BOOK THE SECOND. DARE AND HAVILL.

I.

Young Dare sat thoughtfully at the window of the studio in which Somerset had left him, till the gay scene beneath became embrowned by the twilight, and the brilliant red stripes of the marquees, the bright sunshades, the many-tinted costumes of the ladies, were indistinguishable from the blacks and greys of the masculine contingent moving among them. He had occasionally glanced away from the outward prospect to study a small old volume that lay before him on the drawing-board. Near scrutiny revealed the book to bear the title 'Moivre's Doctrine of Chances.'

The evening had been so still that Dare had heard conversations from below with a clearness unsuspected by the speakers themselves; and among the dialogues which thus reached his ears was that between Somerset and Havill on their professional rivalry. When they parted, and Somerset had mingled with the throng, Havill went to a seat at a distance. Afterwards he rose, and walked away; but on the bench he had quitted there remained a small object resembling a book or leather case.

Dare put away the drawing-board and plotting-scales which he had kept before him during the evening as a reason for his presence at that post of espial, locked up the door, and went downstairs. Notwithstanding his

dismissal by Somerset, he was so serene in countenance and easy in gait as to make it a fair conjecture that professional servitude, however profitable, was no necessity with him. The gloom now rendered it practicable for any unbidden guest to join Paula's assemblage without criticism, and Dare walked boldly out upon the lawn. The crowd on the grass was rapidly diminishing; the tennis-players had relinquished sport; many people had gone in to dinner or supper; and many others, attracted by the cheerful radiance of the candles, were gathering in the large tent that had been lighted up for dancing.

Dare went to the garden-chair on which Havill had been seated, and found the article left behind to be a pocket-book. Whether because it was unclasped and fell open in his hand, or otherwise, he did not hesitate to examine the contents. Among a mass of architect's customary memoranda
occurred a draft of the letter abusing Paula as an iconoclast or Vandal by blood, which had appeared in the newspaper: the draft was so interlined and altered as to bear evidence of being the original conception of that ungentlemanly attack.

The lad read the letter, smiled, and strolled about the grounds, only met by an occasional pair of individuals of opposite sex in deep conversation, the state of whose emotions led them to prefer the evening shade to the publicity and glare of the tents and rooms. At last he observed the white waistcoat of the man he sought.

'Mr. Havill, the architect, I believe?' said Dare. 'The author of most of the noteworthy buildings in this neighbourhood?'

Havill assented blandly.

'I have long wished for the pleasure of your acquaintance, and now an accident helps me to make it. This pocket-book, I think, is yours?'

Havill clapped his hand to his pocket, examined the book Dare held out to him, and took it with thanks. 'I see I am speaking to the artist, archaeologist, Gothic photographer--Mr. Dare.'

'Professor Dare.'

'Professor? Pardon me, I should not have guessed it--so young as you are.'

'Well, it is merely ornamental; and in truth, I drop the title in England, particularly under present circumstances.'

'Ah--they are peculiar, perhaps? Ah, I remember. I have heard that you are assisting a gentleman in preparing a design in opposition to mine--a design--'

'"That he is not competent to prepare himself," you were perhaps going to add?'

'Not precisely that.'

'You could hardly be blamed for such words. However, you are mistaken. I did assist him to gain a little further insight into the working of architectural plans; but our views on art are antagonistic, and I assist him no more. Mr. Havill, it must be very provoking to a well-established professional man to have a rival sprung at him in a grand undertaking which he had a right to expect as his own.'

Professional sympathy is often accepted from those whose condolence on any domestic matter would be considered intrusive. Havill walked up and down beside Dare for a few moments in silence, and at last showed that the words had told, by saying: 'Every one may have his opinion. Had I been a stranger to the Power family, the case would have been different; but having been specially elected by the lady's father as a competent adviser in such matters, and then to be degraded to the position of a mere competitor, it wounds me to the quick--'

'Both in purse and in person, like the ill-used hostess of the Garter.'

'A lady to whom I have been a staunch friend,' continued Havill, not heeding the interruption.

At that moment sounds seemed to come from Dare which bore a remarkable resemblance to the words, 'Ho, ho, Havill!' It was hardly credible,

and yet, could he be mistaken? Havill turned. Dare's eye was twisted comically upward.

'What does that mean?' said Havill coldly, and with some amazement.

'Ho, ho, Havill! "Staunch friend" is good--especially after "an iconoclast and Vandal by blood"--"monstrosity in the form of a Greek temple," and so on, eh!'

'Sir, you have the advantage of me. Perhaps you allude to that anonymous letter?'

'O-ho, Havill!' repeated the boy-man, turning his eyes yet further towards the zenith. 'To an outsider such conduct would be natural; but to a friend who finds your pocket-book, and looks into it before returning it, and kindly removes a leaf bearing the draft of a letter which might injure you if discovered there, and carefully conceals it in his own pocket--why, such conduct is unkind!' Dare held up the abstracted leaf.

Havill trembled. 'I can explain,' he began.

'It is not necessary: we are friends,' said Dare assuringly.

Havill looked as if he would like to snatch the leaf away, but altering his mind, he said grimly: 'Well, I take you at your word: we are

friends. That letter was concocted before I knew of the competition: it was during my first disgust, when I believed myself entirely supplanted.'

'I am not in the least surprised. But if she knew YOU to be the writer!'

'I should be ruined as far as this competition is concerned,' said Havill carelessly. 'Had I known I was to be invited to compete, I should not have written it, of course. To be supplanted is hard; and thereby hangs a tale.'

'Another tale? You astonish me.'

'Then you have not heard the scandal, though everybody is talking about it.'

'A scandal implies indecorum.'

'Well, 'tis indecorous. Her infatuated partiality for him is patent to the eyes of a child; a man she has only known a few weeks, and one who obtained admission to her house in the most irregular manner! Had she a watchful friend beside her, instead of that moonstruck Mrs. Goodman, she would be cautioned against bestowing her favours on the first adventurer who appears at her door. It is a pity, a great pity!'

'O, there is love-making in the wind?' said Dare slowly. 'That alters

the case for me. But it is not proved?'

'It can easily be proved.'

'I wish it were, or disproved.'

'You have only to come this way to clear up all doubts.'

Havill took the lad towards the tent, from which the strains of a waltz now proceeded, and on whose sides flitting shadows told of the progress of the dance. The companions looked in. The rosy silk lining of the marquee, and the numerous coronas of wax lights, formed a canopy to a radiant scene which, for two at least of those who composed it, was an intoxicating one. Paula and Somerset were dancing together.

'That proves nothing,' said Dare.

'Look at their rapt faces, and say if it does not,' sneered Havill.

Dare objected to a judgment based on looks alone.

'Very well--time will show,' said the architect, dropping the tent-curtain.... 'Good God! a girl worth fifty thousand and more a year to throw herself away upon a fellow like that--she ought to be whipped.'

'Time must NOT show!' said Dare.

'You speak with emphasis.'

'I have reason. I would give something to be sure on this point, one way or the other. Let us wait till the dance is over, and observe them more carefully. Horensagen ist halb gelogen! Hearsay is half lies.'

Sheet-lightnings increased in the northern sky, followed by thunder like the indistinct noise of a battle. Havill and Dare retired to the trees. When the dance ended Somerset and his partner emerged from the tent, and slowly moved towards the tea-house. Divining their goal Dare seized Havill's arm; and the two worthies entered the building unseen, by first passing round behind it. They seated themselves in the back part of the interior, where darkness prevailed.

As before related, Paula and Somerset came and stood within the door. When the rain increased they drew themselves further inward, their forms being distinctly outlined to the gaze of those lurking behind by the light from the tent beyond. But the hiss of the falling rain and the lowness of their tones prevented their words from being heard.

'I wish myself out of this!' breathed Havill to Dare, as he buttoned his coat over his white waistcoat. 'I told you it was true, but you wouldn't believe. I wouldn't she should catch me here eavesdropping for the world!'

'Courage, Man Friday,' said his cooler comrade.

Paula and her lover backed yet further, till the hem of her skirt touched Havill's feet. Their attitudes were sufficient to prove their relations to the most obstinate Didymus who should have witnessed them. Tender emotions seemed to pervade the summer-house like an aroma. The calm ecstasy of the condition of at least one of them was not without a coercive effect upon the two invidious spectators, so that they must need have remained passive had they come there to disturb or annoy. The serenity of Paula was even more impressive than the hushed ardour of Somerset: she did not satisfy curiosity as Somerset satisfied it; she piqued it. Poor Somerset had reached a perfectly intelligible depth--one which had a single blissful way out of it, and nine calamitous ones; but Paula remained an enigma all through the scene.

The rain ceased, and the pair moved away. The enchantment worked by their presence vanished, the details of the meeting settled down in the watchers' minds, and their tongues were loosened. Dare, turning to Havill, said, 'Thank you; you have done me a timely turn to-day.'

'What! had you hopes that way?' asked Havill satirically.

'I! The woman that interests my heart has yet to be born,' said Dare, with a steely coldness strange in such a juvenile, and yet almost convincing. 'But though I have not personal hopes, I have an objection to this courtship. Now I think we may as well fraternize, the situation

being what it is?'

'What is the situation?'

'He is in your way as her architect; he is in my way as her lover: we don't want to hurt him, but we wish him clean out of the neighbourhood.'

'I'll go as far as that,' said Havill.

'I have come here at some trouble to myself, merely to observe: I find I ought to stay to act.'

'If you were myself, a married man with people dependent on him, who has had a professional certainty turned to a miserably remote contingency by these events, you might say you ought to act; but what conceivable difference it can make to you who it is the young lady takes to her heart and home, I fail to understand.'

'Well, I'll tell you--this much at least. I want to keep the place vacant for another man.'

'The place?'

'The place of husband to Miss Power, and proprietor of that castle and domain.'

'That's a scheme with a vengeance. Who is the man?'

'It is my secret at present.'

'Certainly.' Havill drew a deep breath, and dropped into a tone of depression. 'Well, scheme as you will, there will be small advantage to me,' he murmured. 'The castle commission is as good as gone, and a bill for two hundred pounds falls due next week.'

'Cheer up, heart! My position, if you only knew it, has ten times the difficulties of yours, since this disagreeable discovery. Let us consider if we can assist each other. The competition drawings are to be sent in--when?'

'In something over six weeks--a fortnight before she returns from the Scilly Isles, for which place she leaves here in a few days.'

'O, she goes away--that's better. Our lover will be working here at his drawings, and she not present.'

'Exactly. Perhaps she is a little ashamed of the intimacy.'

'And if your design is considered best by the committee, he will have no further reason for staying, assuming that they are not definitely engaged to marry by that time?'

'I suppose so,' murmured Havill discontentedly. 'The conditions, as sent to me, state that the designs are to be adjudicated on by three members of the Institute called in for the purpose; so that she may return, and have seemed to show no favour.'

'Then it amounts to this: your design MUST be best. It must combine the excellences of your invention with the excellences of his. Meanwhile a coolness should be made to arise between her and him: and as there would be no artistic reason for his presence here after the verdict is pronounced, he would perforce hie back to town. Do you see?'

'I see the ingenuity of the plan, but I also see two insurmountable obstacles to it. The first is, I cannot add the excellences of his design to mine without knowing what those excellences are, which he will of course keep a secret. Second, it will not be easy to promote a coolness between such hot ones as they.'

'You make a mistake. It is only he who is so ardent. She is only lukewarm. If we had any spirit, a bargain would be struck between us: you would appropriate his design; I should cause the coolness.'

'How could I appropriate his design?'

'By copying it, I suppose.'

'Copying it?'

'By going into his studio and looking it over.'

Havill turned to Dare, and stared. 'By George, you don't stick at trifles, young man. You don't suppose I would go into a man's rooms and steal his inventions like that?'

'I scarcely suppose you would,' said Dare indifferently, as he rose.

'And if I were to,' said Havill curiously, 'how is the coolness to be caused?'

'By the second man.'

'Who is to produce him?'

'Her Majesty's Government.'

Havill looked meditatively at his companion, and shook his head. 'In these idle suppositions we have been assuming conduct which would be quite against my principles as an honest man.'

II.

A few days after the party at Stancy Castle, Dare was walking down the High Street of Markton, a cigarette between his lips and a silver-topped cane in his hand. His eye fell upon a brass plate on an opposite door, bearing the name of Mr. Havill, Architect. He crossed over, and rang the office bell.

The clerk who admitted him stated that Mr. Havill was in his private room, and would be disengaged in a short time. While Dare waited the clerk affixed to the door a piece of paper bearing the words 'Back at 2,' and went away to his dinner, leaving Dare in the room alone.

Dare looked at the different drawings on the boards about the room. They all represented one subject, which, though unfinished as yet, and bearing no inscription, was recognized by the visitor as the design for the enlargement and restoration of Stancy Castle. When he had glanced it over Dare sat down.

The doors between the office and private room were double; but the one towards the office being only ajar Dare could hear a conversation in progress within. It presently rose to an altercation, the tenor of which was obvious. Somebody had come for money.

'Really I can stand it no longer, Mr. Havill--really I will not!' said the creditor excitedly. 'Now this bill overdue again--what can you

expect? Why, I might have negotiated it; and where would you have been then? Instead of that, I have locked it up out of consideration for you; and what do I get for my considerateness? I shall let the law take its course!'

'You'll do me inexpressible harm, and get nothing whatever,' said Havill. 'If you would renew for another three months there would be no difficulty in the matter.'

'You have said so before: I will do no such thing.'

There was a silence; whereupon Dare arose without hesitation, and walked boldly into the private office. Havill was standing at one end, as gloomy as a thundercloud, and at the other was the unfortunate creditor with his hat on. Though Dare's entry surprised them, both parties seemed relieved.

'I have called in passing to congratulate you, Mr. Havill,' said Dare gaily. 'Such a commission as has been entrusted to you will make you famous!'

'How do you do?--I wish it would make me rich,' said Havill drily.

'It will be a lift in that direction, from what I know of the profession. What is she going to spend?'

'A hundred thousand.'

'Your commission as architect, five thousand. Not bad, for making a few sketches. Consider what other great commissions such a work will lead to.'

'What great work is this?' asked the creditor.

'Stancy Castle,' said Dare, since Havill seemed too agape to answer. 'You have not heard of it, then? Those are the drawings, I presume, in the next room?'

Havill replied in the affirmative, beginning to perceive the manoeuvre. 'Perhaps you would like to see them?' he said to the creditor.

The latter offered no objection, and all three went into the drawing-office.

'It will certainly be a magnificent structure,' said the creditor, after regarding the elevations through his spectacles. 'Stancy Castle: I had no idea of it! and when do you begin to build, Mr. Havill?' he inquired in mollified tones.

'In three months, I think?' said Dare, looking to Havill.

Havill assented.

'Five thousand pounds commission,' murmured the creditor. 'Paid down, I suppose?'

Havill nodded.

'And the works will not linger for lack of money to carry them out, I imagine,' said Dare. 'Two hundred thousand will probably be spent before the work is finished.'

'There is not much doubt of it,' said Havill.

'You said nothing to me about this?' whispered the creditor to Havill, taking him aside, with a look of regret.

'You would not listen!'

'It alters the case greatly.' The creditor retired with Havill to the door, and after a subdued colloquy in the passage he went away, Havill returning to the office.

'What the devil do you mean by hoaxing him like this, when the job is no more mine than Inigo Jones's?'

'Don't be too curious,' said Dare, laughing. 'Rather thank me for getting rid of him.'

'But it is all a vision!' said Havill, ruefully regarding the pencilled towers of Stancy Castle. 'If the competition were really the commission that you have represented it to be there might be something to laugh at.'

'It must be made a commission, somehow,' returned Dare carelessly. 'I am come to lend you a little assistance. I must stay in the neighbourhood, and I have nothing else to do.'

A carriage slowly passed the window, and Havill recognized the Power liveries. 'Hullo--she's coming here!' he said under his breath, as the carriage stopped by the kerb. 'What does she want, I wonder? Dare, does she know you?'

'I would just as soon be out of the way.'

'Then go into the garden.'

Dare went out through the back office as Paula was shown in at the front. She wore a grey travelling costume, and seemed to be in some haste.

'I am on my way to the railway-station,' she said to Havill. 'I shall be absent from home for several weeks, and since you requested it, I have called to inquire how you are getting on with the design.'

'Please look it over,' said Havill, placing a seat for her.

'No,' said Paula. 'I think it would be unfair. I have not looked at Mr.--the other architect's plans since he has begun to design seriously, and I will not look at yours. Are you getting on quite well, and do you want to know anything more? If so, go to the castle, and get anybody to assist you. Why would you not make use of the room at your disposal in the castle, as the other architect has done?'

In asking the question her face was towards the window, and suddenly her cheeks became a rosy red. She instantly looked another way.

'Having my own office so near, it was not necessary, thank you,' replied Havill, as, noting her countenance, he allowed his glance to stray into the street. Somerset was walking past on the opposite side.

'The time is--the time fixed for sending in the drawings is the first of November, I believe,' she said confusedly; 'and the decision will be come to by three gentlemen who are prominent members of the Institute of Architects.'

Havill then accompanied her to the carriage, and she drove away.

Havill went to the back window to tell Dare that he need not stay in the garden; but the garden was empty. The architect remained alone in his

office for some time; at the end of a quarter of an hour, when the scream of a railway whistle had echoed down the still street, he beheld Somerset repassing the window in a direction from the railway, with somewhat of a sad gait. In another minute Dare entered, humming the latest air of Offenbach.

''Tis a mere piece of duplicity!' said Havill.

'What is?'

'Her pretending indifference as to which of us comes out successful in the competition, when she colours carmine the moment Somerset passes by.' He described Paula's visit, and the incident.

'It may not mean Cupid's Entire XXX after all,' said Dare judicially. 'The mere suspicion that a certain man loves her would make a girl blush at his unexpected appearance. Well, she's gone from him for a time; the better for you.'

'He has been privileged to see her off at any rate.'

'Not privileged.'

'How do you know that?'

'I went out of your garden by the back gate, and followed her carriage

to the railway. He simply went to the first bridge outside the station, and waited. When she was in the train, it moved forward; he was all expectation, and drew out his handkerchief ready to wave, while she looked out of the window towards the bridge. The train backed before it reached the bridge, to attach the box containing her horses, and the carriage-truck. Then it started for good, and when it reached the bridge she looked out again, he waving his handkerchief to her.'

'And she waving hers back?'

'No, she didn't.'

'Ah!'

'She looked at him--nothing more. I wouldn't give much for his chance.' After a while Dare added musingly: 'You are a mathematician: did you ever investigate the doctrine of expectations?'

'Never.'

Dare drew from his pocket his 'Book of Chances,' a volume as well thumbed as the minister's Bible. 'This is a treatise on the subject,' he said. 'I will teach it to you some day.'

The same evening Havill asked Dare to dine with him. He was just at this time living en garcon, his wife and children being away on a visit. After dinner they sat on till their faces were rather flushed. The talk turned, as before, on the castle-competition.

'To know his design is to win,' said Dare. 'And to win is to send him back to London where he came from.'

Havill inquired if Dare had seen any sketch of the design while with Somerset?

'Not a line. I was concerned only with the old building.'

'Not to know it is to lose, undoubtedly,' murmured Havill.

'Suppose we go for a walk that way, instead of consulting here?'

They went down the town, and along the highway. When they reached the entrance to the park a man driving a basket-carriage came out from the gate and passed them by in the gloom.

'That was he,' said Dare. 'He sometimes drives over from the hotel, and sometimes walks. He has been working late this evening.'

Strolling on under the trees they met three masculine figures, laughing and talking loudly.

'Those are the three first-class London draughtsmen, Bowles, Knowles, and Cockton, whom he has engaged to assist him, regardless of expense,' continued Dare.

'O Lord!' groaned Havill. 'There's no chance for me.'

The castle now arose before them, endowed by the rayless shade with a more massive majesty than either sunlight or moonlight could impart; and Havill sighed again as he thought of what he was losing by Somerset's rivalry. 'Well, what was the use of coming here?' he asked.

'I thought it might suggest something--some way of seeing the design. The servants would let us into his room, I dare say.'

'I don't care to ask. Let us walk through the wards, and then homeward.'

They sauntered on smoking, Dare leading the way through the gate-house into a corridor which was not inclosed, a lamp hanging at the further end.

'We are getting into the inhabited part, I think,' said Havill.

Dare, however, had gone on, and knowing the tortuous passages from his few days' experience in measuring them with Somerset, he came to the butler's pantry. Dare knocked, and nobody answering he entered, took

down a key which hung behind the door, and rejoined Havill. 'It is all right,' he said. 'The cat's away; and the mice are at play in consequence.'

Proceeding up a stone staircase he unlocked the door of a room in the dark, struck a light inside, and returning to the door called in a whisper to Havill, who had remained behind. 'This is Mr. Somerset's studio,' he said.

'How did you get permission?' inquired Havill, not knowing that Dare had seen no one.

'Anyhow,' said Dare carelessly. 'We can examine the plans at leisure; for if the placid Mrs. Goodman, who is the only one at home, sees the light, she will only think it is Somerset still at work.'

Dare uncovered the drawings, and young Somerset's brain-work for the last six weeks lay under their eyes. To Dare, who was too cursory to trouble himself by entering into such details, it had very little meaning; but the design shone into Havill's head like a light into a dark place. It was original; and it was fascinating. Its originality lay partly in the circumstance that Somerset had not attempted to adapt an old building to the wants of the new civilization. He had placed his new erection beside it as a slightly attached structure, harmonizing with the old; heightening and beautifying, rather than subduing it. His work formed a palace, with a ruinous castle annexed as a curiosity. To

Havill the conception had more charm than it could have to the most appreciative outsider; for when a mediocre and jealous mind that has been cudgelling itself over a problem capable of many solutions, lights on the solution of a rival, all possibilities in that kind seem to merge in the one beheld.

Dare was struck by the arrested expression of the architect's face. 'Is it rather good?' he asked.

'Yes, rather,' said Havill, subduing himself.

'More than rather?'

'Yes, the clever devil!' exclaimed Havill, unable to depreciate longer.

'How?'

'The riddle that has worried me three weeks he has solved in a way which is simplicity itself. He has got it, and I am undone!'

'Nonsense, don't give way. Let's make a tracing.'

'The ground-plan will be sufficient,' said Havill, his courage reviving. 'The idea is so simple, that if once seen it is not easily forgotten.'

A rough tracing of Somerset's design was quickly made, and blowing out

the candle with a wave of his hand, the younger gentleman locked the door, and they went downstairs again.

'I should never have thought of it,' said Havill, as they walked homeward.

'One man has need of another every ten years: Ogni dieci anni un uomo ha bisogno dell' altro, as they say in Italy. You'll help me for this turn if I have need of you?'

'I shall never have the power.'

'O yes, you will. A man who can contrive to get admitted to a competition by writing a letter abusing another man, has any amount of power. The stroke was a good one.'

Havill was silent till he said, 'I think these gusts mean that we are to have a storm of rain.'

Dare looked up. The sky was overcast, the trees shivered, and a drop or two began to strike into the walkers' coats from the east. They were not far from the inn at Sleeping-Green, where Dare had lodgings, occupying the rooms which had been used by Somerset till he gave them up for more commodious chambers at Markton; and they decided to turn in there till the rain should be over.

Having possessed himself of Somerset's brains Havill was inclined to be jovial, and ordered the best in wines that the house afforded. Before starting from home they had drunk as much as was good for them; so that their potations here soon began to have a marked effect upon their tongues. The rain beat upon the windows with a dull dogged pertinacity which seemed to signify boundless reserves of the same and long continuance. The wind rose, the sign creaked, and the candles waved. The weather had, in truth, broken up for the season, and this was the first night of the change.

'Well, here we are,' said Havill, as he poured out another glass of the brandied liquor called old port at Sleeping-Green; 'and it seems that here we are to remain for the present.'

'I am at home anywhere!' cried the lad, whose brow was hot and eye wild.

Havill, who had not drunk enough to affect his reasoning, held up his glass to the light and said, 'I never can quite make out what you are, or what your age is. Are you sixteen, one-and-twenty, or twenty-seven? And are you an Englishman, Frenchman, Indian, American, or what? You seem not to have taken your degrees in these parts.'

'That's a secret, my friend,' said Dare. 'I am a citizen of the world. I owe no country patriotism, and no king or queen obedience. A man whose country has no boundary is your only true gentleman.'

'Well, where were you born--somewhere, I suppose?'

'It would be a fact worth the telling. The secret of my birth lies here.' And Dare slapped his breast with his right hand.

'Literally, just under your shirt-front; or figuratively, in your heart?' asked Havill.

'Literally there. It is necessary that it should be recorded, for one's own memory is a treacherous book of reference, should verification be required at a time of delirium, disease, or death.'

Havill asked no further what he meant, and went to the door. Finding that the rain still continued he returned to Dare, who was by this time sinking down in a one-sided attitude, as if hung up by the shoulder. Informing his companion that he was but little inclined to move far in such a tempestuous night, he decided to remain in the inn till next morning. On calling in the landlord, however, they learnt that the house was full of farmers on their way home from a large sheep-fair in the neighbourhood, and that several of these, having decided to stay on account of the same tempestuous weather, had already engaged the spare beds. If Mr. Dare would give up his room, and share a double-bedded room with Mr. Havill, the thing could be done, but not otherwise.

To this the two companions agreed, and presently went upstairs with as gentlemanly a walk and vertical a candle as they could exhibit under the

circumstances.

The other inmates of the inn soon retired to rest, and the storm raged on unheeded by all local humanity.

III.

At two o'clock the rain lessened its fury. At half-past two the obscured moon shone forth; and at three Havill awoke. The blind had not been pulled down overnight, and the moonlight streamed into the room, across the bed whereon Dare was sleeping. He lay on his back, his arms thrown out; and his well-curved youthful form looked like an unpedestaled Dionysus in the colourless lunar rays.

Sleep had cleared Havill's mind from the drowsing effects of the last night's sitting, and he thought of Dare's mysterious manner in speaking of himself. This lad resembled the Etruscan youth Tages, in one respect, that of being a boy with, seemingly, the wisdom of a sage; and the effect of his presence was now heightened by all those sinister and mystic attributes which are lent by nocturnal environment. He who in broad daylight might be but a young chevalier d'industrie was now an unlimited possibility in social phenomena. Havill remembered how the lad had pointed to his breast, and said that his secret was literally kept there. The architect was too much of a provincial to have quenched the common curiosity that was part of his nature by the acquired metropolitan indifference to other people's lives which, in essence more unworthy even than the former, causes less practical inconvenience in its exercise.

Dare was breathing profoundly. Instigated as above mentioned, Havill got out of bed and stood beside the sleeper. After a moment's pause he

gently pulled back the unfastened collar of Dare's nightshirt and saw a word tattooed in distinct characters on his breast. Before there was time for Havill to decipher it Dare moved slightly, as if conscious of disturbance, and Havill hastened back to bed. Dare bestirred himself yet more, whereupon Havill breathed heavily, though keeping an intent glance on the lad through his half-closed eyes to learn if he had been aware of the investigation.

Dare was certainly conscious of something, for he sat up, rubbed his eyes, and gazed around the room; then after a few moments of reflection he drew some article from beneath his pillow. A blue gleam shone from the object as Dare held it in the moonlight, and Havill perceived that it was a small revolver.

A clammy dew broke out upon the face and body of the architect when, stepping out of bed with the weapon in his hand, Dare looked under the bed, behind the curtains, out of the window, and into a closet, as if convinced that something had occurred, but in doubt as to what it was. He then came across to where Havill was lying and still keeping up the appearance of sleep. Watching him awhile and mistrusting the reality of this semblance, Dare brought it to the test by holding the revolver within a few inches of Havill's forehead.

Havill could stand no more. Crystallized with terror, he said, without however moving more than his lips, in dread of hasty action on the part of Dare: 'O, good Lord, Dare, Dare, I have done nothing!'

The youth smiled and lowered the pistol. 'I was only finding out whether it was you or some burglar who had been playing tricks upon me. I find it was you.'

'Do put away that thing! It is too ghastly to produce in a respectable bedroom. Why do you carry it?'

'Cosmopolites always do. Now answer my questions. What were you up to?' and Dare as he spoke played with the pistol again.

Havill had recovered some coolness. 'You could not use it upon me,' he said sardonically, watching Dare. 'It would be risking your neck for too little an object.'

'I did not think you were shrewd enough to see that,' replied Dare carelessly, as he returned the revolver to its place. 'Well, whether you have outwitted me or no, you will keep the secret as long as I choose.'

'Why?' said Havill.

'Because I keep your secret of the letter abusing Miss P., and of the pilfered tracing you carry in your pocket.'

'It is quite true,' said Havill.

They went to bed again. Dare was soon asleep; but Havill did not attempt to disturb him again. The elder man slept but fitfully. He was aroused in the morning by a heavy rumbling and jingling along the highway overlooked by the window, the front wall of the house being shaken by the reverberation.

'There is no rest for me here,' he said, rising and going to the window, carefully avoiding the neighbourhood of Mr. Dare. When Havill had glanced out he returned to dress himself.

'What's that noise?' said Dare, awakened by the same rumble.

'It is the Artillery going away.'

'From where?'

'Markton barracks.'

'Hurrah!' said Dare, jumping up in bed. 'I have been waiting for that these six weeks.'

Havill did not ask questions as to the meaning of this unexpected remark.

When they were downstairs Dare's first act was to ring the bell and ask if his Army and Navy Gazette had arrived.

While the servant was gone Havill cleared his throat and said, 'I am an architect, and I take in the Architect; you are an architect, and you take in the Army and Navy Gazette.'

'I am not an architect any more than I am a soldier; but I have taken in the Army and Navy Gazette these many weeks.'

When they were at breakfast the paper came in. Dare hastily tore it open and glanced at the pages.

'I am going to Markton after breakfast!' he said suddenly, before looking up; 'we will walk together if you like?'

They walked together as planned, and entered Markton about ten o'clock.

'I have just to make a call here,' said Dare, when they were opposite the barrack-entrance on the outskirts of the town, where wheel-tracks and a regular chain of hoof-marks left by the departed batteries were imprinted in the gravel between the open gates. 'I shall not be a moment.' Havill stood still while his companion entered and asked the commissary in charge, or somebody representing him, when the new batteries would arrive to take the place of those which had gone away. He was informed that it would be about noon.

'Now I am at your service,' said Dare, 'and will help you to rearrange

your design by the new intellectual light we have acquired.'

They entered Havill's office and set to work. When contrasted with the tracing from Somerset's plan, Havill's design, which was not far advanced, revealed all its weaknesses to him. After seeing Somerset's scheme the bands of Havill's imagination were loosened: he laid his own previous efforts aside, got fresh sheets of drawing-paper and drew with vigour.

'I may as well stay and help you,' said Dare. 'I have nothing to do till twelve o'clock; and not much then.'

So there he remained. At a quarter to twelve children and idlers began to gather against the railings of Havill's house. A few minutes past twelve the noise of an arriving host was heard at the entrance to the town. Thereupon Dare and Havill went to the window.

The X and Y Batteries of the Z Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, were entering Markton, each headed by the major with his bugler behind him. In a moment they came abreast and passed, every man in his place; that is to say:

Six shining horses, in pairs, harnessed by rope-traces white as milk, with a driver on each near horse: two gunners on the lead-coloured stout-wheeled limber, their carcases jolted to a jelly for lack of springs: two gunners on the lead-coloured stout-wheeled gun-carriage,

in the same personal condition: the nine-pounder gun, dipping its heavy head to earth, as if ashamed of its office in these enlightened times: the complement of jingling and prancing troopers, riding at the wheels and elsewhere: six shining horses with their drivers, and traces white as milk, as before: two more gallant jolted men, on another jolting limber, and more stout wheels and lead-coloured paint: two more jolted men on another drooping gun: more jingling troopers on horseback: again six shining draught-horses, traces, drivers, gun, gunners, lead paint, stout wheels and troopers as before.

So each detachment lumbered slowly by, all eyes martially forward, except when wandering in quest of female beauty.

'He's a fine fellow, is he not?' said Dare, denoting by a nod a mounted officer, with a sallow, yet handsome face, and black moustache, who came up on a bay gelding with the men of his battery.

'What is he?' said Havill.

'A captain who lacks advancement.'

'Do you know him?'

'I know him?'

'Yes; do you?'

Dare made no reply; and they watched the captain as he rode past with his drawn sword in his hand, the sun making a little sun upon its blade, and upon his brilliantly polished long boots and bright spurs; also warming his gold cross-belt and braidings, white gloves, busby with its red bag, and tall white plume.

Havill seemed to be too indifferent to press his questioning; and when all the soldiers had passed by, Dare observed to his companion that he should leave him for a short time, but would return in the afternoon or next day.

After this he walked up the street in the rear of the artillery, following them to the barracks. On reaching the gates he found a crowd of people gathered outside, looking with admiration at the guns and gunners drawn up within the enclosure. When the soldiers were dismissed to their quarters the sightseers dispersed, and Dare went through the gates to the barrack-yard.

The guns were standing on the green; the soldiers and horses were scattered about, and the handsome captain whom Dare had pointed out to Havill was inspecting the buildings in the company of the quartermaster. Dare made a mental note of these things, and, apparently changing a previous intention, went out from the barracks and returned to the town.

IV.

To return for a while to George Somerset. The sun of his later existence having vanished from that young man's horizon, he confined himself closely to the studio, superintending the exertions of his draughtsmen Bowles, Knowles, and Cockton, who were now in the full swing of working out Somerset's creations from the sketches he had previously prepared.

He had so far got the start of Havill in the competition that, by the help of these three gentlemen, his design was soon finished. But he gained no unfair advantage on this account, an additional month being allowed to Havill to compensate for his later information.

Before scaling up his drawings Somerset wished to spend a short time in London, and dismissing his assistants till further notice, he locked up the rooms which had been appropriated as office and studio and prepared for the journey.

It was afternoon. Somerset walked from the castle in the direction of the wood to reach Markton by a detour. He had not proceeded far when there approached his path a man riding a bay horse with a square-cut tail. The equestrian wore a grizzled beard, and looked at Somerset with a piercing eye as he noiselessly ambled nearer over the soft sod of the park. He proved to be Mr. Cunningham Haze, chief constable of the district, who had become slightly known to Somerset during his sojourn

here.

'One word, Mr. Somerset,' said the Chief, after they had exchanged nods of recognition, reining his horse as he spoke.

Somerset stopped.

'You have a studio at the castle in which you are preparing drawings?'

'I have.'

'Have you a clerk?'

'I had three till yesterday, when I paid them off.'

'Would they have any right to enter the studio late at night?'

'There would have been nothing wrong in their doing so. Either of them might have gone back at any time for something forgotten. They lived quite near the castle.'

'Ah, then all is explained. I was riding past over the grass on the night of last Thursday, and I saw two persons in your studio with a light. It must have been about half-past nine o'clock. One of them came forward and pulled down the blind so that the light fell upon his face. But I only saw it for a short time.'

'If it were Knowles or Cockton he would have had a beard.'

'He had no beard.'

'Then it must have been Bowles. A young man?'

'Quite young. His companion in the background seemed older.'

'They are all about the same age really. By the way--it couldn't have been Dare--and Havill, surely! Would you recognize them again?'

'The young one possibly. The other not at all, for he remained in the shade.'

Somerset endeavoured to discern in a description by the chief constable the features of Mr. Bowles: but it seemed to approximate more closely to Dare in spite of himself. 'I'll make a sketch of the only one who had no business there, and show it to you,' he presently said. 'I should like this cleared up.'

Mr. Cunningham Haze said he was going to Toneborough that afternoon, but
would return in the evening before Somerset's departure. With this they parted. A possible motive for Dare's presence in the rooms had instantly presented itself to Somerset's mind, for he had seen Dare enter Havill's

office more than once, as if he were at work there.

He accordingly sat on the next stile, and taking out his pocket-book began a pencil sketch of Dare's head, to show to Mr. Haze in the evening; for if Dare had indeed found admission with Havill, or as his agent, the design was lost.

But he could not make a drawing that was a satisfactory likeness. Then he luckily remembered that Dare, in the intense warmth of admiration he had affected for Somerset on the first day or two of their acquaintance, had begged for his photograph, and in return for it had left one of himself on the mantelpiece, taken as he said by his own process. Somerset resolved to show this production to Mr. Haze, as being more to the purpose than a sketch, and instead of finishing the latter, proceeded on his way.

He entered the old overgrown drive which wound indirectly through the wood to Markton. The road, having been laid out for idling rather than for progress, bent sharply hither and thither among the fissured trunks and layers of horny leaves which lay there all the year round, interspersed with cushions of vivid green moss that formed oases in the rust-red expanse.

Reaching a point where the road made one of its bends between two large beeches, a man and woman revealed themselves at a few yards' distance, walking slowly towards him. In the short and quaint lady he recognized

Charlotte De Stancy, whom he remembered not to have seen for several days.

She slightly blushed and said, 'O, this is pleasant, Mr. Somerset!
Let me present my brother to you, Captain De Stancy of the Royal Horse Artillery.'

Her brother came forward and shook hands heartily with Somerset; and they all three rambled on together, talking of the season, the place, the fishing, the shooting, and whatever else came uppermost in their minds.

Captain De Stancy was a personage who would have been called interesting by women well out of their teens. He was ripe, without having declined a digit towards fogeyism. He was sufficiently old and experienced to suggest a goodly accumulation of touching amourettes in the chambers of his memory, and not too old for the possibility of increasing the store. He was apparently about eight-and-thirty, less tall than his father had been, but admirably made; and his every movement exhibited a fine combination of strength and flexibility of limb. His face was somewhat thin and thoughtful, its complexion being naturally pale, though darkened by exposure to a warmer sun than ours. His features were somewhat striking; his moustache and hair raven black; and his eyes, denied the attributes of military keenness by reason of the largeness and darkness of their aspect, acquired thereby a softness of expression that was in part womanly. His mouth as far as it could be seen

reproduced this characteristic, which might have been called weakness, or goodness, according to the mental attitude of the observer. It was large but well formed, and showed an unimpaired line of teeth within. His dress at present was a heather-coloured rural suit, cut close to his figure.

'You knew my cousin, Jack Ravensbury?' he said to Somerset, as they went on. 'Poor Jack: he was a good fellow.'

'He was a very good fellow.'

'He would have been made a parson if he had lived--it was his great wish. I, as his senior, and a man of the world as I thought myself, used to chaff him about it when he was a boy, and tell him not to be a milksop, but to enter the army. But I think Jack was right--the parsons have the best of it, I see now.'

'They would hardly admit that,' said Somerset, laughing. 'Nor can I.'

'Nor I,' said the captain's sister. 'See how lovely you all looked with your big guns and uniform when you entered Markton; and then see how stupid the parsons look by comparison, when they flock into Markton at a Visitation.'

'Ah, yes,' said De Stancy,

'"Doubtless it is a brilliant masquerade;
But when of the first sight you've had your fill,
It palls--at least it does so upon me,
This paradise of pleasure and ennui."

When one is getting on for forty;

"When we have made our love, and gamed our gaming,
Dressed, voted, shone, and maybe, something more;
With dandies dined, heard senators declaiming;
Seen beauties brought to market by the score,"

and so on, there arises a strong desire for a quiet old-fashioned country life, in which incessant movement is not a necessary part of the programme.'

'But you are not forty, Will?' said Charlotte.

'My dear, I was thirty-nine last January.'

'Well, men about here are youths at that age. It was India used you up so, when you served in the line, was it not? I wish you had never gone there!'

'So do I,' said De Stancy drily. 'But I ought to grow a youth again, like the rest, now I am in my native air.'

They came to a narrow brook, not wider than a man's stride, and Miss De Stancy halted on the edge.

'Why, Lottie, you used to jump it easily enough,' said her brother. 'But we won't make her do it now.' He took her in his arms, and lifted her over, giving her a gratuitous ride for some additional yards, and saying, 'You are not a pound heavier, Lott, than you were at ten years old.... What do you think of the country here, Mr. Somerset? Are you going to stay long?'

'I think very well of it,' said Somerset. 'But I leave to-morrow morning, which makes it necessary that I turn back in a minute or two from walking with you.'

'That's a disappointment. I had hoped you were going to finish out the autumn with shooting. There's some, very fair, to be got here on reasonable terms, I've just heard.'

'But you need not hire any!' spoke up Charlotte. 'Paula would let you shoot anything, I am sure. She has not been here long enough to preserve much game, and the poachers had it all in Mr. Wilkins' time. But what there is you might kill with pleasure to her.'

'No, thank you,' said De Stancy grimly. 'I prefer to remain a stranger to Miss Power--Miss Steam-Power, she ought to be called--and to all her

possessions.'

Charlotte was subdued, and did not insist further; while Somerset, before he could feel himself able to decide on the mood in which the gallant captain's joke at Paula's expense should be taken, wondered whether it were a married man or a bachelor who uttered it.

He had not been able to keep the question of De Stancy's domestic state out of his head from the first moment of seeing him. Assuming De Stancy to be a husband, he felt there might be some excuse for his remark; if unmarried, Somerset liked the satire still better; in such circumstances there was a relief in the thought that Captain De Stancy's prejudices might be infinitely stronger than those of his sister or father.

'Going to-morrow, did you say, Mr. Somerset?' asked Miss De Stancy. 'Then will you dine with us to-day? My father is anxious that you should do so before you go. I am sorry there will be only our own family present to meet you; but you can leave as early as you wish.'

Her brother seconded the invitation, and Somerset promised, though his leisure for that evening was short. He was in truth somewhat inclined to like De Stancy; for though the captain had said nothing of any value either on war, commerce, science, or art, he had seemed attractive to the younger man. Beyond the natural interest a soldier has for imaginative minds in the civil walks of life, De Stancy's occasional manifestations of taedium vitae were too poetically shaped to

be repellent. Gallantry combined in him with a sort of ascetic self-repression in a way that was curious. He was a dozen years older than Somerset: his life had been passed in grooves remote from those of Somerset's own life; and the latter decided that he would like to meet the artillery officer again.

Bidding them a temporary farewell, he went away to Markton by a shorter path than that pursued by the De Stancys, and after spending the remainder of the afternoon preparing for departure, he sallied forth just before the dinner-hour towards the suburban villa.

He had become yet more curious whether a Mrs. De Stancy existed; if there were one he would probably see her to-night. He had an irrepressible hope that there might be such a lady. On entering the drawing-room only the father, son, and daughter were assembled. Somerset fell into talk with Charlotte during the few minutes before dinner, and his thought found its way out.

'There is no Mrs. De Stancy?' he said in an undertone.

'None,' she said; 'my brother is a bachelor.'

The dinner having been fixed at an early hour to suit Somerset, they had returned to the drawing-room at eight o'clock. About nine he was aiming to get away.

'You are not off yet?' said the captain.

'There would have been no hurry,' said Somerset, 'had I not just remembered that I have left one thing undone which I want to attend to before my departure. I want to see the chief constable to-night.'

'Cunningham Haze?--he is the very man I too want to see. But he went out of town this afternoon, and I hardly think you will see him to-night. His return has been delayed.'

'Then the matter must wait.'

'I have left word at his house asking him to call here if he gets home before half-past ten; but at any rate I shall see him to-morrow morning. Can I do anything for you, since you are leaving early?'

Somerset replied that the business was of no great importance, and briefly explained the suspected intrusion into his studio; that he had with him a photograph of the suspected young man. 'If it is a mistake,' added Somerset, 'I should regret putting my draughtsman's portrait into the hands of the police, since it might injure his character; indeed, it would be unfair to him. So I wish to keep the likeness in my own hands, and merely to show it to Mr. Haze. That's why I prefer not to send it.'

'My matter with Haze is that the barrack furniture does not correspond with the inventories. If you like, I'll ask your question at the same

time with pleasure.'

Thereupon Somerset gave Captain De Stancy an unfastened envelope containing the portrait, asking him to destroy it if the constable should declare it not to correspond with the face that met his eye at the window. Soon after, Somerset took his leave of the household.

He had not been absent ten minutes when other wheels were heard on the gravel without, and the servant announced Mr. Cunningham Haze, who had returned earlier than he had expected, and had called as requested.

They went into the dining-room to discuss their business. When the barrack matter had been arranged De Stancy said, 'I have a little commission to execute for my friend Mr. Somerset. I am to ask you if this portrait of the person he suspects of unlawfully entering his room is like the man you saw there?'

The speaker was seated on one side of the dining-table and Mr. Haze on the other. As he spoke De Stancy pulled the envelope from his pocket, and half drew out the photograph, which he had not as yet looked at, to hand it over to the constable. In the act his eye fell upon the portrait, with its uncertain expression of age, assured look, and hair worn in a fringe like a girl's.

Captain De Stancy's face became strained, and he leant back in his chair, having previously had sufficient power over himself to close the

envelope and return it to his pocket.

'Good heavens, you are ill, Captain De Stancy?' said the chief constable.

'It was only momentary,' said De Stancy; 'better in a minute--a glass of water will put me right.'

Mr. Haze got him a glass of water from the sideboard.

'These spasms occasionally overtake me,' said De Stancy when he had drunk. 'I am already better. What were we saying? O, this affair of Mr. Somerset's. I find that this envelope is not the right one.' He ostensibly searched his pocket again. 'I must have mislaid it,' he continued, rising. 'I'll be with you again in a moment.'

De Stancy went into the room adjoining, opened an album of portraits that lay on the table, and selected one of a young man quite unknown to him, whose age was somewhat akin to Dare's, but who in no other attribute resembled him.

De Stancy placed this picture in the original envelope, and returned with it to the chief constable, saying he had found it at last.

'Thank you, thank you,' said Cunningham Haze, looking it over. 'Ah--I perceive it is not what I expected to see. Mr. Somerset was mistaken.'

When the chief constable had left the house, Captain De Stancy shut the door and drew out the original photograph. As he looked at the transcript of Dare's features he was moved by a painful agitation, till recalling himself to the present, he carefully put the portrait into the fire.

During the following days Captain De Stancy's manner on the roads, in the streets, and at barracks, was that of Crusoe after seeing the print of a man's foot on the sand.

V.

Anybody who had closely considered Dare at this time would have discovered that, shortly after the arrival of the Royal Horse Artillery at Markton Barracks, he gave up his room at the inn at Sleeping-Green and took permanent lodgings over a broker's shop in the town above-mentioned. The peculiarity of the rooms was that they commanded a view lengthwise of the barrack lane along which any soldier, in the natural course of things, would pass either to enter the town, to call at Myrtle Villa, or to go to Stancy Castle.

Dare seemed to act as if there were plenty of time for his business. Some few days had slipped by when, perceiving Captain De Stancy walk past his window and into the town, Dare took his hat and cane, and followed in the same direction. When he was about fifty yards short of Myrtle Villa on the other side of the town he saw De Stancy enter its gate.

Dare mounted a stile beside the highway and patiently waited. In about twenty minutes De Stancy came out again and turned back in the direction of the town, till Dare was revealed to him on his left hand. When De Stancy recognized the youth he was visibly agitated, though apparently not surprised. Standing still a moment he dropped his glance upon the ground, and then came forward to Dare, who having alighted from the stile stood before the captain with a smile.

'My dear lad!' said De Stancy, much moved by recollections. He held Dare's hand for a moment in both his own, and turned askance.

'You are not astonished,' said Dare, still retaining his smile, as if to his mind there were something comic in the situation.

'I knew you were somewhere near. Where do you come from?'

'From going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, as Satan said to his Maker.--Southampton last, in common speech.'

'Have you come here to see me?'

'Entirely. I divined that your next quarters would be Markton, the previous batteries that were at your station having come on here. I have wanted to see you badly.'

'You have?'

'I am rather out of cash. I have been knocking about a good deal since you last heard from me.'

'I will do what I can again.'

'Thanks, captain.'

'But, Willy, I am afraid it will not be much at present. You know I am as poor as a mouse.'

'But such as it is, could you write a cheque for it now?'

'I will send it to you from the barracks.'

'I have a better plan. By getting over this stile we could go round at the back of the villas to Sleeping-Green Church. There is always a pen-and-ink in the vestry, and we can have a nice talk on the way. It would be unwise for me to appear at the barracks just now.'

'That's true.'

De Stancy sighed, and they were about to walk across the fields together. 'No,' said Dare, suddenly stopping: my plans make it imperative that we should not run the risk of being seen in each other's company for long. Walk on, and I will follow. You can stroll into the churchyard, and move about as if you were ruminating on the epitaphs. There are some with excellent morals. I'll enter by the other gate, and we can meet easily in the vestry-room.'

De Stancy looked gloomy, and was on the point of acquiescing when he turned back and said, 'Why should your photograph be shown to the chief constable?'

'By whom?'

'Somerset the architect. He suspects your having broken into his office or something of the sort.' De Stancy briefly related what Somerset had explained to him at the dinner-table.

'It was merely diamond cut diamond between us, on an architectural matter,' murmured Dare. 'Ho! and he suspects; and that's his remedy!'

'I hope this is nothing serious?' asked De Stancy gravely.

'I peeped at his drawing--that's all. But since he chooses to make that use of my photograph, which I gave him in friendship, I'll make use of his in a way he little dreams of. Well now, let's on.'

A quarter of an hour later they met in the vestry of the church at Sleeping-Green.

'I have only just transferred my account to the bank here,' said De Stancy, as he took out his cheque-book, 'and it will be more convenient to me at present to draw but a small sum. I will make up the balance afterwards.'

When he had written it Dare glanced over the paper and said ruefully, 'It is small, dad. Well, there is all the more reason why I should broach my scheme, with a view to making such documents larger in the

future.'

'I shall be glad to hear of any such scheme,' answered De Stancy, with a languid attempt at jocularity.

'Then here it is. The plan I have arranged for you is of the nature of a marriage.'

'You are very kind!' said De Stancy, agape.

'The lady's name is Miss Paula Power, who, as you may have heard since your arrival, is in absolute possession of her father's property and estates, including Stancy Castle. As soon as I heard of her I saw what a marvellous match it would be for you, and your family; it would make a man of you, in short, and I have set my mind upon your putting no objection in the way of its accomplishment.'

'But, Willy, it seems to me that, of us two, it is you who exercise paternal authority?'

'True, it is for your good. Let me do it.'

'Well, one must be indulgent under the circumstances, I suppose.... But,' added De Stancy simply, 'Willy, I--don't want to marry, you know. I have lately thought that some day we may be able to live together, you and I: go off to America or New Zealand, where we are not known, and

there lead a quiet, pastoral life, defying social rules and troublesome observances.'

'I can't hear of it, captain,' replied Dare reprovingly. 'I am what events have made me, and having fixed my mind upon getting you settled in life by this marriage, I have put things in train for it at an immense trouble to myself. If you had thought over it o' nights as much as I have, you would not say nay.'

'But I ought to have married your mother if anybody. And as I have not married her, the least I can do in respect to her is to marry no other woman.'

'You have some sort of duty to me, have you not, Captain De Stancy?'

'Yes, Willy, I admit that I have,' the elder replied reflectively. 'And I don't think I have failed in it thus far?'

'This will be the crowning proof. Paternal affection, family pride, the noble instincts to reinstate yourself in the castle of your ancestors, all demand the step. And when you have seen the lady! She has the figure and motions of a sylph, the face of an angel, the eye of love itself. What a sight she is crossing the lawn on a sunny afternoon, or gliding airily along the corridors of the old place the De Stancys knew so well! Her lips are the softest, reddest, most distracting things you ever saw. Her hair is as soft as silk, and of the rarest, tenderest brown.'

The captain moved uneasily. 'Don't take the trouble to say more, Willy,' he observed. 'You know how I am. My cursed susceptibility to these matters has already wasted years of my life, and I don't want to make myself a fool about her too.'

'You must see her.'

'No, don't let me see her,' De Stancy expostulated. 'If she is only half so good-looking as you say, she will drag me at her heels like a blind Samson. You are a mere youth as yet, but I may tell you that the misfortune of never having been my own master where a beautiful face was concerned obliges me to be cautious if I would preserve my peace of mind.'

'Well, to my mind, Captain De Stancy, your objections seem trivial. Are those all?'

'They are all I care to mention just now to you.'

'Captain! can there be secrets between us?'

De Stancy paused and looked at the lad as if his heart wished to confess what his judgment feared to tell. 'There should not be--on this point,' he murmured.

'Then tell me--why do you so much object to her?'

'I once vowed a vow.'

'A vow!' said Dare, rather disconcerted.

'A vow of infinite solemnity. I must tell you from the beginning; perhaps you are old enough to hear it now, though you have been too young before. Your mother's life ended in much sorrow, and it was occasioned entirely by me. In my regret for the wrong done her I swore to her that though she had not been my wife, no other woman should stand in that relationship to me; and this to her was a sort of comfort. When she was dead my knowledge of my own plaguy impressionableness, which seemed to be ineradicable--as it seems still--led me to think what safeguards I could set over myself with a view to keeping my promise to live a life of celibacy; and among other things I determined to forswear the society, and if possible the sight, of women young and attractive, as far as I had the power to do.'

'It is not so easy to avoid the sight of a beautiful woman if she crosses your path, I should think?'

'It is not easy; but it is possible.'

'How?'

'By directing your attention another way.'

'But do you mean to say, captain, that you can be in a room with a pretty woman who speaks to you, and not look at her?'

'I do: though mere looking has less to do with it than mental attentiveness--allowing your thoughts to flow out in her direction--to comprehend her image.'

'But it would be considered very impolite not to look at the woman or comprehend her image?'

'It would, and is. I am considered the most impolite officer in the service. I have been nicknamed the man with the averted eyes--the man with the detestable habit--the man who greets you with his shoulder, and so on. Ninety-and-nine fair women at the present moment hate me like poison and death for having persistently refused to plumb the depths of their offered eyes.'

'How can you do it, who are by nature courteous?'

'I cannot always--I break down sometimes. But, upon the whole, recollection holds me to it: dread of a lapse. Nothing is so potent as fear well maintained.'

De Stancy narrated these details in a grave meditative tone with his

eyes on the wall, as if he were scarcely conscious of a listener.

'But haven't you reckless moments, captain?--when you have taken a little more wine than usual, for instance?'

'I don't take wine.'

'O, you are a teetotaller?'

'Not a pledged one--but I don't touch alcohol unless I get wet, or anything of that sort.'

'Don't you sometimes forget this vow of yours to my mother?'

'No, I wear a reminder.'

'What is that like?'

De Stancy held up his left hand, on the third finger of which appeared an iron ring.

Dare surveyed it, saying, 'Yes, I have seen that before, though I never knew why you wore it. Well, I wear a reminder also, but of a different sort.'

He threw open his shirt-front, and revealed tattooed on his breast the

letters DE STANCY; the same marks which Havill had seen in the bedroom by the light of the moon.

The captain rather winced at the sight. 'Well, well,' he said hastily, 'that's enough.... Now, at any rate, you understand my objection to know Miss Power.'

'But, captain,' said the lad coaxingly, as he fastened his shirt; 'you forget me and the good you may do me by marrying? Surely that's a sufficient reason for a change of sentiment. This inexperienced sweet creature owns the castle and estate which bears your name, even to the furniture and pictures. She is the possessor of at least forty thousand a year--how much more I cannot say--while, buried here in Outer Wessex, she lives at the rate of twelve hundred in her simplicity.'

'It is very good of you to set this before me. But I prefer to go on as I am going.'

'Well, I won't bore you any more with her to-day. A monk in regimentals!--'tis strange.' Dare arose and was about to open the door, when, looking through the window, Captain De Stancy said, 'Stop.' He had perceived his father, Sir William De Stancy, walking among the tombstones without.

'Yes, indeed,' said Dare, turning the key in the door. 'It would look strange if he were to find us here.'

As the old man seemed indisposed to leave the churchyard just yet they sat down again.

'What a capital card-table this green cloth would make,' said Dare, as they waited. 'You play, captain, I suppose?'

'Very seldom.'

'The same with me. But as I enjoy a hand of cards with a friend, I don't go unprovided.' Saying which, Dare drew a pack from the tail of his coat. 'Shall we while away this leisure with the witching things?'

'Really, I'd rather not.'

'But,' coaxed the young man, 'I am in the humour for it; so don't be unkind!'

'But, Willy, why do you care for these things? Cards are harmless enough in their way; but I don't like to see you carrying them in your pocket. It isn't good for you.'

'It was by the merest chance I had them. Now come, just one hand, since we are prisoners. I want to show you how nicely I can play. I won't corrupt you!'

'Of course not,' said De Stancy, as if ashamed of what his objection implied. 'You are not corrupt enough yourself to do that, I should hope.'

The cards were dealt and they began to play--Captain De Stancy abstractedly, and with his eyes mostly straying out of the window upon the large yew, whose boughs as they moved were distorted by the old green window-panes.

'It is better than doing nothing,' said Dare cheerfully, as the game went on. 'I hope you don't dislike it?'

'Not if it pleases you,' said De Stancy listlessly.

'And the consecration of this place does not extend further than the aisle wall.'

'Doesn't it?' said De Stancy, as he mechanically played out his cards. 'What became of that box of books I sent you with my last cheque?'

'Well, as I hadn't time to read them, and as I knew you would not like them to be wasted, I sold them to a bloke who peruses them from morning till night. Ah, now you have lost a fiver altogether--how queer! We'll double the stakes. So, as I was saying, just at the time the books came I got an inkling of this important business, and literature went to the wall.'

'Important business--what?'

'The capture of this lady, to be sure.'

De Stancy sighed impatiently. 'I wish you were less calculating, and had more of the impulse natural to your years!'

'Game--by Jove! You have lost again, captain. That makes--let me see--nine pounds fifteen to square us.'

'I owe you that?' said De Stancy, startled. 'It is more than I have in cash. I must write another cheque.'

'Never mind. Make it payable to yourself, and our connection will be quite unsuspected.'

Captain De Stancy did as requested, and rose from his seat. Sir William, though further off, was still in the churchyard.

'How can you hesitate for a moment about this girl?' said Dare, pointing to the bent figure of the old man. 'Think of the satisfaction it would be to him to see his son within the family walls again. It should be a religion with you to compass such a legitimate end as this.'

'Well, well, I'll think of it,' said the captain, with an impatient

laugh. 'You are quite a Mephistopheles, Will--I say it to my sorrow!'

'Would that I were in your place.'

'Would that you were! Fifteen years ago I might have called the chance a magnificent one.'

'But you are a young man still, and you look younger than you are. Nobody knows our relationship, and I am not such a fool as to divulge it. Of course, if through me you reclaim this splendid possession, I should leave it to your feelings what you would do for me.'

Sir William had by this time cleared out of the churchyard, and the pair emerged from the vestry and departed. Proceeding towards Markton by the same bypath, they presently came to an eminence covered with bushes of blackthorn, and tufts of yellowing fern. From this point a good view of the woods and glades about Stancy Castle could be obtained. Dare stood still on the top and stretched out his finger; the captain's eye followed the direction, and he saw above the many-hued foliage in the middle distance the towering keep of Paula's castle.

'That's the goal of your ambition, captain--ambition do I say?--most righteous and dutiful endeavour! How the hoary shape catches the sunlight--it is the raison d'etre of the landscape, and its possession is coveted by a thousand hearts. Surely it is an hereditary desire of yours? You must make a point of returning to it, and appearing in the

map of the future as in that of the past. I delight in this work of encouraging you, and pushing you forward towards your own. You are really very clever, you know, but--I say it with respect--how comes it that you want so much waking up?'

'Because I know the day is not so bright as it seems, my boy. However, you make a little mistake. If I care for anything on earth, I do care for that old fortress of my forefathers. I respect so little among the living that all my reverence is for my own dead. But manoeuvring, even for my own, as you call it, is not in my line. It is distasteful--it is positively hateful to me.'

'Well, well, let it stand thus for the present. But will you refuse me one little request--merely to see her? I'll contrive it so that she may not see you. Don't refuse me, it is the one thing I ask, and I shall think it hard if you deny me.'

'O Will!' said the captain wearily. 'Why will you plead so? No--even though your mind is particularly set upon it, I cannot see her, or bestow a thought upon her, much as I should like to gratify you.'

VI.

When they had parted Dare walked along towards Markton with resolve on his mouth and an unscrupulous light in his prominent black eye. Could any person who had heard the previous conversation have seen him now, he would have found little difficulty in divining that, notwithstanding De Stancy's obduracy, the reinstation of Captain De Stancy in the castle, and the possible legitimation and enrichment of himself, was still the dream of his brain. Even should any legal settlement or offspring intervene to nip the extreme development of his projects, there was abundant opportunity for his glorification. Two conditions were imperative. De Stancy must see Paula before Somerset's return. And it was necessary to have help from Havill, even if it involved letting him know all.

Whether Havill already knew all was a nice question for Mr. Dare's luminous mind. Havill had had opportunities of reading his secret, particularly on the night they occupied the same room. If so, by revealing it to Paula, Havill might utterly blast his project for the marriage. Havill, then, was at all risks to be retained as an ally.

Yet Dare would have preferred a stronger check upon his confederate than was afforded by his own knowledge of that anonymous letter and the competition trick. For were the competition lost to him, Havill would have no further interest in conciliating Miss Power; would as soon as not let her know the secret of De Stancy's relation to him.

Fortune as usual helped him in his dilemma. Entering Havill's office, Dare found him sitting there; but the drawings had all disappeared from the boards. The architect held an open letter in his hand.

'Well, what news?' said Dare.

'Miss Power has returned to the castle, Somerset is detained in London, and the competition is decided,' said Havill, with a glance of quiet dubiousness.

'And you have won it?'

'No. We are bracketed--it's a tie. The judges say there is no choice between the designs--that they are singularly equal and singularly good. That she would do well to adopt either. Signed So-and-So, Fellows of the Royal Institute of British Architects. The result is that she will employ which she personally likes best. It is as if I had spun a sovereign in the air and it had alighted on its edge. The least false movement will make it tails; the least wise movement heads.'

'Singularly equal. Well, we owe that to our nocturnal visit, which must not be known.'

'O Lord, no!' said Havill apprehensively.

Dare felt secure of him at those words. Havill had much at stake; the slightest rumour of his trick in bringing about the competition, would be fatal to Havill's reputation.

'The permanent absence of Somerset then is desirable architecturally on your account, matrimonially on mine.'

'Matrimonially? By the way--who was that captain you pointed out to me when the artillery entered the town?'

'Captain De Stancy--son of Sir William De Stancy. He's the husband. O, you needn't look incredulous: it is practicable; but we won't argue that. In the first place I want him to see her, and to see her in the most love-kindling, passion-begetting circumstances that can be thought of. And he must see her surreptitiously, for he refuses to meet her.'

'Let him see her going to church or chapel?'

Dare shook his head.

'Driving out?'

'Common-place!'

'Walking in the gardens?'

'Ditto.'

'At her toilet?'

'Ah--if it were possible!'

'Which it hardly is. Well, you had better think it over and make inquiries about her habits, and as to when she is in a favourable aspect for observation, as the almanacs say.'

Shortly afterwards Dare took his leave. In the evening he made it his business to sit smoking on the bole of a tree which commanded a view of the upper ward of the castle, and also of the old postern-gate, now enlarged and used as a tradesmen's entrance. It was half-past six o'clock; the dressing-bell rang, and Dare saw a light-footed young woman hasten at the sound across the ward from the servants' quarter. A light appeared in a chamber which he knew to be Paula's dressing-room; and there it remained half-an-hour, a shadow passing and repassing on the blind in the style of head-dress worn by the girl he had previously seen. The dinner-bell sounded and the light went out.

As yet it was scarcely dark out of doors, and in a few minutes Dare had the satisfaction of seeing the same woman cross the ward and emerge upon the slope without. This time she was bonneted, and carried a little basket in her hand. A nearer view showed her to be, as he had expected, Milly Birch, Paula's maid, who had friends living in Markton, whom she

was in the habit of visiting almost every evening during the three hours of leisure which intervened between Paula's retirement from the dressing-room and return thither at ten o'clock. When the young woman had descended the road and passed into the large drive, Dare rose and followed her.

'O, it is you, Miss Birch,' said Dare, on overtaking her. 'I am glad to have the pleasure of walking by your side.'

'Yes, sir. O it's Mr. Dare. We don't see you at the castle now, sir.'

'No. And do you get a walk like this every evening when the others are at their busiest?'

'Almost every evening; that's the one return to the poor lady's maid for losing her leisure when the others get it--in the absence of the family from home.'

'Is Miss Power a hard mistress?'

'No.'

'Rather fanciful than hard, I presume?'

'Just so, sir.'

'And she likes to appear to advantage, no doubt.'

'I suppose so,' said Milly, laughing. 'We all do.'

'When does she appear to the best advantage? When riding, or driving, or reading her book?'

'Not altogether then, if you mean the very best.'

'Perhaps it is when she sits looking in the glass at herself, and you let down her hair.'

'Not particularly, to my mind.'

'When does she to your mind? When dressed for a dinner-party or ball?'

'She's middling, then. But there is one time when she looks nicer and cleverer than at any. It is when she is in the gymnasium.'

'O--gymnasium?'

'Because when she is there she wears such a pretty boy's costume, and is so charming in her movements, that you think she is a lovely young youth and not a girl at all.'

'When does she go to this gymnasium?'

'Not so much as she used to. Only on wet mornings now, when she can't get out for walks or drives. But she used to do it every day.'

'I should like to see her there.'

'Why, sir?'

'I am a poor artist, and can't afford models. To see her attitudes would be of great assistance to me in the art I love so well.'

Milly shook her head. 'She's very strict about the door being locked. If I were to leave it open she would dismiss me, as I should deserve.'

'But consider, dear Miss Birch, the advantage to a poor artist the sight of her would be: if you could hold the door ajar it would be worth five pounds to me, and a good deal to you.'

'No,' said the incorruptible Milly, shaking her head. 'Besides, I don't always go there with her. O no, I couldn't!'

Milly remained so firm at this point that Dare said no more.

When he had left her he returned to the castle grounds, and though there was not much light he had no difficulty in discovering the gymnasium, the outside of which he had observed before, without thinking to inquire

its purpose. Like the erections in other parts of the shrubberies it was constructed of wood, the interstices between the framing being filled up with short billets of fir nailed diagonally. Dare, even when without a settled plan in his head, could arrange for probabilities; and wrenching out one of the billets he looked inside. It seemed to be a simple oblong apartment, fitted up with ropes, with a little dressing-closet at one end, and lighted by a skylight or lantern in the roof. Dare replaced the wood and went on his way.

Havill was smoking on his doorstep when Dare passed up the street. He held up his hand.

'Since you have been gone,' said the architect, 'I've hit upon something that may help you in exhibiting your lady to your gentleman. In the summer I had orders to design a gymnasium for her, which I did; and they say she is very clever on the ropes and bars. Now--'

'I've discovered it. I shall contrive for him to see her there on the first wet morning, which is when she practises. What made her think of it?'

'As you may have heard, she holds advanced views on social and other matters; and in those on the higher education of women she is very strong, talking a good deal about the physical training of the Greeks, whom she adores, or did. Every philosopher and man of science who ventilates his theories in the monthly reviews has a devout listener in

her; and this subject of the physical development of her sex has had its turn with other things in her mind. So she had the place built on her very first arrival, according to the latest lights on athletics, and in imitation of those at the new colleges for women.'

'How deuced clever of the girl! She means to live to be a hundred!'

VII.

The wet day arrived with all the promptness that might have been expected of it in this land of rains and mists. The alder bushes behind the gymnasium dripped monotonously leaf upon leaf, added to this being the purl of the shallow stream a little way off, producing a sense of satiety in watery sounds. Though there was drizzle in the open meads, the rain here in the thicket was comparatively slight, and two men with fishing tackle who stood beneath one of the larger bushes found its boughs a sufficient shelter.

'We may as well walk home again as study nature here, Willy,' said the taller and elder of the twain. 'I feared it would continue when we started. The magnificent sport you speak of must rest for to-day.'

The other looked at his watch, but made no particular reply.

'Come, let us move on. I don't like intruding into other people's grounds like this,' De Stancy continued.

'We are not intruding. Anybody walks outside this fence.' He indicated an iron railing newly tarred, dividing the wilder underwood amid which they stood from the inner and well-kept parts of the shrubbery, and against which the back of the gymnasium was built.

Light footsteps upon a gravel walk could be heard on the other side of

the fence, and a trio of cloaked and umbrella-screened figures were for a moment discernible. They vanished behind the gymnasium; and again nothing resounded but the river murmurs and the clock-like drippings of the leafage.

'Hush!' said Dare.

'No pranks, my boy,' said De Stancy suspiciously. 'You should be above them.'

'And you should trust to my good sense, captain,' Dare remonstrated. 'I have not indulged in a prank since the sixth year of my pilgrimage. I have found them too damaging to my interests. Well, it is not too dry here, and damp injures your health, you say. Have a pull for safety's sake.' He presented a flask to De Stancy.

The artillery officer looked down at his nether garments.

'I don't break my rule without good reason,' he observed.

'I am afraid that reason exists at present.'

'I am afraid it does. What have you got?'

'Only a little wine.'

'What wine?'

'Do try it. I call it "the blushful Hippocrene," that the poet describes as

"Tasting of Flora and the country green;
Dance, and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth."'

De Stancy took the flask, and drank a little.

'It warms, does it not?' said Dare.

'Too much,' said De Stancy with misgiving. 'I have been taken unawares. Why, it is three parts brandy, to my taste, you scamp!'

Dare put away the wine. 'Now you are to see something,' he said.

'Something--what is it?' Captain De Stancy regarded him with a puzzled look.

'It is quite a curiosity, and really worth seeing. Now just look in here.'

The speaker advanced to the back of the building, and withdrew the wood billet from the wall.

'Will, I believe you are up to some trick,' said De Stancy, not, however, suspecting the actual truth in these unsuggestive circumstances, and with a comfortable resignation, produced by the potent liquor, which would have been comical to an outsider, but which, to one who had known the history and relationship of the two speakers, would have worn a sadder significance. 'I am too big a fool about you to keep you down as I ought; that's the fault of me, worse luck.'

He pressed the youth's hand with a smile, went forward, and looked through the hole into the interior of the gymnasium. Dare withdrew to some little distance, and watched Captain De Stancy's face, which presently began to assume an expression of interest.

What was the captain seeing? A sort of optical poem.

Paula, in a pink flannel costume, was bending, wheeling and undulating in the air like a gold-fish in its globe, sometimes ascending by her arms nearly to the lantern, then lowering herself till she swung level with the floor. Her aunt Mrs. Goodman, and Charlotte De Stancy, were sitting on camp-stools at one end, watching her gyrations, Paula occasionally addressing them with such an expression as--'Now, Aunt, look at me--and you, Charlotte--is not that shocking to your weak nerves,' when some adroit feat would be repeated, which, however, seemed to give much more pleasure to Paula herself in performing it than to Mrs. Goodman in looking on, the latter sometimes saying, 'O, it is terrific--do not run such a risk again!'

It would have demanded the poetic passion of some joyous Elizabethan lyrist like Lodge, Nash, or Constable, to fitly phrase Paula's presentation of herself at this moment of absolute abandonment to every muscular whim that could take possession of such a supple form. The white manilla ropes clung about the performer like snakes as she took her exercise, and the colour in her face deepened as she went on. Captain De Stancy felt that, much as he had seen in early life of beauty in woman, he had never seen beauty of such a real and living sort as this. A recollection of his vow, together with a sense that to gaze on the festival of this Bona Dea was, though so innocent and pretty a sight, hardly fair or gentlemanly, would have compelled him to withdraw his eyes, had not the sportive fascination of her appearance glued them there in spite of all. And as if to complete the picture of Grace personified and add the one thing wanting to the charm which bound him, the clouds, till that time thick in the sky, broke away from the upper heaven, and allowed the noonday sun to pour down through the lantern upon her, irradiating her with a warm light that was incarnadined by her pink doublet and hose, and reflected in upon her face. She only required a cloud to rest on instead of the green silk net which actually supported her reclining figure for the moment, to be quite Olympian; save indeed that in place of haughty effrontery there sat on her countenance only the healthful sprightliness of an English girl.

Dare had withdrawn to a point at which another path crossed the path occupied by De Stancy. Looking in a side direction, he saw Havill

idling slowly up to him over the silent grass. Havill's knowledge of the appointment had brought him out to see what would come of it. When he neared Dare, but was still partially hidden by the boughs from the third of the party, the former simply pointed to De Stancy upon which Havill stood and peeped at him. 'Is she within there?' he inquired.

Dare nodded, and whispered, 'You need not have asked, if you had examined his face.'

'That's true.'

'A fermentation is beginning in him,' said Dare, half pitifully; 'a purely chemical process; and when it is complete he will probably be clear, and fiery, and sparkling, and quite another man than the good, weak, easy fellow that he was.'

To precisely describe Captain De Stancy's admiration was impossible. A sun seemed to rise in his face. By watching him they could almost see the aspect of her within the wall, so accurately were her changing phases reflected in him. He seemed to forget that he was not alone.

'And is this,' he murmured, in the manner of one only half apprehending himself, 'and is this the end of my vow?'

Paula was saying at this moment, 'Ariel sleeps in this posture, does he not, Auntie?' Suiting the action to the word she flung out her arms

behind her head as she lay in the green silk hammock, idly closed her pink eyelids, and swung herself to and fro.