the purpose of examining the objects in the water. A hen-coop, some broken spars, and fragments of shattered plank were the first evidences discovered of the terrible disaster that had happened. Some of the lighter articles of cabin furniture, wrenched and shattered, were found next. And, lastly, a memento of melancholy interest turned up, in the shape of a lifebuoy, with a corked bottle attached to it. These latter objects, with the relics of cabin furniture, were brought on board the Speranza. On the buoy the name of the vessel was painted, as follows: "Dorothea, R. Y. S." (meaning Royal Yacht Squadron). The bottle, on being uncorked, contained a sheet of note-paper, on which the following lines were hurriedly traced in pencil: "Off Cape Spartivento; two days out from Messina. Nov. 5th, 4 P.M." (being the hour at which the log of the Italian brig showed the storm to have been at its height). "Both our boats are stove in by the sea. The rudder is gone, and we have sprung a leak astern which is more than we can stop. The Lord help us all--we are sinking. (Signed) John Mitchenden, Mate." On reaching Marsala, the captain of the brig made his report to the British consul, and left the objects discovered in that gentleman's charge. Inquiry at Messina showed that the ill-fated vessel had arrived there from Naples. At the latter port it was ascertained that the Dorothea had been hired from the owner's agent by an English gentleman, Mr. Armadale, of Thorpe Ambrose, Norfolk. Whether Mr. Armadale had any friends on board with him has not been clearly discovered. But there is unhappily no doubt that the ill-fated gentleman himself sailed in the yacht from Naples, and that he was also on board of the vessel when she left Messina.'

"Such is the story of the wreck, as the newspaper tells it in the plainest and fewest words. My head is in a whirl; my confusion is so great that I think of fifty different things in trying to think of one. I must wait--a day more or less is of no consequence now--I must wait till I can face my new position, without feeling bewildered by it."

"November 23d.--Eight in the morning.--I rose an hour ago, and saw my way clearly to the first step that I must take under present circumstances.

"It is of the utmost importance to me to know what is doing at Thorpe Ambrose; and it would be the height of rashness, while I am quite in the dark in this matter, to venture there myself. The only other alternative is to write to somebody on the spot for news; and the only person I can write to is--Bashwood.

"I have just finished the letter. It is headed 'private and confidential,' and signed 'Lydia Armadale.' There is nothing in it to compromise me, if the old fool is mortally offended by my treatment of him, and if he spitefully shows my letter to other people. But I don't believe he will do this. A man at his age forgives a woman anything, if the woman only encourages him. I have requested him, as a personal favor, to keep our correspondence for the present strictly private. I have hinted that my married life with my deceased husband has not been a happy one; and that I feel the injudiciousness of having married a young man. In the postscript I go further still, and venture boldly on these comforting words: 'I can explain, dear Mr. Bashwood, what may have seemed fake and deceitful in my conduct toward you when you give me a personal opportunity.' If he was on the right side of sixty, I should feel doubtful of results. But he is on the wrong side of sixty, and I believe he will give me my personal opportunity.

"Ten o'clock.--I have been looking over the copy of my marriage certificate, with which I took care to provide myself on the wedding-day; and I have discovered, to my inexpressible dismay, an obstacle to my appearance in the character of Armadale's widow which I now see for the first time.

"The description of Midwinter (under his own name) which the certificate presents answers in every important particular to what would have been the description of Armadale of Thorpe Ambrose, if I had really married him. 'Name and Surname'--Allan Armadale. 'Age'--twenty-one, instead of twenty-two, which might easily pass for a mistake. 'Condition'--Bachelor. 'Rank or profession'--Gentleman. 'Residence at the time of Marriage'--Frant's Hotel, Darley Street. 'Father's Name and Surname'--Allan Armadale. 'Rank or

Profession of Father'--Gentleman. Every particular (except the year's difference in their two ages) which answers for the one answers for the other. But suppose, when I produce my copy of the certificate, that some meddlesome lawyer insists on looking at the original register? Midwinter's writing is as different as possible from the writing of his dead friend. The hand in which he has written 'Allan Armadale' in the book has not a chance of passing for the hand in which Armadale of Thorpe Ambrose was accustomed to sign his name.

"Can I move safely in the matter, with such a pitfall as I see here open under my feet? How can I tell? Where can I find an experienced person to inform me? I must shut up my diary and think."

"Seven o'clock.--My prospects have changed again since I made my last entry. I have received a warning to be careful in the future which I shall not neglect; and I have (I believe) succeeded in providing myself with the advice and assistance of which I stand in need.

"After vainly trying to think of some better person to apply to in the difficulty which embarrassed me, I made a virtue of necessity, and set forth to surprise Mrs. Oldershaw by a visit from her darling Lydia! It is almost needless to add that I determined to sound her carefully, and not to let any secret of importance out of my own possession.

"A sour and solemn old maid-servant admitted me into the house. When I asked for her mistress, I was reminded with the bitterest emphasis that I had committed the impropriety of calling on a Sunday. Mrs. Oldershaw was at home, solely in consequence of being too unwell to go to church! The servant thought it very unlikely that she would see me. I thought it highly probable, on the contrary, that she would honor me with an interview in her own interests, if I sent in my name as 'Miss Gwilt'--and the event proved that I was right. After being kept waiting some minutes I was shown into the drawing-room.

"There sat Mother Jezebel, with the air of a woman resting on the high-road to heaven, dressed in a slate-colored gown, with gray mittens on her hands, a severely simple cap on her head, and a volume of sermons on her lap. She turned up the whites of her eyes devoutly at the sight of me, and the first words she said were--'Oh, Lydia! Lydia! why are you not at church?'

"If I had been less anxious, the sudden presentation of Mrs. Oldershaw in an entirely new character might have amused me. But I was in no humor for laughing, and (my notes of hand being all paid) I was under no obligation to

restrain my natural freedom of speech. 'Stuff and nonsense!' I said. 'Put your Sunday face in your pocket. I have got some news for you, since I last wrote from Thorpe Ambrose.'

"The instant I mentioned 'Thorpe Ambrose,' the whites of the old hypocrite's eyes showed themselves again, and she flatly refused to hear a word more from me on the subject of my proceedings in Norfolk. I insisted; but it was quite useless. Mother Oldershaw only shook her head and groaned, and informed me that her connection with the pomps and vanities of the world was at an end forever. 'I have been born again, Lydia,' said the brazen old wretch, wiping her eyes. 'Nothing will induce me to return to the subject of that wicked speculation of yours on the folly of a rich young man.'

"After hearing this, I should have left her on the spot, but for one consideration which delayed me a moment longer.

"It was easy to see, by this time, that the circumstances (whatever they might have been) which had obliged Mother Oldershaw to keep in hiding, on the occasion of my former visit to London, had been sufficiently serious to force her into giving up, or appearing to give up, her old business. And it was hardly less plain that she had found it to her advantage--everybody in England finds it to their advantage in some way to cover the outer side of her character carefully with a smooth varnish of Cant. This was, however, no business of mine; and I should have made these reflections outside instead of inside the house, if my interests had not been involved in putting the sincerity of Mother Oldershaw's reformation to the test--so far as it affected her past connection with myself. At the time when she had fitted me out for our enterprise, I remembered signing a certain business document which gave her a handsome pecuniary interest in my success, if I became Mrs. Armadale of Thorpe Ambrose. The chance of turning this mischievous morsel of paper to good account, in the capacity of a touchstone, was too tempting to be resisted. I asked my devout friend's permission to say one last word before I left the house.

"'As you have no further interest in my wicked speculation at Thorpe Ambrose,' I said, 'perhaps you will give me back the written paper that I signed, when you were not quite such an exemplary person as you are now?'

"The shameless old hypocrite instantly shut her eyes and shuddered.

"'Does that mean Yes, or No'?' I asked.

"'On moral and religious grounds, Lydia,' said Mrs. Oldershaw, 'it means

No.'

"'On wicked and worldly grounds,' I rejoined, 'I beg to thank you for showing me your hand.'

"There could, indeed, be no doubt now about the object she really had in view. She would run no more risks and lend no more money; she would leave me to win or lose single-handed. If I lost, she would not be compromised. If I won, she would produce the paper I had signed, and profit by it without remorse. In my present situation, it was mere waste of time and words to prolong the matter by any useless recrimination on my side. I put the warning away privately in my memory for future use, and got up to go.

"At the moment when I left my chair there was a sharp double knock at the street door. Mrs. Oldershaw evidently recognized it. She rose in a violent hurry, and rang the bell. 'I am too unwell to see anybody,' she said, when the servant appeared. 'Wait a moment, if you please,' she added, turning sharply on me, when the woman had left us to answer the door.

"It was small, very small, spitefulness on my part, I know; but the satisfaction of thwarting Mother Jezebel, even in a trifle, was not to be resisted. 'I can't wait,' I said; 'you reminded me just now that I ought to be at church.' Before she could answer I was out of the room.

"As I put my foot on the first stair the street door was opened, and a man's voice inquired whether Mrs. Oldershaw was at home.

"I instantly recognized the voice. Doctor Downward!

"The doctor repeated the servant's message in a tone which betrayed unmistakable irritation at finding himself admitted no further than the door.

"'Your mistress is not well enough to see visitors? Give her that card,' said the doctor, 'and say I expect her, the next time I call, to be well enough to see me.'

"If his voice had not told me plainly that he felt in no friendly mood toward Mrs. Oldershaw, I dare say I should have let him go without claiming his acquaintance; but, as things were, I felt an impulse to speak to him or to anybody who had a grudge against Mother Jezebel. There was more of my small spitefulness in this, I suppose. Anyway, I slipped downstairs; and, following the doctor out quietly, overtook him in the street.

"I had recognized his voice, and I recognized his back as I walked behind him. But when I called him by his name, and when he turned round with a start and confronted me, I followed his example, and started on my side. The doctor's face was transformed into the face of a perfect stranger! His baldness had hidden itself under an artfully grizzled wig. He had allowed his whiskers to grow, and had dyed them to match his new head of hair. Hideous circular spectacles bestrode his nose in place of the neat double eyeglass that he used to carry in his hand; and a black neckerchief, surmounted by immense shirt-collars, appeared as the unworthy successor of the clerical white cravat of former times. Nothing remained of the man I once knew but the comfortable plumpness of his figure, and the confidential courtesy and smoothness of his manner and his voice.

"'Charmed to see you again,' said the doctor, looking about him a little anxiously, and producing his card-case in a very precipitate manner. 'But, my dear Miss Gwilt, permit me to rectify a slight mistake on your part. Doctor Downward of Pimlico is dead and buried; and you will infinitely oblige me if you will never, on any consideration, mention him again!'

"I took the card he offered me, and discovered that I was now supposed to be speaking to 'Doctor Le Doux, of the Sanitarium, Fairweather Vale, Hampstead!'

"'You seem to have found it necessary,' I said, 'to change a great many things since I last saw you? Your name, your residence, your personal appearance--?'

"'And my branch of practice,' interposed the doctor. 'I have purchased of the original possessor (a person of feeble enterprise and no resources) a name, a diploma, and a partially completed sanitarium for the reception of nervous invalids. We are open already to the inspection of a few privileged friends--come and see us. Are you walking my way? Pray take my arm, and tell me to what happy chance I am indebted for the pleasure of seeing you again?'

"I told him the circumstances exactly as they had happened, and I added (with a view to making sure of his relations with his former ally at Pimlico) that I had been greatly surprised to hear Mrs. Oldershaw's door shut on such an old friend as himself. Cautious as he was, the doctor's manner of receiving my remark satisfied me at once that my suspicions of an estrangement were well founded. His smile vanished, and he settled his hideous spectacles irritably on the bridge of his nose.

"'Pardon me if I leave you to draw your own conclusions,' he said. 'The subject of Mrs. Oldershaw is, I regret to say, far from agreeable to me under existing circumstances--a business difficulty connected with our late partnership at Pimlico, entirely without interest for a young and brilliant woman like yourself. Tell me your news! Have you left your situation at Thorpe Ambrose? Are you residing in London? Is there anything, professional or otherwise, that I can do for you?'

"That last question was a more important one than he supposed. Before I answered it, I felt the necessity of parting company with him and of getting a little time to think.

"'You have kindly asked me, doctor, to pay you a visit,' I said. 'In your quiet house at Hampstead, I may possibly have something to say to you which I can't say in this noisy street. When are you at home at the Sanitarium? Should I find you there later in the day?'

"The doctor assured me that he was then on his way back, and begged that I would name my own hour. I said, 'Toward the afternoon;' and, pleading an engagement, hailed the first omnibus that passed us. 'Don't forget the address,' said the doctor, as he handed me in. 'I have got your card,' I answered, and so we parted.

"I returned to the hotel, and went up into my room, and thought over it very anxiously.

"The serious obstacle of the signature on the marriage register still stood in my way as unmanageably as ever. All hope of getting assistance from Mrs. Oldershaw was at an end. I could only regard her henceforth as an enemy hidden in the dark--the enemy, beyond all doubt now, who had had me followed and watched when I was last in London. To what other counselor could I turn for the advice which my unlucky ignorance of law and business obliged me to seek from some one more experienced than myself? Could I go to the lawyer whom I consulted when I was about to marry Midwinter in my maiden name? Impossible! To say nothing of his cold reception of me when I had last seen him, the advice I wanted this time related (disguise the facts as I might) to commission of a Fraud--a fraud of the sort that no prosperous lawyer would consent to assist if he had a character to lose. Was there any other competent person I could think of? There was one, and one only--the doctor who had died at Pimlico, and had revived again at Hampstead.

"I knew him to be entirely without scruples; to have the business experience that I wanted myself; and to be as cunning, as clever, and as far-seeing a

man as could be found in all London. Beyond this, I had made two important discoveries in connection with him that morning. In the first place, he was on bad terms with Mrs. Oldershaw, which would protect me from all danger of the two leaguing together against me if I trusted him. In the second place, circumstances still obliged him to keep his identity carefully disguised, which gave me a hold over him in no respect inferior to any hold that I might give him over me. In every way he was the right man, the only man, for my purpose; and yet I hesitated at going to him--hesitated for a full hour and more, without knowing why!

"It was two o'clock before I finally decided on paying the doctor a visit. Having, after this, occupied nearly another hour in determining to a hair-breadth how far I should take him into my confidence, I sent for a cab at last, and set off toward three in the afternoon for Hampstead.

"I found the Sanitarium with some little difficulty.

"Fairweather Vale proved to be a new neighborhood, situated below the high ground of Hampstead, on the southern side. The day was overcast, and the place looked very dreary. We approached it by a new road running between trees, which might once have been the park avenue of a country house. At the end we came upon a wilderness of open ground, with half-finished villas dotted about, and a hideous litter of boards, wheelbarrows, and building materials of all sorts scattered in every direction. At one corner of this scene of desolation, stood a great overgrown dismal house, plastered with drab-colored stucco, and surrounded by a naked, unfinished garden, without a shrub or a flower in it, frightful to behold. On the open iron gate that led into this inclosure was a new brass plate, with 'Sanitarium' inscribed on it in great black letters. The bell, when the cabman rang it, pealed through the empty house like a knell; and the pallid, withered old man-servant in black who answered the door looked as if he had stepped up out of his grave to perform that service. He let out on me a smell of damp plaster and new varnish; and he let in with me a chilling draft of the damp November air. I didn't notice it at the time, but, writing of it now, I remember that I shivered as I crossed the threshold.

"I gave my name to the servant as 'Mrs. Armadale,' and was shown into the waiting-room. The very fire itself was dying of damp in the grate. The only books on the table were the doctor's Works, in sober drab covers; and the only object that ornamented the walls was the foreign Diploma (handsomely framed and glazed), of which the doctor had possessed himself by purchase, along with the foreign name.

"After a moment or two, the proprietor of the Sanitarium came in, and held up his hands in cheerful astonishment at the sight of me.

"'I hadn't an idea who "Mrs. Armadale" was!' he said. 'My dear lady, have you changed your name too? How sly of you not to tell me when we met this morning! Come into my private snuggery--I can't think of keeping an old and dear friend like you in the patients' waiting-room.'

"The doctor's private snuggery was at the back of the house, looking out on fields and trees, doomed but not yet destroyed by the builder. Horrible objects in brass and leather and glass, twisted and turned as if they were sentient things writhing in agonies of pain, filled up one end of the room. A great book-case with glass doors extended over the whole of the opposite wall, and exhibited on its shelves long rows of glass jars, in which shapeless dead creatures of a dull white color floated in yellow liquid. Above the fireplace hung a collection of photographic portraits of men and women, inclosed in two large frames hanging side by side with a space between them. The left-hand frame illustrated the effects of nervous suffering as seen in the face; the right-hand frame exhibited the ravages of insanity from the same point of view; while the space between was occupied by an elegantly illuminated scroll, bearing inscribed on it the time-honored motto, 'Prevention is better than Cure.'

"'Here I am, with my galvanic apparatus, and my preserved specimens, and all the rest of it,' said the doctor, placing me in a chair by the fireside. 'And there is my System mutely addressing you just above your head, under a form of exposition which I venture to describe as frankness itself. This is no mad-house, my dear lady. Let other men treat insanity, if they like--I stop it! No patients in the house as yet. But we live in an age when nervous derangement (parent of insanity) is steadily on the increase; and in due time the sufferers will come. I can wait as Harvey waited, as Jenner waited. And now do put your feet up on the fender, and tell me about yourself. You are married, of course? And what a pretty name! Accept my best and most heart-felt congratulations. You have the two greatest blessings that can fall to a woman's lot; the two capital H's, as I call them--Husband and Home.'

"I interrupted the genial flow of the doctor's congratulations at the first opportunity.

"'I am married; but the circumstances are by no means of the ordinary kind,' I said, seriously. My present position includes none of the blessings that are usually supposed to fall to a woman's lot. I am already in a situation of very serious difficulty; and before long I may be in a situation of very serious

danger as well.'

"The doctor drew his chair a little nearer to me, and fell at once into his old professional manner and his old confidential tone.

"'If you wish to consult me,' he said, softly, 'you know that I have kept some dangerous secrets in my time, and you also know that I possess two valuable qualities as an adviser. I am not easily shocked; and I can be implicitly trusted.'

"I hesitated even now, at the eleventh hour, sitting alone with him in his own room. It was so strange to me to be trusting to anybody but myself! And yet, how could I help trusting another person in a difficulty which turned on a matter of law?

"'Just as you please, you know,' added the doctor. 'I never invite confidences. I merely receive them.'

"There was no help for it; I had come there not to hesitate, but to speak. I risked it, and spoke.

"'The matter on which I wish to consult you,' I said, 'is not (as you seem to think) within your experience as a professional man. But I believe you may be of assistance to me, if I trust myself to your larger experience as a man of the world. I warn you beforehand that I shall certainly surprise, and possibly alarm, you before I have done.'

"With that preface I entered on my story, telling him what I had settled to tell him, and no more.

"I made no secret, at the outset, of my intention to personate Armadale's widow; and I mentioned without reserve (knowing that the doctor could go to the office and examine the will for himself) the handsome income that would be settled on me in the event of my success. Some of the circumstances that followed next in succession I thought it desirable to alter or conceal. I showed him the newspaper account of the loss of the yacht, but I said nothing about events at Naples. I informed him of the exact similarity of the two names; leaving him to imagine that it was accidental. I told him, as an important element in the matter, that my husband had kept his real name a profound secret from everybody but myself; but (to prevent any communication between them) I carefully concealed from the doctor what the assumed name under which Midwinter had lived all his life really was. I acknowledged that I had left my husband behind me on the Continent; but

when the doctor put the question, I allowed him to conclude--I couldn't, with all my resolution, tell him positively!--that Midwinter knew of the contemplated Fraud, and that he was staying away purposely, so as not to compromise me by his presence. This difficulty smoothed over--or, as I feel it now, this baseness committed--I reverted to myself, and came back again to the truth. One after another I mentioned all the circumstances connected with my private marriage, and with the movements of Armadale and Midwinter, which rendered any discovery of the false personation (through the evidence of other people) a downright impossibility. 'So much,' I said, in conclusion, 'for the object in view. The next thing is to tell you plainly of a very serious obstacle that stands in my way.'

"The doctor, who had listened thus far without interrupting me, begged permission here to say a few words on his side before I went on.

"The 'few words' proved to be all questions--clever, searching, suspicious questions--which I was, however, able to answer with little or no reserve, for they related, in almost every instance, to the circumstances under which I had been married, and to the chances for and against my lawful husband if he chose to assert his claim to me at any future time.

"My replies informed the doctor, in the first place, that I had so managed matters at Thorpe Ambrose as to produce a general impression that Armadale intended to marry me; in the second place, that my husband's early life had not been of a kind to exhibit him favorably in the eyes of the world; in the third place, that we had been married, without any witnesses present who knew us, at a large parish church in which two other couples had been married the same morning, to say nothing of the dozens on dozens of other couples (confusing all remembrance of us in the minds of the officiating people) who had been married since. When I had put the doctor in possession of these facts--and when he had further ascertained that Midwinter and I had gone abroad among strangers immediately after leaving the church; and that the men employed on board the yacht in which Armadale had sailed from Somersetshire (before my marriage) were now away in ships voyaging to the other end of the world--his confidence in my prospects showed itself plainly in his face. 'So far as I can see,' he said, 'your husband's claim to you (after you have stepped into the place of the dead Mr. Armadale's widow) would rest on nothing but his own bare assertion. And that I think you may safely set at defiance. Excuse my apparent distrust of the gentleman. But there might be a misunderstanding between you in the future, and it is highly desirable to ascertain beforehand exactly what he could or could not do under those circumstances. And now that we have done with the main obstacle that I see in the way of your success, let

us by all means come to the obstacle that you see next!'

"I was willing enough to come to it. The tone in which he spoke of Midwinter, though I myself was responsible for it, jarred on me horribly, and roused for the moment some of the old folly of feeling which I fancied I had laid asleep forever. I rushed at the chance of changing the subject, and mentioned the discrepancy in the register between the hand in which Midwinter had signed the name of Allan Armadale, and the hand in which Armadale of Thorpe Ambrose had been accustomed to write his name, with an eagerness which it quite diverted the doctor to see.

"'Is that all?' he asked, to my infinite surprise and relief, when I had done. 'My dear lady, pray set your mind at ease! If the late Mr. Armadale's lawyers want a proof of your marriage, they won't go to the church-register for it, I can promise you!'

"'What!' I exclaimed, in astonishment. 'Do you mean to say that the entry in the register is not a proof of my marriage?'

"'It is a proof,' said the doctor, 'that you have been married to somebody. But it is no proof that you have been married to Mr. Armadale of Thorpe Ambrose. Jack Nokes or Tom Styles (excuse the homeliness of the illustration!) might have got the license, and gone to the church to be married to you under Mr. Armadale's name; and the register (how could it do otherwise?) must in that case have innocently assisted the deception. I see I surprise you. My dear madam, when you opened this interesting business you surprised me--I may own it now--by laying so much stress on the curious similarity between the two names. You might have entered on the very daring and romantic enterprise in which you are now engaged, without necessarily marrying your present husband. Any other man would have done just as well, provided he was willing to take Mr. Armadale's name for the purpose.'

"I felt my temper going at this. 'Any other man would not have done just as well,' I rejoined, instantly. 'But for the similarity of the names, I should never have thought of the enterprise at all.'

"The doctor admitted that he had spoken too hastily. 'That personal view of the subject had, I confess, escaped me,' he said. 'However, let us get back to the matter in hand. In the course of what I may term an adventurous medical life, I have been brought more than once into contact with the gentlemen of the law, and have had opportunities of observing their proceedings in cases of, let us say, Domestic Jurisprudence. I am quite sure

I am correct in informing you that the proof which will be required by Mr. Armadale's representatives will be the evidence of a witness present at the marriage who can speak to the identity of the bride and bridegroom from his own personal knowledge.'

"'But I have already told you,' I said, 'that there was no such person present.'

"'Precisely,' rejoined the doctor. 'In that case, what you now want, before you can safely stir a step in the matter, is--if you will pardon me the expression--a ready-made witness, possessed of rare moral and personal resources, who can be trusted to assume the necessary character, and to make the necessary Declaration before a magistrate. Do you know of any such person?' asked the doctor, throwing himself back in his chair, and looking at me with the utmost innocence.

"'I only know you,' I said.

"The doctor laughed softly. 'So like a woman!' he remarked, with the most exasperating good humor. 'The moment she sees her object, she dashes at it headlong the nearest way. Oh, the sex! the sex!'

"'Never mind the sex!' I broke out, impatiently. 'I want a serious answer--Yes or No?'

"The doctor rose, and waved his hand with great gravity and dignity all round the room. 'You see this vast establishment,' he began; 'you can possibly estimate to some extent the immense stake I have in its prosperity and success. Your excellent natural sense will tell you that the Principal of this Sanitarium must be a man of the most unblemished character--'

"'Why waste so many words,' I said, 'when one word will do? You mean No!'

"The Principal of the Sanitarium suddenly relapsed into the character of my confidential friend.

"'My dear lady,' he said, 'it isn't Yes, and it isn't No, at a moment's notice. Give me till to-morrow afternoon. By that time I engage to be ready to do one of two things--either to withdraw myself from this business at once, or to go into it with you heart and soul. Do you agree to that? Very good; we may drop the subject, then, till to-morrow. Where can I call on you when I have decided what to do?'

"There was no objection to my trusting him with my address at the hotel. I had taken care to present myself there as 'Mrs. Armadale'; and I had given Midwinter an address at the neighboring post-office to write to when he answered my letters. We settled the hour at which the doctor was to call on me; and, that matter arranged, I rose to go, resisting all offers of refreshment, and all proposals to show me over the house. His smooth persistence in keeping up appearances after we had thoroughly understood each other disgusted me. I got away from him as soon as I could, and came back to my diary and my own room.

"We shall see how it ends to-morrow. My own idea is that my confidential friend will say Yes."

"November 24th.--The doctor has said Yes, as I supposed; but on terms which I never anticipated. The condition on which I have secured his services amounts to nothing less than the payment to him, on my stepping into the place of Armadale's widow, of half my first year's income--in other words, six hundred pounds!

"I protested against this extortionate demand in every way I could think of. All to no purpose. The doctor met me with the most engaging frankness. Nothing, he said, but the accidental embarrassment of his position at the present time would have induced him to mix himself up in the matter at all. He would honestly confess that he had exhausted his own resources, and the resources of other persons whom he described as his 'backers,' in the purchase and completion of the Sanitarium. Under those circumstances, six hundred pounds in prospect was an object to him. For that sum he would run the serious risk of advising and assisting me. Not a farthing less would tempt him; and there he left it, with his best and friendliest wishes, in my hands!

"It ended in the only way in which it could end. I had no choice but to accept the terms, and to let the doctor settle things on the spot as he pleased. The arrangement once made between us, I must do him the justice to say that he showed no disposition to let the grass grow under his feet. He called briskly for pen, ink and paper, and suggested opening the campaign at Thorpe Ambrose by to-night's post.

"We agreed on a form of letter which I wrote, and which he copied on the spot. I entered into no particulars at starting. I simply asserted that I was the widow of the deceased Mr. Armadale; that I had been privately married to him; that I had returned to England on his sailing in the yacht from Naples; and that I begged to inclose a copy of my marriage certificate, as a

matter of form with which I presumed it was customary to comply. The letter was addressed to 'The Representatives of the late Allan Armadale, Esq., Thorpe Ambrose, Norfolk.' And the doctor himself carried it away, and put it in the post.

"I am not so excited and so impatient for results as I expected to be, now that the first step is taken. The thought of Midwinter haunts me like a ghost. I have been writing to him again--as before, to keep up appearances. It will be my last letter, I think. My courage feels shaken, my spirits get depressed, when my thoughts go back to Turin. I am no more capable of facing the consideration of Midwinter at this moment than I was in the by-gone time, The day of reckoning with him, once distant and doubtful, is a day that may come to me now, I know not how soon. And here I am, trusting myself blindly to the chapter of Accidents still!"

"November 25th.--At two o'clock to-day the doctor called again by appointment. He has been to his lawyers (of course without taking them into our confidence) to put the case simply of proving my marriage. The result confirms what he has already told me. The pivot on which the whole matter will turn, if my claim is disputed, will be the question of identity; and it may be necessary for the witness to make his Declaration in the magistrate's presence before the week is out.

"In this position of affairs, the doctor thinks it important that we should be within easy reach of each other, and proposes to find a quiet lodging for me in his neighborhood. I am quite willing to go anywhere; for, among the other strange fancies that have got possession of me, I have an idea that I shall feel more completely lost to Midwinter if I move out of the neighborhood in which his letters are addressed to me. I was awake and thinking of him again last night. This morning I have finally decided to write to him no more.

"After staying half an hour, the doctor left me, having first inquired whether I would like to accompany him to Hampstead to look for lodgings. I informed him that I had some business of my own which would keep me in London. He inquired what the business was. 'You will see,' I said, 'to-morrow or next day.'

"I had a moment's nervous trembling when I was by myself again. My business in London, besides being a serious business in a woman's eyes, took my mind back to Midwinter in spite of me. The prospect of removing to my new lodging had reminded me of the necessity of dressing in my new character. The time had come now for getting my widow's weeds.

"My first proceeding, after putting my bonnet on, was to provide myself with money. I got what I wanted to fit me out for the character of Armadale's widow by nothing less than the sale of Armadale's own present to me on my marriage--the ruby ring! It proved to be a more valuable jewel than I had supposed. I am likely to be spared all money anxieties for some time to come.

"On leaving the jeweler's, I went to the great mourning shop in Regent Street. In four-and-twenty hours (if I can give them no more) they have engaged to dress me in my widow's costume from head to foot. I had another feverish moment when I left the shop; and, by way of further excitement on this agitating day, I found a surprise in store for me on my return to the hotel. An elderly gentleman was announced to be waiting to see me. I opened my sitting-room door, and there was old Bashwood!

"He had got my letter that morning, and had started for London by the next train to answer it in person. I had expected a great deal from him, but I had certainly not expected that. It flattered me. For the moment, I declare it flattered me!

"I pass over the wretched old creature's raptures and reproaches, and groans and tears, and weary long prosings about the lonely months he had passed at Thorpe Ambrose, brooding over my desertion of him. He was quite eloquent at times; but I don't want his eloquence here. It is needless to say that I put myself right with him, and consulted his feelings before I asked him for his news. What a blessing a woman's vanity is sometimes! I almost forgot my risks and responsibilities in my anxieties to be charming. For a minute or two I felt a warm little flutter of triumph. And it was a triumph--even with an old man! In a quarter of an hour I had him smirking and smiling, hanging on my lightest words in an ecstasy, and answering all the questions I put to him like a good little child.

"Here is his account of affairs at Thorpe Ambrose, as I gently extracted it from him bit by bit:

"In the first place, the news of Armadale's death has reached Miss Milroy. It has so completely overwhelmed her that her father has been compelled to remove her from the school. She is back at the cottage, and the doctor is in daily attendance. Do I pity her? Yes! I pity her exactly as much as she once pitied me!

"In the next place, the state of affairs at the great house, which I expected to find some difficulty in comprehending, turns out to be quite intelligible, and

certainly not discouraging so far. Only yesterday, the lawyers on both sides came to an understanding. Mr. Darch (the family solicitor of the Blanchards, and Armadale's bitter enemy in past times) represents the interests of Miss Blanchard, who (in the absence of any male heir) is next heir to the estate, and who has, it appears, been in London for some time past. Mr. Smart, of Norwich (originally employed to overlook Bashwood), represents the deceased Armadale. And this is what the two lawyers have settled between them.

"Mr. Darch, acting for Miss Blanchard, has claimed the possession of the estate, and the right of receiving the rents at the Christmas audit, in her name. Mr. Smart, on his side, has admitted that there is great weight in the family solicitor's application. He cannot see his way, as things are now, to contesting the question of Armadale's death, and he will consent to offer no resistance to the application, if Mr. Darch will consent, on his side, to assume the responsibility of taking possession in Miss Blanchard's name. This Mr. Darch has already done; and the estate is now virtually in Miss Blanchard's possession.

"One result of this course of proceeding will be (as Bashwood thinks) to put Mr. Darch in the position of the person who really decides on my claim to the widow's place and the widow's money. The income being charged on the estate, it must come out of Miss Blanchard's pocket; and the question of paying it would appear, therefore, to be a question for Miss Blanchard's lawyer. To-morrow will probably decide whether this view is the right one, for my letter to Armadale's representatives will have been delivered at the great house this morning.

"So much for what old Bashwood had to tell me. Having recovered my influence over him, and possessed myself of all his information so far, the next thing to consider was the right use to turn him to in the future. He was entirely at my disposal, for his place at the steward's office has been already taken by Miss Blanchard's man of business, and he pleaded hard to be allowed to stay and serve my interests in London. There would not have been the least danger in letting him stay, for I had, as a matter of course, left him undisturbed in his conviction that I really am the widow of Armadale of Thorpe Ambrose. But with the doctor's resources at my command, I wanted no assistance of any sort in London; and it occurred to me that I might make Bashwood more useful by sending him back to Norfolk to watch events there in my interests.

"He looked sorely disappointed (having had an eye evidently to paying his court to me in my widowed condition!) when I told him of the conclusion at

which I had arrived. But a few words of persuasion, and a modest hint that he might cherish hopes in the future if he served me obediently in the present, did wonders in reconciling him to the necessity of meeting my wishes. He asked helplessly for 'instructions' when it was time for him to leave me and travel back by the evening train. I could give him none, for I had no idea as yet of what the legal people might or might not do. 'But suppose something happens,' he persisted, 'that I don't understand, what am I to do, so far away from you?' I could only give him one answer. 'Do nothing,' I said. 'Whatever it is, hold your tongue about it, and write, or come up to London immediately to consult me.' With those parting directions, and with an understanding that we were to correspond regularly, I let him kiss my hand, and sent him off to the train.

"Now that I am alone again, and able to think calmly of the interview between me and my elderly admirer, I find myself recalling a certain change in old Bashwood's manner which puzzled me at the time, and which puzzles me still.

"Even in his first moments of agitation at seeing me, I thought that his eyes rested on my face with a new kind of interest while I was speaking to him. Besides this, he dropped a word or two afterward, in telling me of his lonely life at Thorpe Ambrose, which seemed to imply that he had been sustained in his solitude by a feeling of confidence about his future relations with me when we next met. If he had been a younger and a bolder man (and if any such discovery had been possible), I should almost have suspected him of having found out something about my past life which had made him privately confident of controlling me, if I showed any disposition to deceive and desert him again. But such an idea as this in connection with old Bashwood is simply absurd. Perhaps I am overexcited by the suspense and anxiety of my present position? Perhaps the merest fancies and suspicions are leading me astray? Let this be as it may, I have, at any rate, more serious subjects than the subject of old Bashwood to occupy me now. Tomorrow's post may tell me what Armadale's representatives think of the claim of Armadale's widow."

"November 26th.--The answer has arrived this morning, in the form (as Bashwood supposed) of a letter from Mr. Darch. The crabbed old lawyer acknowledges my letter in three lines. Before he takes any steps, or expresses any opinion on the subject, he wants evidence of identity as well as the evidence of the certificate; and he ventures to suggest that it may be desirable, before we go any further, to refer him to my legal advisers.

"Two o'clock.--The doctor called shortly after twelve to say that he had found

a lodging for me within twenty minutes' walk of the Sanitarium. In return for his news, I showed him Mr. Darch's letter. He took it away at once to his lawyers, and came back with the necessary information for my guidance. I have answered Mr. Darch by sending him the address of my legal advisers--otherwise, the doctor's lawyers--without making any comment on the desire that he has expressed for additional evidence of the marriage. This is all that can be done to-day. To-morrow will bring with it events of greater interest, for to-morrow the doctor is to make his Declaration before the magistrate, and to-morrow I am to move to my new lodging in my widow's weeds."

"November 27th.--Fairweather Vale Villas.--The Declaration has been made, with all the necessary formalities. And I have taken possession, in my widow's costume, of my new rooms.

"I ought to be excited by the opening of this new act in the drama, and by the venturesome part that I am playing in it myself. Strange to say, I am quiet and depressed. The thought of Midwinter has followed me to my new abode, and is pressing on me heavily at this moment. I have no fear of any accident happening, in the interval that must still pass before I step publicly into the place of Armadale's widow. But when that time comes, and when Midwinter finds me (as sooner or later find me he must!) figuring in my false character, and settled in the position that I have usurped--then, I ask myself, What will happen? The answer still comes as it first came to me this morning, when I put on my widow's dress. Now, as then, the presentiment is fixed in my mind that he will kill me. If it was not too late to draw back--Absurd! I shall shut up my journal."

"November 28th.--The lawyers have heard from Mr. Darch, and have sent him the Declaration by return of post.

"When the doctor brought me this news, I asked him whether his lawyers were aware of my present address; and, finding that he had not yet mentioned it to them, I begged that he would continue to keep it a secret for the future. The doctor laughed. 'Are you afraid of Mr. Darch's stealing a march on us, and coming to attack you personally?' he asked. I accepted the imputation, as the easiest way of making him comply with my request. 'Yes,' I said, 'I am afraid of Mr. Darch.'

"My spirits have risen since the doctor left me. There is a pleasant sensation of security in feeling that no strangers are in possession of my address. I am easy enough in my mind to-day to notice how wonderfully well I look in my widow's weeds, and to make myself agreeable to the people of the house.

"Midwinter disturbed me a little again last night; but I have got over the ghastly delusion which possessed me yesterday. I know better now than to dread violence from him when he discovers what I have done. And there is still less fear of his stooping to assert his claim to a woman who has practiced on him such a deception as mine. The one serious trial that I shall be put to when the day of reckoning comes will be the trial of preserving my false character in his presence. I shall be safe in his loathing and contempt for me, after that. On the day when I have denied him to his face, I shall have seen the last of him forever.

"Shall I be able to deny him to his face? Shall I be able to look at him and speak to him as if he had never been more to me than a friend? How do I know till the time comes? Was there ever such an infatuated fool as I am, to be writing of him at all, when writing only encourages me to think of him? I will make a new resolution. From this time forth, his name shall appear no more in these pages."

"Monday, December 1st.--The last month of the worn-out old year 1851! If I allowed myself to look back, what a miserable year I should see added to all the other miserable years that are gone! But I have made my resolution to look forward only, and I mean to keep it.

"I have nothing to record of the last two days, except that on the twenty-ninth I remembered Bashwood, and wrote to tell him of my new address. This morning the lawyers heard again from Mr. Darch. He acknowledges the receipt of the Declaration, but postpones stating the decision at which he has arrived until he has communicated with the trustees under the late Mr. Blanchard's will, and has received his final instructions from his client, Miss Blanchard. The doctor's lawyers declare that this last letter is a mere device for gaining time--with what object they are, of course, not in a position to guess. The doctor himself says, facetiously, it is the usual lawyer's object of making a long bill. My own idea is that Mr. Darch has his suspicions of something wrong, and that his purpose in trying to gain time--"

* * * * *

"Ten, at night.--I had written as far as that last unfinished sentence (toward four in the afternoon) when I was startled by hearing a cab drive up to the door. I went to the window, and got there just in time to see old Bashwood getting out with an activity of which I should never have supposed him capable. So little did I anticipate the tremendous discovery that was going to burst on me in another minute, that I turned to the glass, and wondered what the susceptible old gentleman would say to me in my widow's cap.

"The instant he entered the room, I saw that some serious disaster had happened. His eyes were wild, his wig was awry. He approached me with a strange mixture of eagerness and dismay. 'I've done as you told me,' he whispered, breathlessly. 'I've held my tongue about it, and come straight to you!' He caught me by the hand before I could speak, with a boldness quite new in my experience of him. 'Oh how can I break it to you!' he burst out. 'I'm beside myself when I think of it!'

"'When you can speak,' I said, putting him into a chair, 'speak out. I see in your face that you bring me news I don't look for from Thorpe Ambrose.'

"He put his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat, and drew out a letter. He looked at the letter, and looked at me. 'New--new--news you don't look for,' he stammered; 'but not from Thorpe Ambrose!'

"'Not from Thorpe Ambrose!'

"'No. From the sea!'

"The first dawning of the truth broke on me at those words. I couldn't speak--I could only hold out my hand to him for the letter.

"He still shrank from giving it to me. 'I daren't! I daren't!' he said to himself, vacantly. 'The shock of it might be the death of her.'

"I snatched the letter from him. One glance at the writing on the address was enough. My hands fell on my lap, with the letter fast held in them. I sat petrified, without moving, without speaking, without hearing a word of what Bashwood was saying to me, and slowly realized the terrible truth. The man whose widow I had claimed to be was a living man to confront me! In vain I had mixed the drink at Naples--in vain I had betrayed him into Manuel's hands. Twice I had set the deadly snare for him, and twice Armadale had escaped me! I came to my sense of outward things again, and found Bashwood on his knees at my feet, crying.

"'You look angry,' he murmured, helplessly. 'Are you angry with me? Oh, if you only knew what hopes I had when we last saw each other, and how cruelly that letter has dashed them all to the ground!'

"I put the miserable old creature back from me, but very gently. 'Hush!' I said. 'Don't distress me now. I want composure; I want to read the letter.'

"He went away submissively to the other end of the room. As soon as my eye was off him, I heard him say to himself, with impotent malignity, 'If the sea had been of my mind, the sea would have drowned him!'

"One by one I slowly opened the folds of the letter; feeling, while I did so, the strangest incapability of fixing my attention on the very lines that I was burning to read. But why dwell any longer on sensations which I can't describe? It will be more to the purpose if I place the letter itself, for future reference, on this page of my journal.

"'Fiume, Illyria, November 21, 1851.

"MR. BASHWOOD--The address I date from will surprise you; and you will be more surprised still when you hear how it is that I come to write to you from a port on the Adriatic Sea.

"I have been the victim of a rascally attempt at robbery and murder. The robbery has succeeded; and it is only through the mercy of God that the murder did not succeed too.

"I hired a yacht rather more than a month ago at Naples; and sailed (I am glad to think now) without any friend with me, for Messina. From Messina I went for a cruise in the Adriatic. Two days out we were caught in a storm. Storms get up in a hurry, and go down in a hurry, in those parts. The vessel behaved nobly: I declare I feel the tears in my eyes now, when I think of her at the bottom of the sea! Toward sunset it began to moderate; and by midnight, except for a long, smooth swell, the sea was as quiet as need be. I went below, a little tired (having helped in working the yacht while the gale lasted), and fell asleep in five minutes. About two hours after, I was woke by something falling into my cabin through a chink of the ventilator in the upper part of the door. I jumped up, and found a bit of paper with a key wrapped in it, and with writing on the inner side, in a hand which it was not very easy to read.

"Up to this time I had not had the ghost of a suspicion that I was alone at sea with a gang of murderous vagabonds (excepting one only) who would stick at nothing. I had got on very well with my sailing-master (the worst scoundrel of the lot), and better still with his English mate. The sailors, being all foreigners, I had very little to say to. They did their work, and no quarrels and nothing unpleasant happened. If anybody had told me, before I went to bed on the night after the storm, that the sailing-master and the crew and the mate (who had been no better than the rest of them at starting) were all in a conspiracy to rob me of the money I had on board, and then to

drown me in my own vessel afterward, I should have laughed in his face. Just remember that; and then fancy for yourself (for I'm sure I can't tell you) what I must have thought when I opened the paper round the key, and read what I now copy (from the mate's writing), as follows:

"'SIR--Stay in your bed till you hear a boat shove off from the starboard side, or you are a dead man. Your money is stolen; and in five minutes' time the yacht will be scuttled, and the cabin hatch will be nailed down on you. Dead men tell no tales; and the sailing-master's notion is to leave proofs afloat that the vessel has foundered with all on board. It was his doing, to begin with, and we were all in it. I can't find it in my heart not to give you a chance for your life. It's a bad chance, but I can do no more. I should be murdered myself if I didn't seem to go with the rest. The key of your cabin door is thrown back to you, inside this. Don't be alarmed when you hear the hammer above. I shall do it, and I shall have short nails in my hand as well as long, and use the short ones only. Wait till you hear the boat with all of us shove off, and then pry up the cabin hatch with your back. The vessel will float a quarter of an hour after the holes are bored in her. Slip into the sea on the port side, and keep the vessel between you and the boat. You will find plenty of loose lumber, wrenched away on purpose, drifting about to hold on by. It's a fine night and a smooth sea, and there's a chance that a ship may pick you up while there's life left in you. I can do no more.--Yours truly, J. M.'

"As I came to those last words, I heard the hammering down of the hatch over my head. I don't suppose I'm more of a coward than most people, but there was a moment when the sweat poured down me like rain. I got to be my own man again before the hammering was done, and found myself thinking of somebody very dear to me in England. I said to myself: 'I'll have a try for my life, for her sake, though the chances are dead against me.'

"I put a letter from that person I have mentioned into one of the stoppered bottles of my dressing-case, along with the mate's warning, in case I lived to see him again. I hung this, and a flask of whisky, in a sling round my neck; and, after first dressing myself in my confusion, thought better of it, and stripped, again, for swimming, to my shirt and drawers. By the time I had done that the hammering was over and there was such a silence that I could hear the water bubbling into the scuttled vessel amidships. The next noise was the noise of the boat and the villains in her (always excepting my friend, the mate) shoving off from the starboard side. I waited for the splash of the oars in the water, and then got my back under the hatch. The mate had kept his promise. I lifted it easily--crept across the deck, under cover of the bulwarks, on all fours--and slipped into the sea on the port side. Lots of

things were floating about. I took the first thing I came to--a hen-coop--and swam away with it about a couple of hundred yards, keeping the yacht between me and the boat. Having got that distance, I was seized with a shivering fit, and I stopped (fearing the cramp next) to take a pull at my flask. When I had closed the flask again, I turned for a moment to look back, and saw the yacht in the act of sinking. In a minute more there was nothing between me and the boat but the pieces of wreck that had been purposely thrown out to float. The moon was shining; and, if they had had a glass in the boat, I believe they might have seen my head, though I carefully kept the hen-coop between me and them.

"As it was, they laid on their oars; and I heard loud voices among them disputing. After what seemed an age to me, I discovered what the dispute was about. The boat's head was suddenly turned my way. Some cleverer scoundrel than the rest (the sailing-master, I dare say) had evidently persuaded them to row back over the place where the yacht had gone down, and make quite sure that I had gone down with her.

"They were more than half-way across the distance that separated us, and I had given myself up for lost, when I heard a cry from one of them, and saw the boat's progress suddenly checked. In a minute or two more the boat's head was turned again; and they rowed straight away from me like men rowing for their lives.

"I looked on one side toward the land, and saw nothing. I looked on the other toward the sea, and discovered what the boat's crew had discovered before me--a sail in the distance, growing steadily brighter and bigger in the moonlight the longer I looked at it. In a quarter of an hour more the vessel was within hail of me, and the crew had got me on board.

"They were all foreigners, and they quite deafened me by their jabber. I tried signs, but before I could make them understand me I was seized with another shivering fit, and was carried below. The vessel held on her course, I have no doubt, but I was in no condition to know anything about it. Before morning I was in a fever; and from that time I can remember nothing clearly till I came to my senses at this place, and found myself under the care of a Hungarian merchant, the consignee (as they call it) of the coasting vessel that had picked me up. He speaks English as well or better than I do; and he has treated me with a kindness which I can find no words to praise. When he was a young man he was in England himself, learning business, and he says he has remembrances of our country which make his heart warm toward an Englishman. He has fitted me out with clothes, and has lent me the money to travel with, as soon as the doctor allows me to start for

home. Supposing I don't get a relapse, I shall be fit to travel in a week's time from this. If I can catch the mail at Trieste, and stand the fatigue, I shall be back again at Thorpe Ambrose in a week or ten days at most after you get my letter. You will agree with me that it is a terribly long letter. But I can't help that. I seem to have lost my old knack at putting things short, and finishing on the first page. However, I am near the end now; for I have nothing left to mention but the reason why I write about what has happened to me, instead of waiting till I get home, and telling it all by word of mouth.

"I fancy my head is still muddled by my illness. At any rate, it only struck me this morning that there is barely a chance of some vessel having passed the place where the yacht foundered, and having picked up the furniture, and other things wrenched out of her and left to float. Some false report of my being drowned may, in that case, have reached England. If this has happened (which I hope to God may be an unfounded fear on my part), go directly to Major Milroy at the cottage. Show him this letter--I have written it quite as much for his eye as for yours--and then give him the inclosed note, and ask him if he doesn't think the circumstances justify me in hoping he will send it to Miss Milroy. I can't explain why I don't write directly to the major, or to Miss Milroy, instead of to you. I can only say there are considerations I am bound in honor to respect, which oblige me to act in this roundabout way.

"I don't ask you to answer this, for I shall be on my way home, I hope, long before your letter could reach me in this out-of-the-way place. Whatever you do, don't lose a moment in going to Major Milroy. Go, on second thoughts, whether the loss of the yacht is known in England or not.

"Yours truly, ALLAN ARMADALE."

"I looked up when I had come to the end of the letter, and saw, for the first time, that Bashwood had left his chair and had placed himself opposite to me. He was intently studying my face, with the inquiring expression of a man who was trying to read my thoughts. His eyes fell guiltily when they met mine, and he shrank away to his chair. Believing, as he did, that I was really married to Armadale, was he trying to discover whether the news of Armadale's rescue from the sea was good news or bad news in my estimation? It was no time then for entering into explanations with him. The first thing to be done was to communicate instantly with the doctor. I called Bashwood back to me and gave him my hand.

"'You have done me a service,' I said, 'which makes us closer friends than ever. I shall say more about this, and about other matters of some interest

to both of us, later in the day. I want you now to lend me Mr. Armadale's letter (which I promise to bring back) and to wait here till I return. Will you do that for me, Mr. Bashwood?'

"He would do anything I asked him, he said. I went into the bedroom and put on my bonnet and shawl.

"'Let me be quite sure of the facts before I leave you,' I resumed, when I was ready to go out. 'You have not shown this letter to anybody but me?'

"'Not a living soul has seen it but our two selves.'

"'What have you done with the note inclosed to Miss Milroy?'

"He produced it from his pocket. I ran it over rapidly--saw that there was nothing in it of the slightest importance--and put it in the fire on the spot. That done, I left Bashwood in the sitting-room, and went to the Sanitarium, with Armadale's letter in my hand.

"The doctor had gone out, and the servant was unable to say positively at what time he would be back. I went into his study, and wrote a line preparing him for the news I had brought with me, which I sealed up, with Armadale's letter, in an envelope, to await his return. Having told the servant I would call again in an hour, I left the place.

"It was useless to go back to my lodgings and speak to Bashwood, until I knew first what the doctor meant to do. I walked about the neighborhood, up and down new streets and crescents and squares, with a kind of dull, numbed feeling in me, which prevented, not only all voluntary exercise of thought, but all sensation of bodily fatigue. I remembered the same feeling overpowering me, years ago, on the morning when the people of the prison came to take me into court to be tried for my life. All that frightful scene came back again to my mind in the strangest manner, as if it had been a scene in which some other person had figured. Once or twice I wondered, in a heavy, senseless way, why they had not hanged me!

"When I went back to the Sanitarium, I was informed that the doctor had returned half an hour since, and that he was in his own room anxiously waiting to see me.

"I went into the study, and found him sitting close by the fire with his head down and his hands on his knees. On the table near him, beside Armadale's letter and my note, I saw, in the little circle of light thrown by the reading-

lamp, an open railway guide. Was he meditating flight? It was impossible to tell from his face, when he looked up at me, what he was meditating, or how the shock had struck him when he first discovered that Armadale was a living man.

"'Take a seat near the fire,' he said. 'It's very raw and cold to-day.'

"I took a chair in silence. In silence, on his side, the doctor sat rubbing his knees before the fire.

"'Have you nothing to say to me?' I asked.

"He rose, and suddenly removed the shade from the reading-lamp, so that the light fell on my face.

"'You are not looking well,' he said. 'What's the matter?'

"'My head feels dull, and my eyes are heavy and hot,' I replied. 'The weather, I suppose.'

"It was strange how we both got further and further from the one vitally important subject which we had both come together to discuss!

"'I think a cup of tea would do you good,' remarked the doctor.

"I accepted his suggestion; and he ordered the tea. While it was coming, he walked up and down the room, and I sat by the fire, and not a word passed between us on either side.

"The tea revived me; and the doctor noticed a change for the better in my face. He sat down opposite to me at the table, and spoke out at last.

"'If I had ten thousand pounds at this moment,' he began, 'I would give the whole of it never to have compromised myself in your desperate speculation on Mr. Armadale's death!'

"He said those words with an abruptness, almost with a violence, which was strangely uncharacteristic of his ordinary manner. Was he frightened himself, or was he trying to frighten me? I determined to make him explain himself at the outset, so far as I was concerned. 'Wait a moment, doctor,' I said. 'Do you hold me responsible for what has happened?'

"'Certainly not,' he replied, stiffly. 'Neither you nor anybody could have

foreseen what has happened. When I say I would give ten thousand pounds to be out of this business, I am blaming nobody but myself. And when I tell you next that I, for one, won't allow Mr. Armadale's resurrection from the sea to be the ruin of me without a fight for it, I tell you, my dear madam, one of the plainest truths I ever told to man or woman in the whole course of my life. Don't suppose I am invidiously separating my interests from yours in the common danger that now threatens us both. I simply indicate the difference in the risk that we have respectively run. You have not sunk the whole of your resources in establishing a Sanitarium; and you have not made a false declaration before a magistrate, which is punishable as perjury by the law.'

"I interrupted him again. His selfishness did me more good than his tea: it roused my temper effectually. 'Suppose we let your risk and my risk alone, and come to the point,' I said. 'What do you mean by making a fight for it? I see a railway guide on your table. Does making a fight for it mean--running away?'

"'Running away?' repeated the doctor. 'You appear to forget that every farthing I have in the world is embarked in this establishment.'

"'You stop here, then?' I said.

"'Unquestionably!'

"'And what do you mean to do when Mr. Armadale comes to England?'

"A solitary fly, the last of his race whom the winter had spared, was buzzing feebly about the doctor's face. He caught it before he answered me, and held it out across the table in his closed hand.

"'If this fly's name was Armadale,' he said, 'and if you had got him as I have got him now, what would you do?'

"His eyes, fixed on my face up to this time, turned significantly, as he ended this question, to my widow's dress. I, too, looked at it when he looked. A thrill of the old deadly hatred and the old deadly determination ran through me again.

"'I should kill him,' I said.

"The doctor started to his feet (with the fly still in his hand), and looked at me--a little too theatrically--with an expression of the utmost horror.

"'Kill him!' repeated the doctor, in a paroxysm of virtuous alarm. 'Violence--murderous violence--in My Sanitarium! You take my breath away!'

"I caught his eye while he was expressing himself in this elaborately indignant manner, scrutinizing me with a searching curiosity which was, to say the least of it, a little at variance with the vehemence of his language and the warmth of his tone. He laughed uneasily when our eyes met, and recovered his smoothly confidential manner in the instant that elapsed before he spoke again.

"'I beg a thousand pardons,' he said. 'I ought to have known better than to take a lady too literally at her word. Permit me to remind you, however, that the circumstances are too serious for anything in the nature of--let us say, an exaggeration or a joke. You shall hear what I propose, without further preface.' He paused, and resumed his figurative use of the fly imprisoned in his hand. 'Here is Mr. Armadale. I can let him out, or keep him in, just as I please--and he knows it. I say to him,' continued the doctor, facetiously addressing the fly, 'Give me proper security, Mr. Armadale, that no proceedings of any sort shall be taken against either this lady or myself, and I will let you out of the hollow of my hand. Refuse--and, be the risk what it may, I will keep you in." Can you doubt, my dear madam, what Mr. Armadale's answer is, sooner or later, certain to be? Can you doubt,' said the doctor, suiting the action to the word, and letting the fly go, 'that it will end to the entire satisfaction of all parties, in this way?'

"'I won't say at present,' I answered, 'whether I doubt or not. Let me make sure that I understand you first. You propose, if I am not mistaken, to shut the doors of this place on Mr. Armadale, and not to let him out again until he has agreed to the terms which it is our interest to impose on him? May I ask, in that case, how you mean to make him walk into the trap that you have set for him here?'

"'I propose,' said the doctor, with his hand on the railway guide, 'ascertaining first at what time during every evening of this month the tidal trains from Dover and Folkestone reach the London Bridge terminus. And I propose, next, posting a person whom Mr. Armadale knows, and whom you and I can trust, to wait the arrival of the trains, and to meet our man at the moment when he steps out of the railway carriage.'

"'Have you thought,' I inquired, 'of who the person is to be?'

"'I have thought,' said the doctor, taking up Armadale's letter 'of the person

to whom this letter is addressed.'

"The answer startled me. Was it possible that he and Bashwood knew one another? I put the question immediately.

"'Until to-day I never so much as heard of the gentleman's name,' said the doctor. 'I have simply pursued the inductive process of reasoning, for which we are indebted to the immortal Bacon. How does this very important letter come into your possession? I can't insult you by supposing it to have been stolen. Consequently, it has come to you with the leave and license of the person to whom it is addressed. Consequently, that person is in your confidence. Consequently, he is the first person I think of. You see the process? Very good. Permit me a question or two, on the subject of Mr. Bashwood, before we go on any further.'

"The doctor's questions went as straight to the point as usual. My answers informed him that Mr. Bashwood stood toward Armadale in the relation of steward; that he had received the letter at Thorpe Ambrose that morning, and had brought it straight to me by the first train; that he had not shown it, or spoken of it before leaving, to Major Milroy or to any one else; that I had not obtained this service at his hands by trusting him with my secret; that I had communicated with him in the character of Armadale's widow; that he had suppressed the letter, under those circumstances, solely in obedience to a general caution I had given him to keep his own counsel, if anything strange happened at Thorpe Ambrose, until he had first consulted me; and, lastly, that the reason why he had done as I told him in this matter, was that in this matter, and in all others, Mr. Bashwood was blindly devoted to my interests.

"At that point in the interrogatory, the doctor's eyes began to look at me distrustfully behind the doctor's spectacles.

"'What is the secret of this blind devotion of Mr. Bashwood's to your interests?' he asked.

"I hesitated for a moment--in pity to Bashwood, not in pity to myself. 'If you must know,' I answered, 'Mr. Bashwood is in love with me.'

"'Ay! ay!' exclaimed the doctor, with an air of relief. 'I begin to understand now. Is he a young man?'

"'He is an old man.'

"The doctor laid himself back in his chair, and chuckled softly. 'Better and better!' he said. 'Here is the very man we want. Who so fit as Mr. Armadale's steward to meet Mr. Armadale on his return to London? And who so capable of influencing Mr. Bashwood in the proper way as the charming object of Mr. Bashwood's admiration?'

"There could be no doubt that Bashwood was the man to serve the doctor's purpose, and that my influence was to be trusted to make him serve it. The difficulty was not here: the difficulty was in the unanswered question that I had put to the doctor a minute since. I put it to him again.

"'Suppose Mr. Armadale's steward meets his employer at the terminus,' I said. 'May I ask once more how Mr. Armadale is to be persuaded to come here?'

"'Don't think me ungallant,' rejoined the doctor in his gentlest manner, 'if I ask, on my side, how are men persuaded to do nine-tenths of the foolish acts of their lives? They are persuaded by your charming sex. The weak side of every man is the woman's side of him. We have only to discover the woman's side of Mr. Armadale--to tickle him on it gently--and to lead him our way with a silken string. I observe here,' pursued the doctor, opening Armadale's letter, 'a reference to a certain young lady, which looks promising. Where is the note that Mr. Armadale speaks of as addressed to Miss Milroy?'

"Instead of answering him, I started, in a sudden burst of excitement, to my feet. The instant he mentioned Miss Milroy's name all that I had heard from Bashwood of her illness, and of the cause of it, rushed back into my memory. I saw the means of decoying Armadale into the Sanitarium as plainly as I saw the doctor on the other side of the table, wondering at the extraordinary change in me. What a luxury it was to make Miss Milroy serve my interests at last!

"'Never mind the note,' I said. 'It's burned, for fear of accidents. I can tell you all (and more) than the note could have told you. Miss Milroy cuts the knot! Miss Milroy ends the difficulty! She is privately engaged to him. She has heard the false report of his death; and she has been seriously ill at Thorpe Ambrose ever since. When Bashwood meets him at the station, the very first question he is certain to ask--'

"'I see!' exclaimed the doctor, anticipating me. 'Mr. Bashwood has nothing to do but to help the truth with a touch of fiction. When he tells his master that the false report has reached Miss Milroy, he has only to add that the

shock has affected her head, and that she is here under medical care. Perfect! perfect! We shall have him at the Sanitarium as fast as the fastest cab-horse in London can bring him to us. And mind! no risk--no necessity for trusting other people. This is not a mad-house; this is not a licensed establishment; no doctors' certificates are necessary here! My dear lady, I congratulate you; I congratulate myself. Permit me to hand you the railway guide, with my best compliments to Mr. Bashwood, and with the page turned down for him, as an additional attention, at the right place.'

"Remembering how long I had kept Bashwood waiting for me, I took the book at once, and wished the doctor good-evening without further ceremony. As he politely opened the door for me, he reverted, without the slightest necessity for doing so, and without a word from me to lead to it, to the outburst of virtuous alarm which had escaped him at the earlier part of our interview.

"'I do hope,' he said, 'that you will kindly forget and forgive my extraordinary want of tact and perception when--in short, when I caught the fly. I positively blush at my own stupidity in putting a literal interpretation on a lady's little joke! Violence in My Sanitarium!' exclaimed the doctor, with his eyes once more fixed attentively on my face--'violence in this enlightened nineteenth century! Was there ever anything so ridiculous? Do fasten your cloak before you go out, it is so cold and raw! Shall I escort you? Shall I send my servant? Ah, you were always independent! always, if I may say so, a host in yourself! May I call to-morrow morning, and hear what you have settled with Mr. Bashwood?'

"I said yes, and got away from him at last. In a quarter of an hour more I was back at my lodgings, and was informed by the servant that 'the elderly gentleman' was still waiting for me.

"I have not got the heart or the patience--I hardly know which--to waste many words on what passed between me and Bashwood. It was so easy, so degradingly easy, to pull the strings of the poor old puppet in any way I pleased! I met none of the difficulties which I should have been obliged to meet in the case of a younger man, or of a man less infatuated with admiration for me. I left the allusions to Miss Milroy in Armadale's letter, which had naturally puzzled him, to be explained at a future time. I never even troubled myself to invent a plausible reason for wishing him to meet Armadale at the terminus, and to entrap him by a stratagem into the doctor's Sanitarium. All that I found it necessary to do was to refer to what I had written to Mr. Bashwood, on my arrival in London, and to what I had afterward said to him, when he came to answer my letter personally at the

hotel.

"'You know already,' I said, 'that my marriage has not been a happy one. Draw your own conclusions from that; and don't press me to tell you whether the news of Mr. Armadale's rescue from the sea is, or is not, the welcome news that it ought to be to his wife!' That was enough to put his withered old face in a glow, and to set his withered old hopes growing again. I had only to add, 'If you will do what I ask you to do, no matter how incomprehensible and how mysterious my request may seem to be; and if you will accept my assurances that you shall run no risk yourself, and that you shall receive the proper explanations at the proper time, you will have such a claim on my gratitude and my regard as no man living has ever had yet!' I had only to say those words, and to point them by a look and a stolen pressure of his hand, and I had him at my feet, blindly eager to obey me. If he could have seen what I thought of myself; but that doesn't matter: he saw nothing.

"Hours have passed since I sent him away (pledged to secrecy, possessed of his instructions, and provided with his time-table) to the hotel near the terminus, at which he is to stay till Armadale appears on the railway platform. The excitement of the earlier part of the evening has all worn off; and the dull, numbed sensation has got me again. Are my energies wearing out, I wonder, just at the time when I most want them? Or is some foreshadowing of disaster creeping over me which I don't yet understand?

"I might be in a humor to sit here for some time longer, thinking thoughts like these, and letting them find their way into words at their own will and pleasure, if my Diary would only let me. But my idle pen has been busy enough to make its way to the end of the volume. I have reached the last morsel of space left on the last page; and whether I like it or not, I must close the book this time for good and all, when I close it to-night.

"Good-by, my old friend and companion of many a miserable day! Having nothing else to be fond of, I half suspect myself of having been unreasonably fond of you.

"What a fool I am!"

THE END OF THE FOURTH BOOK.