







ABS. 1. 78. 152







CURIOSITIES OF CRIME
IN EDINBURGH

DURING

The Last Thirty Years.





James M. Levy

CURIOSITIES OF CRIME

IN EDINBURGH

DURING

The Last Thirty Years.

BY

JAMES M'LEVY,

EDINBURGH POLICE DETECTIVE STAFF.

EDINBURGH :
WILLIAM KAY, 5 BANK STREET.

LONDON : GEORGE VICKERS, 172 STRAND.

M.DCCC.LXI.



PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

THE cases of detection contained in this volume are only a part, and a very small part, of the experiences of Mr James M'Levy, taken from among no fewer than 2220 instances, where he almost uniformly got convictions. The strange adventures will speak for themselves, and will at once suggest the great difference between a species of literature which can be safely read, as being a true account of what happened, and another which, pretending to be true, is only fiction, with a few and sometimes no grains of truth at the bottom. In this latter kind must, I fear, be held to be included the greater part of those books which have been latterly given out as the experiences of detective officers, the authors being not only not of that class of men, but often entirely unacquainted with them or their ways, and drawing their mate-

rials—the more wonderful the more successful—from their own prolific brains. The name of Mr M'Levy is the guarantee of this book; and well it may be, for he is known throughout the kingdom, not only for his honesty and veracity, but for the possession of those many qualities which go to form a successful detective officer; nor, indeed, will it be too much to say, that while he is beyond question without a competitor, now or heretofore, in Scotland, he has very few, if any, in England. It is needless to enumerate these requirements, among which a native sagacity, ingenuity, decision, and courage, are indispensable, but I may remark, that he is well-known for having uniformly illustrated these by urbanity, moderation, and kindness—qualities not always found in people of this class.

The advantages to which a book of this kind may be turned seem very evident; for, while all pandering to an appetite for details of crime has been carefully avoided, there is set before the reader such an array of examples where misdeeds have been brought to light as if it were by miracle, that no one can read them without being impressed by

the conviction that in these times, when the dark paths of vice are so carefully watched, it is scarcely possible to be wicked without being in some way or another found out.

The cases given in this volume constitute, as I have said, a small portion of Mr M'Levy's detections; but if this be, as I hope it may, considered a fault, it is one which it is the intention of the author to mend.

MEMOIR OF MR JAMES M'LEVY.

MR M'LEVY was born in the parish of Ballymacnab, county Armagh, in Ireland, his father holding the position of a small farmer. Having received a suitable education, at the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to the trade of fine-linen weaving, at which he continued till he was seventeen, when he came over to Scotland. Having remained for two years at the Gatehouse-of-Fleet, he came to Edinburgh, where he was first employed by Mr Wallace, a considerable builder at that time, and subsequently by Mr Walker, a son-in-law of Mr Wallace's. Latterly, he went into the service of Mr Robert Paterson, builder and tax-surveyor. During all this time he conducted himself with honesty and propriety, occasionally displaying freaks of humour, and

instances of that ingenuity which so signally marked his subsequent career.

In particular, Mr M'Levy had so recommended himself by his uniform steadiness to Mr Paterson, that that gentleman, who probably saw other qualities in him capable of being turned to better account than in the daily toil of a hod-man, advised him to enter the police, and promised to get Captain Stewart to accept his services. He immediately agreed to this proposal, and Mr Paterson having succeeded in his application, he entered the force in August 1830, as a night-watchman. In this capacity he acted till 1833, when, having taken fever, he was removed to the Infirmary. Though at one time dangerously ill, it was not long till, through the means of a strong constitution, he began to shew symptoms of amendment; and at this stage there occurred an incident worth recording, as shewing his turn for "finding people out." It seems the doctor who attended his ward, having noticed with satisfaction the returning convalescence of his patient, in whom he felt perhaps more than the usual interest, ordered nourishing food and wine for him. On the first day after this

order, the nurse brought the supply. There was no objection to the food, but the patient thought the quantity of wine not only below what he wished and required, but so limited as to do him no good. He at once suspected the nurse of defrauding him of what he so much required. Accordingly, when the doctor came round next day and asked his patient how the wine agreed with him,—“Why, sir,” said he, “it could not disagree with me, for I scarcely knew it was in my inside, it was so small.” “Well, you shall have more,” replied he; “I will give directions to the nurse.” Next day the nurse appeared again, this time with a good quantity in a bottle. As she entered, M'Levy turned his eye, saw the bottle, and then throwing the clothes over his head, with room only for the play of one eye, began to snore stoutly. Up comes the nurse, and being satisfied that her patient was sleeping, she put the bottle to her head, and took off nearly the half. “So, so,” said the patient quietly, getting his head out, “this is the way my wine goes. Madam, this will be the dearest gulp you ever had in your life.” Then the woman began to preach and pray, and appeal to his feelings,—that she

would be turned away if he informed on her, and would, in short, be a ruined woman. But M'Levy would not say he would not inform—he kept his intention to himself, and the consequence resulted very happily for him, and not unhappily for the woman, who, from that day, gave him even more wine, not only raw, but in the form of negus, than he could swallow—all which tended to his convalescence.

After recovering from this illness, he was told by the doctor that he must renounce his night-work, and he accordingly went to Captain Stewart with the view of resigning. That gentleman, who had a quick eye to intelligence, and knew where to look for it, offered M'Levy promotion to the staff of detectives. He was accordingly appointed, in 1833, to that situation he has filled since with so much honour to himself and advantage to the public. His name soon came to be known everywhere, and for a thief or robber to be ferreted out or pursued by M'Levy, was held equal to his being caught. We have only to look to the number of his cases, 2220, to form some idea of the vast amount of property he has been the means of

restoring to its owners, of the number of offenders he has brought to justice, and of the impression of his influence in the observed diminution of crime. Other causes have, happily, tended to this last result; but it cannot be denied that, in so far as regards Edinburgh, much of that effect has been due to his exertions.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE CONJUROR,	1
THE HAPPY LAND,	13
THE HANDCUFFS,	22
THE RED RIBBONS,	34
THE HOLY LAND,	41
THE PEWTER SPOON,	54
LONG LOOKED-FOR, COME AT LAST,	64
THE SWAN,	75
THE TOPCOATS,	86
THE BELFAST KEY,	102
THE DEAD CHILD'S LEG,	116
THE ASH-BUCKET,	132
THE JEWEL-BOX,	142
THE PADLOCK,	148
THE BOOTS,	157
THE BLOOD-STAINED MOLESKIN,	163

	PAGE
THE BROKER'S SECRET,	175
THE WHISPER,	186
THE LAUGH,	199
THE BREATHING,	208
THE URCHIN,	214
THE PIRATES,	223
THE LOOK-OUT,	234
THE LETTER,	244
DECISION,	256
NIEVIE, NIEVIE, NICK-NACK,	262
THE JOSTLE,	273
THE HAY-SEEDS,	290

The Conjuror.

THE more I consider my eventful life, the more I am satisfied that there are coincidences that cannot be explained on the common calculations of Chance, because, though I have attributed many of my lucky hits to her, whom I call my patroness, yet I am quite sure her ladyship, though by no means a Lady Bountiful, is very much a Lady Grateful, who insists on something being done by her favourites to deserve her attention—perhaps a little flattery, though I am not much in that way.

About 1840, a very young boy, in Bo'ness, was sent by his masters,—shipowners, I think, there,—with £200 to place in the bank to their credit. As he went along, he was met by a man, holding a good character, and following the profession of a schoolmaster. Seized, it must have been, by the very demon of ambition, or perhaps sick of unbreeching and birching,—which seemed to do no good in the world, as the people were all as bad notwithstanding as he felt himself to be in his heart, in

spite of all the birching he himself had got,—he fell upon the boy, who, he had suspected, was the bearer of money, and by sheer force took the whole sum from him. How, in so small a place, and at noon-day, he could have escaped, is a mystery I never heard cleared up, but true it is he did escape from the town, notwithstanding of the hullabaloo that got up in the neighbourhood. If he had taken to any of the country-leading roads, especially that to Edinburgh, he would have been seized ; and I have always held the probability to be, that he sought refuge in some of the low, disreputable houses, where the inmates have a strong sympathy for custodiers of cash, so long as it lasts, thereafter kicking them out ; and “serve ’em well.”

We got, of course, information ; but, after some weeks, I concluded that the man had either never come to Edinburgh, or had quickly left it. His crime was there, however, where it made a considerable noise from its peculiarity ; for though dominies have often vices, it is seldom they betake themselves to the highway. When I know a man is not under the changeful wing of an alibi, he must be got of course—that’s certain. That’s a rule with me ; but never having considered myself omniscient, the moment I am satisfied a man is not on my beat I can be easy. But then my beat was certainly a pretty wide one, and the difficulty was to find out one negative among so many positives as some two hundred thousand ; and somehow I am a hard hoper, so that my conclusion was rather a forced matter in this case.

About a week or ten days after the affair, I was one night taking a turn along Bristo Street, a little in the knight-errant way, looking out for some pretty Lady Virtue, in defence of whom, under the brutalities of her ungallant sons, I might break, not a spear, but a head. On the pavement there stood two young girls, speaking, with their bonnets nid-nodding against each other, and looking with eyes so scandalously full of scandal of some very captivating kind, that I was induced to stop.

"What now, my lasses?"

"Fine night."

"Where do you belong to, now? Edinburgh lasses—eh?"

"No, Bo'ness," said one of them.

"Bo'ness! Oh, you must have heard of the school-master who robbed the boy?"

"Ay, and just speakin' o' him," said the second.

"Do you know him?" asked I, just with the proper carelessness.

"Brawly; he has whipt me before now, and I wadna care though he was hanged in his ain lang tawse, for his cruelty to me mony a day."

"Well, perhaps I may help you to repay him," said I; "one good turn deserves another."

Thereupon one, shooting out her face so as to be very near my ear, said, "Whisht!"

"Why? there's no one near."

"Nae saying; he's in that public-house there," pointing with her finger.

"Stop there till I come," said I, and instantly walked in.

I got into a room where there was a man, threw my eye over him, and there to be sure was Mr ——. I took no time to scan; you only raise suspicion. A glance gave me the "nose somewhat turned up;" the "demure face," as if so tired of whipping urchins; "gray eye," far ben, so indicative of foxiness; "big upper lip," of sensuality; "no whiskers," where whiskers should *have been*; and, beyond all, the look of great reverence, as if he had been bred to psalm-singing.

"Fairish night," said I.

"Middling," was the gruff reply of my schoolmaster.

"Bring me a bottle of ginger beer," I cried, suddenly, to the man of the house.

If any one will guess why I called for a drink I despised on a coldish night, when perhaps I needed something to warm me under the freezing look of his reverence, I'll give him my baton. Just guess now, and fail. It was not, I assure you upon my honour, that I might treat the girl whom he had whipped. Be so good as keep that in mind, because you might call me a fool for proposing a puzzle which was no puzzle.

My beer came in, and, going to the door, I brought in the whipped Jenny.

"Take a little beer, lass," said I, cheerfully.

But she couldn't, for her eyes were fixed on the dominie,—in the recollection probably of the tawse,—and her whole body shook.

"No fear," said I; "no tawse here, lass."

But still she stared and he stared, and they would have kept staring until all the froth on the beer had passed into thin air, if I had not put an end to it.

"You know the man?" said I to the girl.

"Ay—that's him," replied she, still staring at him, as if the old charm of the tawse tingled somewhere about her body.

"Who?" rejoined I.

"Mr ——, the schoolmaster o' Bo'ness."

"Well, give me your name and address," said I, getting out my pencil, and proceeding to make the important entry in that terrible red-book of mine. "Now, my bonny lass," continued I, "your name is *given up* to the dominie, who'll *decry* you; but never mind. You may go now, but 'still remember me.'"

And she went, still all of a tremble, and forgetting her beer entirely.

"Well, I have the pleasure of having before me Mr ——, late schoolmaster at Bo'ness?"

"It's false, sir."

"At any rate a supposition's no crime, and just let us suppose it."

"I'm not to suppose any such thing."

"Don't want you—it isn't necessary. It is only necessary that I should, and, what is more, *I do*. And I also suppose you have something in your pocket which would be very interesting to me."

"I am a respectable man——"

"I'm not disputing it."

"And I see no authority you have to inquire what I carry with me."

"Well, you may put me down as impertinent. I am sorry for it, but I am often obliged to be uncivil—can't really help it. Turn out."

"'Twill do you no good," said he, sulkily, and fumbling in his breeches-pocket.

"There's all the money I have,"—putting some silver upon the table,—“if you're a robber, take it."

"I don't happen to belong to that fraternity, I am a robber-catcher."

I had got the *whip*-hand of the reverend dominie. He shook violently, and knit his brows to make amends.

"You are pale, my good sir," said I, "and my beer's done, but I see you have got some in your coat-pocket,"—pointing to the top of a bottle sticking out, and which I had seen when I called for my own, through sympathy or fun ; for we sometimes, when prosperous in our calling, get merry at the expense of vice. And why not ? Are we not men ? Have we not eyes, noses, hearts to feel, and lungs to laugh, and all the rest ?

"What mean you ?" he said, looking at me as if those far-ben eyes had come an inch out of their dark holes.

"Just to give you a drop of your favourite beverage," said I, pulling out a bottle from his right pocket. "Ah ! and here is one for me as well," taking another from the left ; "and here's a third for Madam Justice," taking the remaining one from his breast-pocket.

"I get beer at this house," said he, "and bring back the bottles to get more."

Here I was certainly a little taken aback. The explanation was really plausible, and I thought for a moment my drollery had been folly—that however brisk the beer I had called for, my joke had been stale.

"And now you see," said he, profiting by my disadvantage, "what you have made of your impudence."

But then, I think I have said that Vice is liable to infirmities. When she gets merry she gambols, like the moth, and rushes into the candle ; or crows like the cock, who, getting on the heap-top, and then into the claws of the eagle, would never, but for the cocky-leerie-la of his jubilation, have been seen by his big friend. Yes, my reverence here committed a mistake ;—probably though he had not, I would have been up with him. And then, with all the coolness in the world, he actually took up one of the bottles, and was putting it into his pocket.

"What ! didn't you say you had brought these empty bottles?—for that they are empty," I continued, as I lifted one, "there can be no doubt ; and why put them back into your pocket again to trouble you by taking them out a second time ?"

"That's my business," said he.

"And this is mine," said I, taking up a poker in one hand and a bottle in the other, and knocking the head and upper part clean off, when there appeared a nicely rolled up bundle of notes, about £50.

The sound of the broken bottle brought in the landlord.

"Just in time," said I, taking the man by the coat, and drawing him forward.

"You see this?—it may be necessary you testify to it. This bottle, which I have taken from this gentleman, is more wonderful than that one I have read of in 'The Devil on Two Sticks,' for it contains this bundle of notes. Let us try our luck again," I continued, as I broke the second, and then the third, each revealing a similar bundle of notes, amounting in all to upwards of £150.

"Do you put pound-notes in your ginger-beer bottles when you cork them up for sale?"

The man laughed, even in the midst of his bewilderment. "The deevil o' the like o' this ever I saw!" he said; "what is the meaning of it? Ah, I see, you're a conjuror."

"Just so."

"I wish you would conjure some of my bottles that way. Faith, an' I'd soon be a rich man."

"I only do it to my friends," I replied, as I took a look of Master Reverence; "but no more of this joking; you have seen what you have seen, and can speak to my conjuring when you are called upon by an officer from the Sheriff."

The man began to see a little better.

"I understand," said he.

"Well, you may go."

"And now, sir," addressing my prisoner, "you will please go with me to the Police-office; I will take care of your bottles."

"What to do there?" he said, scarcely now able to speak with fear.

"To answer to the charge of robbing the boy —— in Borrowstounness, a week ago."

I now began to gather up my broken bottles; and as I proceeded, I heard him sighing and breathing laboriously; words came too, as if he had forgotten I was there. The spirit was working within; the conscience up in war, tearing him; he threw himself back on the chair, with his legs out, and as he hauled these shuffling along the floor, he still muttered—I could scarcely make it out, yet I was satisfied of these strange words, which I have never forgotten, and never will forget—

"Good God! this very girl I punished severely without a fault, because I had a grudge against her father!"

So, so, I thought; and what hand led me here so that I should come upon this girl, and what power stopped me, what power opened my mouth? Silence! I am only a humble instrument for discovering the secret ways of man's wickedness. Yes, I have often been impressed with this feeling when people thought I was merely pleased with my own poor efforts. Maybe they did not know me, for these thoughts are not just suited for the Police-office; and then, I have been obliged to stand the look of great judges, who, while they complimented me, no doubt looked upon me as a poor machine, only moved by strings pulled by a love of being thought clever, while they, who act upon my detections, are so wise and so honourable. But every man to his trade—shoemaker,

poet, judge, and last—excuse me—the ferreter out of evil. It is easy to “charge” on such labours as mine,—easy to pronounce the word guilty, as proved by them,—easy to hang, as a consequence of them ; and yet no man has less reason to complain than I myself.

“I love a penitent,” said I, as I turned round to the miserable man.

He did not relish the compliment ; such people never do.

“Mind your own business ; you have been insolent in your wit.”

Ah, there’s no pleasing them : if you are harsh, they say you are riding over them ; if mild, you are gloating over your superiority ; if humorous, you are cruel and ironical.

“Suppose then,” said I, “I command you as a suspected——”

“Just suspected.”

“As a suspected robber of a poor helpless boy, not much beyond your birch——”

“Peace, man ; your words enter my soul.”

“Who might have been suspected of having appropriated that money, and been ruined for ever, to——”

“Peace, peace !”

“Walk up to justice ;—will that please you ?”

“True, true !” he ejaculated ; “what will please him who has displeased God, and therefore himself ? Were you to speak as an angel, I would call you devil ; and devil you are !”

"Well, you will admit that the boy's masters, when they get the contents of the bottles, will not have so bad an opinion of me; you know there's a reward."

"But none to me," he sobbed, as his head fell on his breast; "my reward will not be here."

"Not sure but it may begin here, and in a way which may lead you to rejoice that it does not end here. A little sharpness quickens a man's conscience, and when that begins to cry out, you know there's a voice that answers."

"Well, you are not so bad a fellow after all," he said; and, rising, "now I will go with you quietly, for I think God's mind is in me, and perhaps He may lead me through tribulation to exultation."

"But what put the bottles in your head?" said I, changing the subject, for really I felt curious, though I have seen all manner of hiding-places, even the tender arm-pits of women,—yes, their mouths speaking sweet, endearing words,—but a ginger-beer bottle was new to me.

"Because," replied he, "after my first run I got thirsty, and having, in a public-house, got a drink of ginger beer, and as the empty bottle stood before me, I thought it would be a good means of hiding. No doubt the devil put this in my head, because he knew there was a man in Edinburgh who understood the devil's ways, and would find me out. But what," he asked, after a pause, "made you call for ginger beer when you entered? The words went to my very heart."

"Because," said I, "the devil induced you to allow

a neck to stick out. I suspected in an instant that the money was there."

"Strange, indeed!"

"And I was so amused with myself, that I called for a bottle, just as a playful way—for I do my business with good humour—of intimating to you that I knew your trick."

We had talked more than I am in the habit of doing generally. I took him, with the broken bottles and notes, up to the office.

"There," said I, to the Captain, "is the Bo'ness gentleman, and there is the money—all but fifty pounds—and there are the bottles where the money was secreted."

These were enigmas ; but when the Captain understood them, he did not know what to say, between a desire to laugh and some restraint he could not comprehend. ;

"Ah!" said he, at last, "M'Levy, we should have a pulpit here, where people might be taught by us, as preachers, that God has many ways of finding out the wicked."

The prisoner was sent on to Linlithgow, along with the notes and broken bottles, and afterwards sentenced to fourteen years. The Judge complimented me handsomely ; not so the offerers of the reward, for they never gave me a penny. The £25 went to the girls. I did not begrudge the gift ; and yet, somehow, though not fond of money, more than is necessary for my humble wants, I think I should have got a five-pound note to wet my throat with ginger beer when following up the devil.

The Happy Land.

DON'T fancy I am going to speak of the "happy land" of which Richard Weaver sings so well, through the medium of the hymn, so joyous with its "away and away" to where many of us, it is to be hoped, have mothers, and sisters, and brothers. Nor will the people of Edinburgh be ignorant of the meaning of the title of my present reminiscence. Yet many may not know the "happy land" I allude to—not other than that large tenement in Leith Wynd, not far from the top, composed of a number of houses, led to by a long stone-stair,—the steps of which are worn into inequalities by the myriads of feet, tiny and large, light and heavy, steady and unsteady, which have passed up and down so long,—and divided into numerous dens, inhabited by thieves, robbers, thimblers, pickpockets, abandoned women, drunken destitutes, and here and there chance-begotten brats, squalling with hunger, or lying dead for days after they should have been buried. Well do I know every hole and corner of it, and so well that I shrink from a description of it, which at the best would be only a mass of blotches—not a picture, only coarse cloth and

dingy paint. Some people may have a notion of a "stew;" but the Happy Land is a great conglomeration of stews; so that the scenes, the doings, the swearings, the fights, the drunken brawls, the prostitutions, the blasphemies, the cruelties, and the robberies, which you figure of various houses removed by distance, are often all going on at the same moment, and with no more screens or barriers to hide the shame than thin lath walls and crazy doors—often, indeed, without any division at all. Yet all the people who inhabit this accumulation of dens understand each other. It is a world by itself, with no law ruling except force, no compunction except fear, no religion except that of the devil. They laugh at every thing that is fair and good, and transfer the natural feelings due to these over to evil; and, then, there's not a whit of effort in all this—to them it is perfectly natural. And I'm not sure if they do not consider the outside world over in the New Town a very tame affair, not worth living for.

In the third storey of the huge tenement, as you go into the right, there was a section of this little world, occupied by a young, stout, and fair hizzy, called Mary Wood, about twenty years of age. She was well known, not only in the Happy Land itself, but in Princes Street, where she was often seen walking as demurely under her fashionable bonnet as any of the young ladies from the houses in the New Town. Her section was very limited, consisting only of a small room, containing a bed, a table, a chair or two, a looking-glass of course, and a trunk

for her fineries, not forgetting "the red saucer." Immediately off this room was a closet, with no means of light, excepting one or two auger-bored holes, intended for gratifying any one taking up his station there by a look of what was going on in the room. These two apartments formed the castle of this enchantress, and the scene of a plot—not uncommon then—entered into by Mary and two strong ruffians of the names of George Renny and James Stevenson. The conspiracy was not so complicated as it was bold, dastardly, and cruel. Mary was to go out in her most seductive dress, and endeavour to entice in any gentleman likely to have a gold watch and money on him, and when she had succeeded in this, the two bullies, as they have been called, who, on a signal of her approach, had previously betaken themselves to the closet, were, when they considered all matters ripe, to rush out, seize the victim, and rob him.

This conspiracy, I had reason to suspect, had been carried on for some time with considerable success, and without our being applied to by the sufferers, many of whom were anxious to conceal their imprudence, and consented rather to lose their watches than expose their character. One night, the 9th of August 1849, our damsel was trying her fortune in Princes Street, while Renny and Stevenson were waiting, ready for their work when the time came. About twelve o'clock, she fascinated a likely "cully," or "colley," as the Scotch women say, with perhaps more humour than they wot of—a gentleman of the name of W——n, from London, who,

little knowing the character of the "happy land" to which he was destined, agreed to accompany her home. In a short time she had him all safe. Mistress of her trade, she was all blandishments to the happy Englishman, who, after all deductions for the squalor of her dwelling, could probably not have picked up a woman better qualified to please; but no sooner had he made preparations for departing, than the gentlemen of the dark closet rushed out upon him, laid him on his back, took from him a gold watch and chain, with fifteen sovereigns, and everything they could rifle; but, most unkind cut of all, the enchantress Mary helped them in their work of robbery, pulling off his fingers two valuable rings, which, a little before, she was praising to him with much admiration. I afterwards ascertained that the struggle was a desperate one, no doubt owing to the value of the property inflaming the one party, and nerving the other.

When allowed to depart, Mr W——n, much injured, and greatly alarmed, rushed down-stairs, almost breaking his neck in the descent, and went direct to the Police-office, where he gave a rapid account of the transaction, as well as a description of the parties. The case was one for me, and, about one o'clock, I was roused out of my sleep to catch these robbers. I recollect I was much wearied that day, and was in no humour for a midnight hunt, exhausted, as I had been, by late hours. I was, notwithstanding, dressed in a moment. I went first to see the gentleman, who seemed inclined to lose

more time by a description. I told him it was of no use, for that I knew the men perfectly. I had, indeed, seen them in company with Mary, who was familiar to me, and knew that they were her special retainers. The difficulty was to know where to find them, and get hold of the money, but I had confidence enough to tell Mr W——n that, if he would remain for a time in the office, I would bring the robbers to him. As for Mary, she had been taken up about the time I was called, but she had no money on her—the whole having been carried off by the robbers.

My task was arduous enough, for, although I knew their haunts, the places were not few, and would likely be avoided. I tried many without success, and was beginning to repent of my promise to Mr W——n, when I bethought me of a lodging-house at the West Port, occupied by a man of the name of Goodall. Thither I went. It was now about four in the morning, and having rapped, I was answered from behind the door by Goodall.

"Did two men come to your house this morning to lodge?" was my question.

"Yes," replied he, as he opened the door, probably knowing my voice.

"Well, I think they will be the men I want."

"But you're too soon," said Goodall, with a kind of laugh.

"Why?"

"Because it's only *four*, and they told me they were not to be wakened till five.

"That's a pity," said I; "but they will excuse *you*, and as for me, why they set me up at one, so I'm quits with them there. Shew me into their room."

I then beckoned the constable I had with me; and, preceded by Goodall, we were led to the side of the bed where lay the very men. I held Goodall's candle over their faces, and saw the effect I produced upon them—not that I augured from their surprise and dismay that they had done this deed, for I knew I was a terror to them at any time, but that I liked to enjoy my advantage.

"Get up," said I, "and go with me;" so sure of my men, that I did not even put them to the question.

And then broke in Goodall again with his humour—

"Ye see, you're not to blame me, my lads. It's only four, but Mr M'Levy says you were the cause of wakening him at one."

These men, who, four hours before, were throttling an innocent gentleman, were now dumb and docile; nay, they were simple,—for Renny, when getting out of bed, let slip—

"You'll not find either the watch or the sovereigns on me, anyhow."

Stevenson looked daggers at his friend.

"Why, man," said I, "Renny has done no more than I have made others do, by simply holding my peace; and he has done you no harm either by his mistake, for I can prove that you and Mary Wood robbed the gentleman four hours ago in the Happy Land."

"D—n the Happy Land," cried Stevenson, still enraged at his friend. "I never found any happiness in it, nor money either."

"D—n the Happy Land!" said Goodall, again wishing to be witty. "Lord save us! that's a terrible oath against a place we are all doing our best to get to. The very children sing, 'Come to yon happy land,' and you curse it."

I could scarcely keep from laughing, even in the midst of my impatience, at the keeper of this famous resort for all moral waifs thus reproving, by his mirth, his children,—so many of whom came from that Happy Land. Of course he had reason to bless it, and did it in his own way of humour—a habit of his.

"Quick," said I, as the putting on of the clothes proceeded slowly. "Mr W——n is waiting for you."

Worst shock yet, for such men are great moral cowards; and to confront the gentleman they treated so cruelly was so complete a turn, within so short a time, that my words stunned them.

In a quarter of an hour after they were standing before Mr W——n.

"Are these your men?" said I.

"Ah, I know them too well," said the gentleman. "And I wish I had never seen them; for I am a stranger here,—all my money is gone, and I know not what to do."

"We have none of your money," replied Stevenson, growlingly.

No doubt secreted somewhere. I forgot to say I searched them at Goodall's.

"And it is gone, then?" said Mr W——n, despondingly.

"No," said I; "not all. The money may not be recovered easily, but I will get the watch."

"Well, I shall live in hope," said Mr W——n, as he went away, leaving his address.

They were now locked up, and the next question for me was how to get the property.

On the following and subsequent days every effort was made. There had been no pledging or selling to the brokers, and I was at fault; but I had succeeded in so many cases where there appeared no hope, that I persevered. As a last resource, I had a young fellow confined for a short time along with the prisoners, who I knew was on terms of intimacy with them. All thieves and robbers "split" when in trouble; confidences are the weakness of criminal natures; yet, perhaps, I would not have got this information if he had not expected I would favour him. He told me that the two men, after having committed the robbery, flew along St Mary's Wynd, and never stopped till they got to the Dumbiedykes;—that there they placed the watch, sovereigns, and rings into a hole of the old dyke, where they made a secret mark, only known to themselves.

I was now as much at fault as ever. The men remained obdurate, and they alone knew the secret. I would, however, try the old dyke; and while I was busy

peering into the crevices, who should come up to me but one of the park-keepers ?

"I think," said he, "I know what you are looking for. You're Mr M'Levy ?"

"Yes," said I. "I am searching for a stolen watch and sovereigns ; can you help me to the place ?"

"I can, at least, help you to the watch," said he, as he held out the glittering object, with its gold chain and seals. "I found it here," he continued, going a few steps along. "The rainy night must have washed away the earth from the top of the dyke, for I found it nearly exposed in a hole not deep enough to escape observation."

And so the watch was recovered, but no more. The sovereigns were never found, and are likely in that dyke to this day, for all the three prisoners were shortly after transported for seven years.

The Handcuffs.

IN the year 1836, which was in Mr Stewart's time, information came to the office from the quiet town of Peebles,—so quiet, that Lord Cockburn says, in some of his books, "if you want to make a public proclamation anywhere so as not to be heard, go to Peebles, and it is buried for ever,"—that the house of a gentleman there had been robbed on a Wednesday night, and a number of articles, among which were a new greatcoat and a pair of Wellington boots, had been carried off. However deaf Peebles may be to a proclamation, it certainly—at least among the high authorities there—cannot be charged with insensibility to the breach of the laws, for a capital account it was which we got, embracing all the particulars, the articles carried off, and the description of a person, once a servant in the family, who was suspected of the breaking-in and the abstraction. There was only one want—not a hint of the direction the burglar had taken,—whether east, west, north, or south; only that he was off somewhere.

The affair was entrusted to me, but I wanted that indispensable condition of hope—the certainty, or at

least probable suspicion, of his being in Edinburgh. However, I transferred the image of the fellow to my mind's eye by that inside photography I have a knack in. I never knew where the light comes from, but the image, if once there, does not need any "gall" of anger to fix it, rather only the honey of love. I had him set up in that inside-plate accordingly, as large and living as life:—six feet two—dark complexion—leg-of-mutton whiskers—drooping nose, as if too heavy for the forehead to sustain—small mouth under the same, sadly oppressed by the said nose, and as if afraid to open under so formidable an incumbrance—something of a squint, under a bush of eyebrow. As for clothes, uncertain, unless he exchanged in the morning, and put on the new greatcoat and boots, which, for the sake of completing the picture, I supposed he had done; and so I had my man's image safe in my mind's keeping. But where was the original? I have always had a yearning for those comparisons, however odious, between the mind-sun-picture and the real walking, breathing piece of humanity itself, however low and degraded; but the desire is fruitless without the one of the two sides of the comparison.

Two days passed without issue, and it was now Saturday night. I had had the image all right for twice twenty-four hours, but where was the lantern? Even that would shew me the honest man in the dark,—more difficult then to be seen, though present, than at noonday, as in the old case; nor have we more of that

class now than then, I suspect. I wanted my "idea," and it was not a case exactly of time; another day might as well pass without diminishing my chance of success. I would wait for my "idea," just as the poets do, I'm told—not considering themselves bound to work unless they're sure they have it, though some tell me that many try without it. Better they than I, for I never did any good without mine. It might come by chance. True, what have I not done, in my small way, by chance? Ay, but Chance never smiled on me unless I poked her (is she female?) some way; so that my "notion," after all, has been, in the getting of it, my own work, only perfected by a higher hand.

In this dubious, stupid kind of state I left the office, intending to go home; nor, before I came to Toddrick's Wynd, had I any intention to poke up my favourite goddess; but, just as I was passing by the entry, my right leg I found inclined to the south, and the one leg carried the other, and both my head, which, so drowsy was I, seemed to be quite guiltless of the change from my right line home to bed down that same close. Habit, I fear, had some part in this wilfulness of my lower members. A Mrs Taylor lived down the wynd, a famous keeper of a half-respectable kind of lodging-house—a species of pool whence I have drawn many a kipper, as well as full-roed fish, newly run, with no other bait than a sombre "March-dun," or sober "May-bee"—and with a lazy floating line, too, without a bit of har-

ling or whipping. Yes, I had been so often there, that I might be said to have formed a habit of going, for that kind of comfort without which I do not think I could live in this world of man-and-woman wickedness.

Having opened the good woman's door,—I call her good, because, if her lodgers were often only half-respectable, she was wholly so, at least in my eyes,—I entered with my usual familiarity, and sat down with her by the fire. I have said I wanted comfort, and so I began my old way of asking for it.

“Any lodgers just now?”

“Ay, a man frae the country. He came early in the morning, and got his breakfast. He is to sleep a' night at ony rate.”

“What like is he?” I inquired.

“A perfect Anak amang the Philistines! Ye're a guid buirdly man yersel'; but, my faith! ye're naething to him. The man, I fancy, is guid eneugh; but I wadna redd you meddle him—I mean if he were ane ye had ony care for—without at least twa assistants.”

“Can you describe his face?” said I, really in the expectation of getting nothing.

“Indeed, no,” replied the good woman, “for it's lang since I gave up spying into men's faces, whaur I never, in my best days, saw muckle to look at, but a nose amang a bush o' hair, and twa een aye glowerin' at us women-folk; but, besides, my niece Jenny gave him his breakfast, and I've scarcely seen him;—but, Guid save

us ! here he is," she added, as she heard a heavy foot in the lobby.

And so, to be sure, the big lodger entered, very confidently, drew in a chair, and sat down. I threw my eye over him on the instant, not of course very inquiringly,—for, indeed, as I have already said, a glance generally does my purpose,—and there was the nose, so much too heavy-like for the forehead, and the mouth under the incumbrance of the nose, the leg-of-mutton whiskers, and the squint, all so perfect, that my mind-sun-image leapt within me, as if it would be out to its original, there to lose itself in flesh and blood. Enough for the justification of my modesty and simplicity, and taking-it-soft method—nay, I'm not sure if the man had observed whether I looked at him at all or not, and, as for the future of our companionship, I did not need. I had something else to do—I had caught my "idea," as well as its original ; but then the one was a fancy, and the other a "Tartar."

The conversation was meanwhile leading to trades and occupations ; how it began I cannot tell ; but all of a sudden it came into my head to say to my man, "You'll be a hawker, no doubt?"

"Are *you* a hawker?" replied he, rather in a surly tone, as if offended.

"Yes," said I.

"I thought as much," growled he, "for we think everybody we meet should be like ourselves."

"And yet we don't find that always," I rejoined, softly. "But I could wish every man were as well to do as I am, for I have six men on the road, and a horse seldom off it."

"The horse will be for yourself?" said he.

"Yes; I could not get on without my Rory; for, you know, I have all those six fellows to look after."

"Why, don't they return at the end of their rounds?" inquired he, again.

"Yes, if they are able."

"And what's to disable them?"

"The fiend drink," said I, somewhat sorrowfully. "They get into wayside publicas, and sometimes lie for days—all the while my goods are being stolen."

"And what do you do with them when you find them in this state?" said he. "Turn them off, I fancy, and get more sober men?"

"No: were I to do that, I would be changing every week, and with no chance of getting better ones; for if they don't drink, they cheat, and a drunken honest pedlar is better than a sober dishonest one."

"Why, then, you must just let them sleep off their drink," said he, "and trust to a sober run to make up for the drunken one?"

"No; I hasten to the spot, and having caught the fellow as he begins to look clear, I handcuff him, and bring him into town with the pack on his back. There I relieve him, and keep him without wages as a punishment, just as long as I think necessary; and when I

think he is determined to do better, I give him his pack again, and begin his pay."

"And is this strange punishment often necessary?" said he, as his curiosity became excited by my novel method.

"Why," replied I, "no longer ago than Wednesday morning, I was obliged to set off for Peebles, where one of my chaps was lying drunk—and I think I met you" (a chance thrust) "coming out of the town with a bundle, and that was just the very reason that made me suppose you were one of our order."

"Well," said he, thus taken suddenly, "I did leave Peebles on Wednesday morning with a bundle, but I am not a hawker."

"No offence; it is a good honest calling. Once upon a time a great part of the country trade of Scotland was done by hawking, and a pedlar was often worth thousands."

"May be," said my giant; "but if I were one of your men I would be very drunk indeed if you could handcuff me."

"Perhaps I wouldn't try one of your size and mettle," said I, "unless you were very drunk."

"And then what the use?" rejoined he. "Drunkenness is a very good handcuffing itself, though I never saw the instrument I have heard so much of, nor would I like to deserve it. But, man," he continued, after a pause, during which he perhaps thought he did deserve the application of the check, and maybe shook a little at

the prospect of feeling it, "what are handcuffs—what like are they? Could a strong man not snap them, and then snap his fingers at the officer?"

"A very simple thing," said I, drawing out a good specimen, which I cherish as my stock-in-trade, maybe with no less affection than Simpson did his bit of hemp, though, in point of respectability, I don't want the two things to be compared. "Here is my wrist-curb for my disobedient pedlars."

I even put the thing into his hands.

"A very simple affair," said he, with a sneer; "but I am d——d if that would hold me, unless it be applied in some queer way."

"Well," said I, "I never saw one of my men break it or get loose."

"How *do* you apply it?" said he, looking curiously.

"Why, just this way."

And in, I hope, my usual kindly manner, I put his right hand into the kench.

"How is that to bind a man?" he again sneered.

"Not finished yet, my dear fellow. I bind the other end to my *left* hand thus, and there you are."

"Well, rather kittle, I admit," said he, looking not quite comfortable-like; "and I would just as soon be out of it."

"But you have not tried it yet," continued I. "Sometimes a man is unfortunate, and while we are yet innocent and free we might be nothing the worse for preparing for an eventual future, you know. Just suppose that I

were not a hawker, but one of those very uncomfortable men called detective officers, and that I wanted to walk you up to the Cross. Let us see—come along, now; quietly, my good fellow—this way”—leading him out—“so, this way—so,” till I got him to the outer door leading to the close. “So,—how quiet you are! You don’t resist. Why don’t you? So”—up the close a bit—“you said you could snap it, or get loose, and then snap your fingers, and yet don’t you see?”

Even all this time my man thought it play, but whether it was that suspicion seized him, or he merely wanted to try the game, I cannot say, but he began in earnest to struggle; but it would not do. I held him firm by the right arm, and whenever he used the left, I quelled him easily by *my* right.

“Enough of it,” said he, at last.

“Not just yet,” said I, with an *impressive* softness. “I want to see if I can take you up as far as the Police-office.”

“The Police-office!” he roared, with a tremendous growl. “The Police-office and be d——d! Why there?”

“To be searched and examined,” I replied, still keeping my temper, “and perhaps committed for breaking open your old master’s house at Peebles, on Wednesday night, and stealing, among other things, the greatcoat that’s now on you, and, I believe, also the boots now on your feet.”

I felt his right arm fall as if palsied. I could see by the lamp at the head of the close that he was as pale as

pipeclay. There was not so much pith in this big man as would have sufficed to break a rosin-end of good hemp, nor did he speak a single word. All I heard was his labouring breath, as he heaved his strong ribs, so that he might give room for the play of his heart. I was now safe from an attempt at escape, for we had reached the top of the wynd, where the man in charge of the street immediately came up to my assistance. But somehow I got filled with the demon of pride. I had an ambition to walk him up alone, and though, no doubt, the appearance of the policeman might have contributed to the continuance of my now easy victory, yet I verily believed he was still incapable—such is often the effect of that striking down of the confidence and courage of a conscious criminal, by a calm announcement, coupled with a mere strap of leather—of offering any resistance.

And thus I took him to the room of the lieutenant, where Captain Stewart happened to be at the time; and here it was he first found voice.

“I am brought here by a hawker. I am not one of his pedlars, and no more drunk than he is himself,” he cried, his mind suggesting some faint hope which, for a moment, blinded him to his fate.

“Why, M’Levy, you have caught our Peebles friend,” said the captain, laughing, but wondering, too, at my new vocation of pedlar; “there’s the height, the nose, and all the rest, as large as life. Where, in the name of all that’s wonderful, did you find him?”

"Stranger still," said the lieutenant, "where's your assistant? You couldn't handcuff that giant alone?"

"He's handcuffed, anyhow," said I; "call some of the men, for I want to be relieved."

He was, in a few minutes, safer still—locked up for the night.

Don't, I beg of you, suppose that we are such ill-disposed and gloomy beings, who frequent this outer chamber or entrance to the dempster's hall, that we never have the luxury of a little quiet mirth. Bless you all, except, of course, those who will not come quietly up to see us, we are quite humane in our way—no hyæna's laugh or crocodile's tears amongst our fraternity. We can even enjoy such mishaps as the discomfiture of those who try to put mirth to flight in many a domestic heaven; and can even afford, without detriment to our hearts, to be merry over grief, when it is the grief which follows God's behest against the disturbers of man's rest. Then it is only making the balance even, for how glorious do our enemies, whom we yet treat as friends, get in their midnight triumphs of pilfering, robbing, and murdering their fellow-creatures, who not only never injured them, but often served them well, but, alas! not wisely. So I need no apology for that heartily-passed half-hour, during which I explained the capture of my man—one of my six pedlars; but withal, it was nothing but the confidence my superiors had in me that prevented them doubting, not only the means I employed in getting the wrist of this truly big thief into the strap, but my ability

to bring so great a giant all so quietly from Toddrick's Wynd to the Cross of Edinburgh. I was at least comforted, even by Widow Taylor, at whose house I had sought consolation for my two days' disappointment, and went home to bed without a touch of compunction.

Next day, my pedlar, with his pack—collected from several brokers—along with him, was sent to Peebles, where the Sheriff and Jury gave him nine months, to confirm him in a resolution, no doubt formed when he pled guilty, that he would not, even at the bidding of a hawker, try on a pair of handcuffs again.

The Red Ribbons.

ONE day, also in Captain Stewart's time, a gentleman came to the head-office late in the afternoon. There were several detective officers present, ready for any emergency. He was much excited ; more so, indeed, than was consistent with the principal cause of his application, but not more than might have been expected from the circumstances attending it. He stated, that in the morning of that same day he and his wife had left his house in Haddington Place (a flat) to go to the country, where they intended to sojourn for some time. Their children, and the care of their house, they left to the sympathy and trustworthiness of the servant, a young girl, in whom, for her gentleness, religious feelings, and general good conduct, they had the most unbounded confidence. For some reason which, I think, he did not state, he returned himself in the afternoon, and, to his horror, found the door locked, and no trace of the key. He knocked, but all that he heard was the weeping and wailing of his children, all very young, and one, indeed, only newly weaned. Even amidst this very eloquent evidence of something being wrong, he could not at the

instant, nor for some time, suspect any foul play on the part of the gentle Helen, but after waiting longer, he heard one of the young creatures sobbing behind the door, and crying out that Nelly had gone out long ago, and that they had got nothing to eat. He was now satisfied that there was something very wrong, and, hurrying for a blacksmith, he got the lock picked, and the door opened.

On getting inside he observed an extraordinary scene. The newly-weaned child had been laid in the cradle, where it had wept itself nearly blind—its eyes swelled, and its face all wet with its tears. Another was lying on the ground, in a perfect agony of fear; a third was sitting looking wistfully out of the window, which it could not open, and where it had been knocking and crying to the passers-by for hours, without having been responded to; and two others were running backwards and forwards, not knowing for what object, but just in obedience to an impulse that would not permit of rest. But what was more strange, they had, from sheer hunger, got hold of a loaf of bread, no doubt to eat it ravenously; and yet there was the loaf untouched, as if the desire to eat had been overcome by their fear, so that, while the stomach craved, the muscles of the mouth disobeyed even this primary instinct. But he had not yet seen everything. On examining further, under the suspicions excited by the sobbing, weeping words of the poor young creatures, he found that the bureau where he kept his money had been broken up with a poker, and sixteen

pounds extracted. He now understood everything too well, and having got a neighbour to attend to the children, and give them something to eat, he hurried up to the office. Captain Stewart having heard the strange story, questioned the gentleman in the ordinary way.

“What like is the girl?”

“Rather pretty, about nineteen years of age, dark eyes, aquiline nose, small mouth, and a mole on the left cheek.”

“How was she dressed?”

A more difficult question—rather befitting the gentleman's wife. He could scarcely answer.

“This beats me,” replied he; “but I have a notion she has red ribbons on a white straw bonnet. I could not say more; and if it had not been that Mrs B—— had remarked to me, on the previous day, that Nelly was a little too gaudy (and consequently she probably thought giddy) about the head, with these glaring red ribbons of hers, I would not have been able to condescend even upon this particular, so little attention do I pay to these things.”

Captain Stewart noted, and several officers were sent right and left, while I sat meditating a little. “All good-enough marks these,” I thought; “but the girl may have got out of the town.” Going up to the gentleman, I whispered (for I wanted the answer to myself—not that I lacked faith in Captain Stewart's tact, but that sometimes I found it more convenient to take my own way, and report afterwards)—

“Is she an Edinburgh girl?”

"No," said he, in a similar under-tone, from probably mere sympathy.

"Then where does she come from?" was my next question.

"Glasgow."

"You will find me turn up, perhaps, in the morning," I said to the Captain, who had confidence in me, and did not wish to lay open my intentions, whatever they were, to those alongside.

"Very well," cried he. "I only hope you will catch the mole."

"I have caught as deep a mouldiewart before," said I, as I prepared to depart.

But I wanted an answer to another question.

"Have you any reason," I inquired further, "to suppose that the girl suspects you know her friends' whereabouts in Glasgow?"

"No," replied the gentleman; "because I never knew that, neither does my wife."

"Of what bank were the notes?"

"British Linen Company."

"Enough;" and with an idea in my head—a very easy to be found one, and no other than that most animals, whether moles, or mud-larks, or men, (and far more women,) generally, when pursued, seek their old holes and lurking-places—I set out. I knew that the afternoon coach to Glasgow would leave about this very hour, and expected to be all in good time; but on arriving at the office, I found that it had left only a few minutes

before. I knew that I could not make up with it on foot, and therefore hailed a cab. In the meanwhile, and while it was coming up, I made out, from a few rapid questions at the clerk,—whether there were any young girls among the passengers, what like they were, and so forth,—that there was one coming near my mark, not of the mole, or of the dark eyes, or aquiline nose, but of the red ribbons.

“I can’t be wrong about the red ribbons on the bonnet,” said he; “only I think there are two—one inside and one out.”

“Did any of the girls change a note?”

“Yes, one of them.”

“Let me see it.”

“British Linen Company,” said the clerk, handing it to me.

“The changer inside or out?” said I.

“Outside.”

“All right,” said I; and, mounting the cab—“Now, cabby, you are to overtake the Glasgow coach *at any rate*, if you should break your horse’s wind, your own neck, and my collar-bone.”

And the man, knowing very well who I was, set out at a gallop at once, and so furious a one, that it almost put me out of a study—no other than the examination of all the bonnets I could see in Princes Street; for I had, for the nonce, become a student of the *beau monde*, at least of the *beaux* of the world of bonnets;—in short, I was curious to know the proportion, in a hun-

dred colours, of my new favourite one of red ;—and so furious, moreover, was his driving, that the eyes of the whole street were turned upon us—those under the shadow of red ribbons being, fortunately, unconscious that I was doing all I could to reduce the renown of their favourite colour. We soon passed the Hay-weights, and were fairly on the high-road to Corstorphine. Nor was it long till I could see the red badge waving very proudly on the top of the coach, just as the clerk had told me ; nay, it even appeared to me that the cabman's ambition was roused by the pennant, for he drove harder and harder, till at length the coach stopped, no doubt in obedience to the conviction of the driver that he was to get a too-late fare.

“ Make haste,” cried the coachman, as I got alongside and was getting out. “ We have room for one, but no time for parley,”

“ Room for one,” said I, as I looked up into the face of the gentle Nelly, where the mole was, and where there rose upon the instant something else, first a blush as red as her ribbons, and then a pallor as white as the bonnet. “ Rather think you've got one too many.”

“ No, the Act of Parliament says we are entitled to carry——”

“ Not that girl with the red ribbons,” said I, producing my baton. “ You come down, Miss Helen N——.” (I forgot to say I got her name from her master.) “ I want to give you a ride back to town.”

She wouldn't though, and seemed inclined to resist to

the uttermost ; but the passengers seeing she couldn't, for want of will, come of herself, took her by force, and handed her down to me, who thanked them for so pretty a charge. Having got her into the cab, I next got out her box, and, placing that alongside of her, I drove her direct up to the office. Captain Stewart, recollecting the red ribbons and the mole, and casting his eyes over her head-gear and the face, smiled in spite of his usual gravity. We soon found that the gentle Nelly wanted to prove as untrue to us as she had been to her master, for she absolutely swore that she was not only not guilty of doing anything against the laws, but that she was not even Helen N—— at all, notwithstanding of the ribbons, the mole, and the black eyes, and the really fine aquiline nose ; so it did actually seem necessary that we should prove, to her own satisfaction, who she was. After searching her, we thought that the exact sum of £15, 14s. found on her—which, with the 6s. for her fare, made up the £16—would have removed her scepticism as to her identity ; but even this was insufficient, and the resolute Nelly might have remained in her utter ignorance of herself till doomsday, had it not been that Mr B—— called at the office, and satisfied her that she was herself. And not only was she then convinced, but she had reason not to relapse again into her ignorance ; for, during the six months she was doomed to remain in prison, she was so much by herself, with seldom another to confound her notions of who she was, that she could not have avoided herself, however willing.

The Holy Land.

THIS large building, so christened by Scottish humour,—a little grim in its profanity,—still presents its dark front to Leith Wynd, on the same line with the Happy Land. At the time of which I speak, it was occupied chiefly by great masses of profligate women, some in rags, some in silks, mixed up in grotesque confusion. However well I know all its dark apartments and holes, it is beyond my power to describe it in such a way as to be followed with satisfaction by my readers. The middle stair led, and leads still, to a number of flats—each of these divided into dwellings, some of only one room, and some of two or three, and the size generally indicating the proportion of inmates, for they were literally crammed with human beings. They were almost all appropriated to the same purpose,—prostitution, with its accompaniment, intoxication. Among them were what might be called establishments, got up in a very simple way, and with no more capital than served to purchase a few old beds, chairs, and fir tables. One worn-out unfortunate, who chanced to outlive the limited term without becoming a cinder-wife, would contrive to get these articles,

often through the medium of some man with a few pounds to spare, and who would have a share in the earnings, and thus "set up." Presently the rooms, seldom exceeding three, were filled with the young cast-aways with which Edinburgh was filled, and who were always on the outlook for shelter, taking along with them their stock-in-trade, often enough only the flimsy rags on their bodies. Sometimes there was no mistress, the affair being a joint partnership among three or four of these young women—clubbing for the few articles of furniture, and each earning her own livelihood, and spending what she earned in her own way—the usual routine being bread and butter, eggs, tea, and whisky.

Neither of these kinds of places of business, where the proprietor or partners lived and got drunk on the premises, was without the indispensable bully, or "fancy man"—that very worst example of degraded human nature,—always a thief outside, and a sorer on poor female wretches within—acting at one time the cruel hawk, preying upon small game, and at another the "dirty Andrew," living on the droppings of gulls as they fly over him. On entering these places, I have found him lounging among the women, and, as if ashamed, slinking away into some dark hole, scowling and looking back with his swollen eyes. He knows his degradation well enough, but the shame is changed into revenge against every one who can yet hold up his head, a man among men; and, strange enough, he and his kind are the wretches upon whom these women, often pretty young

creatures, throw away their affections,—or rather, I would say, from my experience, that there is scarcely an unfortunate to be found anywhere, even in the genteel palaces of sin, where they are seldom let out, who does not have her low secret “fancy,” all the while the gay youths who go about her think they are the objects of her affections. Wherever, in short, these creatures are, there are the indispensable carrion-crows.

Not that they keep these hangers-on always for robbery, for often enough I have found concerted cases among two or three or four women, all leagued for the systematic plunder of the simpletons who are enchanted into their dens. On the second flat of the Holy Land, I had occasion to be acquainted with a nest of female conspirators of this kind, who executed their business without the assistance of a bully. Their names were Jean Mullins, Elizabeth Thomson, and Eliza Graham; and their plan owed its principal feature to the condition that they should so work their treble-bagged net that when the fish was secure they should be all in at the hauling. But how was this to be managed? It required some cleverness both of mind and body. Their rooms looked to the street, and when one took in her “cully” she made a signal by hanging a white cloth out at the window, so that the other two might come in and assist. If one could act best alone, the two others might retire to the other room; but when it was necessary to dose the victim with drink, it was advantageous that they should all three be at the work. That they had

force, and adroitness to use it in self-defence, is evident enough ; for they knew that there are men who, under the rage of being so deceived and robbed, can be very dangerous ; but they laid their account with taking advantage of their united strength in attack, when, perhaps, the individual, though intoxicated, was wary and resistive.

No one who saw these girls could have doubted their formidableness, not from their strength alone, for they were only lithe and active. Their extreme youth was a recommendation to those who were likely to fall in with their wishes ; and the good looks of at least two of them—Thomson and Graham—might promise well for the filling of the net. One night in December 1847,—a very cold one, with snow on the ground,—Mullins got into her toils a gentleman of the name of H—ll, from Manchester ; and the good soul sighed ardently for his translation to the Holy Land, not that she hinted she had any intention of taking him to a place the name of which would, to a Scotchman, have given rise to suspicions, and even to an Englishman might have suggested some contrast. No, she wanted him only to her lodging, which was all her own, not a “house” where a bully might murder a cully, but a quiet kind of retreat, with nobody near but a good old woman, so discreet as to wink at ways of pleasantness which she herself had enjoyed. Mr H—ll was tempted, and went along with the siren.

And to that holy of holies she led him. Thomson and Graham, the moment they heard her coming in, retired

to the farther room, leaving a fine glowing fire to welcome the stranger. How kind in the good old lady to have that fire in that cold night, to thaw their cold limbs, and be so propitious to love! After remaining for some time, Jean was satisfied that Mr H—ll would not drink. He was a *temperate* man, and resisted all liquors which tended to steal away the reason, and therefore she must act upon her own hook. That she did pretty effectually, if we might judge from his starting up in a terrible consternation and bawling out—

“You wretch, you have taken from me a £50 Bank of England note.”

“You’re a liar,” cried Mullins; “you have lost it somewhere else.”

“I deny it,” rejoined the temperate gentleman. “I made sure by feeling for it at the foot of the stair before I came up to this door.”

“Then you must have lost it on the stair,” said she. “We were passed by two women, one of whom you pulled by the gown.”

“Yes, but I could swear it wasn’t she,” he cried again.

“And what care I for your oath? See, here’s a witness,” she cried, as Eliza Graham opened the door, coming out of the inner room.

“Eliza,” asked Mullins, “did you come up the outer stair a little ago, and go into your room by the lobby?”

“Yes,” was the confident answer.

“And wasn’t you at the foot of the stair when we came in?”

"Yes," with equal confidence.

"And didn't you see that thief, Bess Collins, who lives above us, come down the stair after we went up?"

"Yes," repeated the vixen, "and what's a great deal more, she told me she had got a haul of a £50 note out of Mullins' cully."

And so tickled was Jean with the sharpness of Graham, that she burst out into a derisive laugh, in which not only Eliza joined, but also Elizabeth, who had also rushed in to help the game.

The man stood thunderstruck, nor was he for a time able to speak.

"Come, then," said Mullins, thinking he was satisfied, "give me a dram for ill-using me, and we'll make up."

"Yes," said Eliza, "and I'll help you to catch Collins. Won't I be such a stunning witness against the thief!"

"Yes, and serve her right," broke in Elizabeth; "for it's she and the like of her who brings all us decent girls into bad character."

But H—ll was sharp enough—and the form of the house might have led an observant man to it: he rushed to get into the inner room to see what he suspected, that there was no opening from it to the lobby whereby Eliza Graham could have got in. But no sooner did he make the effort than the whole three laid hold of him.

"What to do there?" asked Elizabeth. "It is my private room; and why would you wish to go into the sleeping-place of a respectable female?"

"Not like a gentleman," said Eliza.

"Not a Scotchman, at least," said Mullins.

And so they really shamed him out of his purpose ; but Mr H—ll was not yet done. He bethought himself of the police, and ran back to the window of the room where he was, with the intention of pulling up the sash and bawling out.

"If you do, you villain, we'll tumble you out^e to send you after Collins," cried Mullins.

And H—ll got terrified at the young furies, who stood pulling and dragging him, with wild looks and flaming eyes, as if they would have torn him to pieces.

If H—ll had been a powerful man, he would at least have ended the personal struggle, but though not strong, he had still the small amount of courage necessary to enable him to make a stand against three young and even slender females ; so he began to lay about him in the hope of terrifying them, but they had been called upon before for a device to pacify an unruly victim.

"If you arn't quiet," said Mullins, "I have only to give three knocks on the door, and one will appear who will pacify you, so that you'll require no more peace in this world."

"A bully?" cried H—ll.

"Perhaps," answered Jean ; "and must not poor unprotected girls be defended against liars who say we rob when we don't?"

Mr H—ll had scarcely courage to meet a man of that stamp, and then he had no doubt that such a scoundrel

was not far off. He was, in short, nearly at his wit's end, and became quiet through a kind of despair.

"Just better walk out living, than be carried out dead," said Mullins.

"And go after Collins," added Elizabeth with a laugh.

What could the poor Englishman do amidst so much adroitness, boldness, and threatened cruelty? They had entirely mastered him, and there seemed only one chance for him. He was quite satisfied as to the manner of the transference of his note, and he knew the Edinburgh police was under good management; so he had presence of mind enough to appear to give in to the Collins theory. He would now repay them in their own Scotch money.

"And where will I find this woman Collins?" said he.

"Oh, everybody knows Collins," said Mullins, scarcely able now to restrain her satisfaction at getting quit of the police, their greatest terror; "she walks Princes' Street, from the Register Office to the foot of Hanover Street."

"And how is she dressed?" asked he again, but only as a device.

"Bonnet and green ribbons."

"And what like is she?"

"Ugly—turned-up nose, mouth like a post-office, and eyes like a cat."

Whereat the two laughed heartily.

"You can't miss her," said Mullins, again. "And if

you're good, I'll tell you a secret," added Eliza Graham.

"I will be good and quiet," said poor H—ll, so wise behind the hand.

"She has the £50 note in her muff; just go up to her, snatch the muff, and bolt to your inn, and you'll find it."

"Very well," said H—ll, taking his hat, and running out; hearing, as he went—

"And you *won't* give us a dram for what we have told you? scurvy beggar!"

No sooner had he got down-stairs, than he hastened to the Police-office, where he reported the robbery of £50, by Jean Mullins, and gave the description of the three women and the house. I took charge of the business, as being familiar with the Holy Land, as well as every one, mostly, of its inmates. After a conversation, in which Mr H—ll, still excited, wished to enlarge on all these particulars, and which I saw the necessity of cutting short, I went and apprehended the girls, searched the house without success, and found only some silver on their persons.

No more could be done that night. The note had been conveyed to a resetter, and tracing is always a delicate affair. In this instance, I was not without my idea. There was a person of the name of Thomas Brown, who kept an old metal shop on the ground storey of the Happy Land, and I had strong reasons for believing that he acted as resetter to the thieves of the various flats. About ten next morning I was on the alert, but

as the article I was in search of was so small and delicate an affair that it might have been put into a walnut, I saw I could have no chance of getting it if my shadow were cast in at that man's door. I knew, moreover, he would change it at a bank, and it was even profitable to give him time to get that effected. At ten, I ascertained—though not by calling—that he had gone out, and immediately set off to try if I could bring him within the verge of my eye. By going to the banks, any advantage thereby derived would be counterbalanced by my chance of falling in with Brown. I had a weary hunt that day. I could find him nowhere, and was about to give up that scent for my fortune at the various banks, when, at length, crossing the top of Leith Walk, I saw my metal merchant, accompanied by another person, coming direct up from Leith. A thought now struck me that, as it was not then uncommon for thieves to get their English notes changed at Leith, Brown and the other man had been down at the Bank of Scotland branch there, getting their object effected. I resolved, therefore, on letting Brown in the meantime go unnoticed, and take my chance of my “idea.” I hurried, accordingly, to Leith, and found, upon inquiry, that the note had been changed at the bank there only a few minutes before. I regretted that the number of the note was unknown to Mr H—ll, and therefore to me, but I got such a description of Brown's friend that I had no doubt of the man. I got the note from the agent on receipt, and hurried to Edinburgh.

I went and apprehended Brown, and afterwards got hold of his friend, whose name is not in my book. Never was a man more delighted than Mr H—ll when he learnt the fate of the note; but the business was not yet finished. There could be no doubt of the travels of the small bit of paper, or the hands through which it had gone; but there was a difficulty. The bank-agent could identify Brown's friend; but, he being unwilling, who was to identify a note with a number not condescended on, because not known? Then, unless we could identify it as stolen, the bank would reclaim it. Nay, we could not get at either the robbers or resellers. Nor would it have been any better though I had got the fifty Scotch notes on Brown or in his house, because, whatever the presumption might have been, the legal proof that they were the change of this £50 note would have been wanting.

I had only one remedy. I went to Brown's friend.

"Now," said I, "you're in for Botany Bay."

"You must prove me guilty," said he, doggedly, for no doubt he had a share in the spoil.

"Why," replied I, "it is an easy matter that. The bank-agent at Leith will swear to you as having changed the note at his office."

"Well, and what then?" not much moved as yet.

"What then? It will be demanded of you where you got the note."

"No man is bound to tell where he gets his money," he replied, doggedly.

"No, certainly, if he does not feel the force."

"What do you mean?" said he.

"Simply this," replied I, "that as every honest man is ready to admit where his money comes from, your refusal will be taken as a confession, and you will be held responsible for the robbery."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Sure; and what a fool you are! Suppose you got it from Brown, and say so, you are free. You are a mile off from the women, and no one will blame you for being made a dupe of Brown, but rather pity you. Besides, you are doing your duty to your country."

This last speech did the job—the man broke down.

"Well," he said, "I did get the note from Brown to change, and I changed it, getting a pound to myself."

"And you'll swear this?"

"Yes," replied he, stoutly.

"All right," said I. "You will be liberated after the trial, with no scath."

So this strange case terminated. All the three denizens of the Holy Land, along with the dealer in *hard* goods, were tried before the High Court. One of the girls—I think Eliza Graham—was let off, on what special grounds I don't remember. Mullins and Thomson as the robbers, and Brown as resetter, were all sentenced to seven years.

I have always considered this case as one of the narrowest that ever went through my hands. It had a good effect. The Holy Land did not become more holy,

—that was impossible,—but it became, for a time at least, more circumspect. A great many of the “Virgins of Jerusalem,” in their white robes of innocence, were at the trial, and they would take home to the Holy Land the fate of their sisters.

The Pewter Spoon.

ON going up to the office one day, about eighteen years ago, I was beckoned into his shop by Mr Davidson, hardware-merchant in the High Street. He seemed to have something to say to me of a very mysterious nature, for he took me ben to the back-shop, and shut the door. As for all this, and the long face, I pay generally little heed to such things, for I often find there is but small justification of the mystery inside the heads of long faces ; yet I will not say whether in this case I was disappointed or not in my expectations.

“Do you know,” says he, “there’s a circumstance occurs in my shop, almost every day, for which I cannot account ?”

“Silver disappearing from a till—a very common occurrence, according to my experience.”

“No,” said he ; “pewter is the metal.” Then, drawing closer to me—“There is a youngish woman, and rather interesting, with a mild, innocent look about her, who has come to the shop for a considerable period, always purchasing an article of the same kind.”

“You don’t sell picklocks ?”

"No, nor is it anything in that way. To be out with it at once, it is a pewter spoon; and not being over particular in noticing either purchaser or purchases, I doubt if I would have remarked particularly even three or four returns; but she has been here almost every other day for months, gets the one solitary spoon, lays down the money——"

"Which, of course, you examine?"

"Goes away; nay, I have known her to come twice in one day for the spoon. The only construction I have been able to put upon the mysterious transaction, and even that appears to myself absurd, is, that she is abstracting, one by one, silver spoons out of some plate-box, perhaps in her master's house, and replacing each silver spoon by a pewter one, to keep up the weight and apparent number."

"More ingenious than sound," said L.

"I confess that myself, and therefore am I thrown back to my wit's end."

"And not far to be thrown, in the direction of the nature of women," said L. "It is a far deeper affair than even your supposition."

"Well, I am dying to know."

"And will know before dying, but not till perhaps the day after to-morrow, that's Thursday—or Friday—it may even be Saturday; but know you will. Do you expect her to-day?"

"Scarcely, as she was here yesterday, Monday. Her double purchases are often on the Saturday."

"Not ill to account for *that*," said I. "You may look for her to-morrow, according to her routine. I am ambitious to make acquaintance with her, and shall walk opposite your shop to-morrow forenoon to wait for her. How is she dressed?"

"Always with the same shawl and bonnet."

"The ribbon is a good head-mark."

"Well, it is orange, the bonnet a chip, and the shawl a Paisley one, white, and a conch-shell border."

"A sharp colour orange," said I, curious as I am in these studies; "it even disturbs me, it is so penetrating. A woman like this could have nothing to do with green, and yet there is a verdancy about her; where, you won't guess."

"Where?"

"Why, in the absurdity of her repeating the dose upon you so often."

"Well, that very circumstance has induced me to think that she can have no improper purpose to serve."

"You don't know that vice has a weakness about it. We should always paint the devil with a limp."

"But, really," rejoined the good man, "that woman is so mild, so lamb-like, you know, so——"

"Yes, so like a fallen angel on the boards, that you can't suspect anything behind the scenes; just so. Well, you understand me—I am opposite your shop to-morrow forenoon?"

"Say twelve."

"Twelve; and you will be kind enough to come to

the door yourself, just as she goes out, so that I shall know my 'nymph of the pewter spoon.' "

Leaving the shop, after thus arranging my net, which is generally not over-wide in the meshes, and as far as possible from run-holes, I proceeded to my other business of the day, scarcely ever recurring to the pewter spoon ; nor do I think I would have been paying any compliment to other than very simple people if I had supposed that I saw further into the curious-enough-looking affair than ordinary observers might have done. Yet I was at my post on the subsequent day, pacing the north side of the High Street, on either side of the *Scotsman's* stair, and noticing, without looking at, my "hopefuls ;" many of whom, as they passed, gave a hitch to a side as they suddenly found themselves near me, and yet were ashamed to acknowledge their ingratitude to one who took so much care of them, when it would seem they could not take care of themselves. Among these was a *young* woman of the name of Maggy Blackwood, yet an *old* acquaintance. I saw Maggy eyeing me very keenly over about the Cross. It may be doubted whether I could detect the movements of a person's eye at that distance. I don't choose to make a question of it, yet I wouldn't advise any one, with the privilege remaining of wearing a silk neckcloth round his neck, to the exclusion of one of a coarser material and with longer ends than cambric bands, to place much confidence in my inability. I had, in short, no doubt Maggy was not only scanning me, but watching my movements. An ex-

traordinary girl that,—her sister as well, nearly of the same age; both acute, and fitted for any business calling for my help. They had in their yet short pilgrimage tried all the games in the outlaw side of human life,—prostitution, pocket-picking, copartnership as sleeping partners with thimblers and card-sharpers, the department of “fancy girls” to blackleg lovers of the fine arts (of nature),—yet they had even till now passed through all dangers almost unscathed; at least, if burnt once or twice, they contrived not only to cure the wound, but even to conceal the scar. In the midst of all this, too, they had kept up a Siamese-twinship of affection for each other, and a sympathy of mutual resistiveness to the causes that generally so soon bring the career of vicious and dissolute women to ruin and death, of so binding and sustaining a character that, if their lives had been consecrated by goodness, one could not have resisted an admiration for them. The secret of all their success—for success it is to pass through such fires—was cunning, a quality which, like some walking-sticks, does well when green for support or guard, but when dry and old breaks and runs up into you.

No sooner had Maggy got her eye upon me, and seen me turn, than she walked quickly on, as if bent on some very commendable business, but not before I had observed the orange ribbon on the white chip, and the conch-shell border. “Ah, my nymph of the pewter spoon!” She had thought I was to come between her and her porridge, and therefore the spoon would be of

no use. But was I to deprive Maggy of her spoon ? Scarcely so. I stepped over to the office, to save her amiable timidity from the withering effect of my surveillance. I could calculate what time she required to go into Mr Davidson's, and get her spoon, and be out again.

And so, to be sure, it turned out ; for, after waiting in the recess of the office-stair for only a few minutes, then going across the street, and placing myself a little deep in the mouth of a close, I had the satisfaction of seeing Maggy coming out of the shop, bowed out to the door by Mr Davidson, the light of whose face came over to me as a signal I didn't need. There was now little necessity for care, because Maggy was known on the streets ; nor, as it appeared, did she and her sister keep her lodgings a very great secret, though they had no desire for calls or respects of dear old friends. All she feared was my observing her enter the shop ; yet I saw the prudence of not throwing over her "orange" the shadow of my hemlock, and therefore kept at a distance, still following her, till she disappeared up a stair in the Grassmarket. I did not follow her into her room, because that step was not consistent with my mode of conducting such enterprises.

Bless you, that stair—with its flats looking out through their small eyes to the Grassmarket—and I were old friends ; we had secrets of each other, and never thought of being perfidious in our loves and confidences. Even that afternoon, when looking about for a stray beam of

evidence of any kind to assuage my thirst of light, as I went home to dinner, I felt an impulse that brought my finger softly on the shoulder of an old woman.

"Who have you living with you just now, Mrs W——?" inquired I.

"Twa lasses," was the reply.

"Their names?"

"Maggy and Bess Blackwood," she answered at once.

"Have they been long with you?"

"A gey while; maybe six months."

"And how do they live at present?" rejoined I, as I found her so very pleasant.

"Live! brawly, sir, aye plenty o' siller; very quiet, and never out till the gloaming."

"Any men going about them?"

"Seldom ane; they're quite reformed since I kenned them; they even let in a missionary at times, wi' a gey brown black coat, and a gey yellow white cravat, and after he gaes awa' the door's barred, and then I'm no sure but they pray,—only they never said sae,—but what am I to think?"

"A missionary?" said I, rather in a thinking than a speaking way,—no doubt, but *what* is his mission? I thought, as my mind began to play about the image of the pewter spoon. "And you think they bar you out that they may not be disturbed in their prayers?"

"Just sac, for Maggy especially is really very serious, sir; and then, they have a Bible; a queer book for them, ye ken."

"Well, Mrs W——," said I, seriously, "I like to see my old pupils take to that book; and to satisfy myself, I intend to look up to-morrow or next day, between twelve and one. If you see me coming up, you'll take no notice any more than if I were the missionary himself."

"Just sae," replied she, with a kind of wink, intercepted by a look at me, whom she could not understand anyhow, for I was in the humour of gravity before dinner.

Having faith in Mrs W——, I had no reason to expect any interruption in my scheme. My pious ladies would only have more time for devotion, without any impediment to the purchase of the spoon; and it was not till the day after the next that I found myself in the wake of Maggy, with another of the same in her pocket. I allowed her to go home, to mount the stair, to get in to her holy of holies, and to bar the door if she pleased,—even half-an-hour more, just the time required for arriving at the middle of the use to which the pewter spoon would be applied, but cruelly allowing nothing for the ripening of the fruits left by the missionary with the brown-black and the yellow-white. At the end of that period, I went quietly, in my usual manner of the "taking-it-soft," up the stairs, put my finger as gently on the latch,—no bar then,—and introduced myself to the devout spinsters. I confess, I took no notice of the start and confusion into which I had so unceremoniously hurried them; but, casting my eyes round, I placed my hand upon one of a row of seven shillings laid up on the cross spar of the top of the bed—

"Tempting, Maggie, but hot," I said, as my hand recoiled from the touch of the burning coin. "Surely these come from the devil?"

The two spinsters had by far too much sense to make any protestations, or even excuses for burning my fingers; besides, they were transfixed.

"But so rude I am," I continued, as wheeling round and laying hold of a mould on the cheek of the grate, I turned out the half-impressed last coin, "I have even interrupted industrious women in 'the turning of a shilling.'"

"No use for your mocking mildness," said Maggie, as she bit her thin lips, which she could not have bled for her biting, where there seemed no blood—so white they were. "We know it's all up, but I would rather a hundred times your sneers were damning oaths."

"And so would I," said Bess, whose words choked her.

And who should appear at that moment but he of the missionary vocation? but a most useless servant of his master; for if ever there was a time when his pupils stood in need of consolation it was now; and yet the very instant he saw me, he cried out, "M'Levy—the devil!" and bolted without leaving us a blessing! If he knew me, I also knew him. Having no assistant at the time, I could not follow him with more than my regret that he thus shied an old benefactor, for I had sent him on a mission to Botany Bay to learn good behaviour; but he returned, to take up the quadruple trade of a fancy

man to my two nymphs of the pewter spoon, the utterer of the said spoon in the shape of shillings, the religious cloak of their knavery, and a most successful clerical beggar at the houses of the New Town, of small helps to widows in the Cowgate, dying amidst the cries of their famishing children. Yet I had occasion to overcome my anger some time after, by heaping burning coals on his head, in the form of a new mission to Botany Bay. I even did more, by sending out to the same place his two lovers before him, that he might not be without friends on his arrival, nor for seven years afterwards. But I am anticipating. When the shillings and the young women had cooled down so as to be fit for handling, I removed them to a safe lodging, and then went to dinner. In passing Mr Davidson's shop I gratified a whim:—

"What did Margaret Blackwood pay you for each spoon?" said I.

"Threepence."

"Cannot be, or you must be a very bad judge of the value of pewter."

"Why?"

"Because, see there are eight shillings made of one spoon, and supposing you had sold her forty, you have given for ten shillings no less than £16."

"Ah!" said he laughing, "I see I have been a little spooney."

Long Looked-for, Come at Last.

ONE of the not least strange circumstances in my life is, that I seldom ever had any great desire to get hold of a worthy character without having it gratified. How that most adroit of all thieves, Adam M'Donald, did flutter my laurels! If ever there was a man who interfered with my night's rest, it was that man. For twenty-five years he had laid contributions on the good folks of Edinburgh; and yet, such was his caution, dexterity, and boldness, that he escaped trouble. Often apprehended, he was so successful in non-recognitions, alibis, and scape-goats, that he foiled every one. As my reputation increased, so increased my regret at his. At one time he was the aim and object of all my ambition. Yea, I would have given all my fame, to have it to earn again by the capture of that one man. We knew each other perfectly well, often met, and looked at each other, saying, as plainly as looks could do, "I know you love me, M'Levy, but I am coy, and will never submit to your embraces"—"Why will you not eat, Adam? the apple is sweet; and, if it should be the price of your soul, I will be a gentle master over you." It wouldn't

do. If I was a gentleman in charge, he was a gentleman at large. If I was curious in my changes of place, Adam was everywhere, and yet nowhere. If I was up to a thing, Adam was up to twenty things. If I was burning to catch Adam, as only one article, Adam was zealous to catch many articles without being caught himself. If I was vexed with disappointment, Adam was comfortable in success. Never was an Adam more envied than he was by me, and never an Adam more difficult to tempt.

It is said, that if you “wait *long enough* to become tenant of a house, you may sleep in the king’s palace.” I would have waited a hundred years to get possession of this man; but, probably, my good angel, Chance, thought I had waited long enough when the period came to fifteen years. Yet that was not the whole time of his triumphs, for that had extended to twenty-five—yea, he had been great when I was little, famous when I was unknown. And surely these fifteen years were enough. I certainly thought so, and some other detectives among the gods must have been of the same opinion; for in January 1835 it was reported to us that a gentleman had, on the previous evening, been robbed in the High Street of a gold watch, and it was suspected that the famous Adam was the skilful artist. To whom should this great business have been committed by Serjeant-major Ramage but to me, his natural rival in fame? Yes, that commission was the very pride of my life; and I set about its execution as if it had been a

power of attorney to possess myself of a thousand a-year.

Yet the very boon was at first like a mockery. The suspicion against him was a mere gossamer web of floating surmises. No one would swear to him, and he was so defiant that I could not apprehend him without evidence to support my interference with the liberty of a British-born subject. I was pestered with advices,—a kind of contribution I never valued much, for, though they cost nothing to give, they are often dear to receive. One of the weaknesses of the regular celebrities is a kind of pride of a clever achievement, which (however unlikely it may appear to ordinary thinkers) leads them, as if by a fatality, to the scene of their triumph—ay, to the very repetition of the same act in the same place. Admitted that it is a weakness, I have often found it my strength. It will scarcely be believed, that at a quarter to seven of that evening when I got my commission, I was posted in the entry to Milne Square, in the almost certain expectation of Adam figuring again thereabout, and in the same way. There I stood, while Mulholland went with some message to Princes Street; and, before he returned, whom did I see pass, going east, but my friend Kerr, road-officer at Jock's Lodge—groggy, but not unable to take some care of himself? I knew he had a gold watch, which he guarded by a chain round his neck. No sooner had he passed, than I saw Adam, and a faithful friend, Ebenezer Chisholm, following and watching the unsteady prey from the middle of the

High Street. My heart would have leapt, if I had not something else to do with its ordinary pulses,—and I could have wished even these to be calmer.

I do not say that it was a rather rebellious state of my case that made me in an instant old as ninety, and lame as palsy. With what difficulty and straining of nature I made across the street, eyeing all the while the victim and his followers. I saw them leave the middle of the street and betake themselves to the pavement, about the door of M'Intosh's snuff-shop, where they laid hold of Kerr, no doubt, as friends, each taking an arm of him, to help him on, and save him from robbers. At sight of this I got young again, my palsy left me, and I planted myself under the pend of Blackfriars Wynd. May Heaven forgive me for my adjuration, that that man, Adam M'Donald, should at that moment be put into my hands. Surely I might be forgiven the prayer when the prayer would be answered, but then it would not be till they took him to the King's Park, on his way home, where they could do their business undisturbed. Would they be fools enough to attempt a robbery of a road-officer, on the principal street of the city? Answer—I have already stated my ridiculed calculation. I saw them leave the pavement at a point opposite to the very pend below which I stood. In an instant, the feet were taken from Kerr, he was thrown flat on his back, with a sound of his head against the granite which reached my ears. Chisholm held him down ; Adam, whirling the gold chain over the victim's head, rolled it up in his hand, along

with the watch, and bolted,—Chisholm, at the same instant, making for the dense parts of the Canongate. But whither did Adam bolt? Into my very arms! Yes; I received him joyfully as a long lost friend. But that ingratitude, of which I have complained so often! The moment I clutched him, he commenced a struggle with me, which, if I had not been of the strength I am, would have ended in his escape. Excepting once, I never encountered so tough a job. The moment we closed in the strife, I could see his face marked with the traits of a demon, while a sputtering of words, mixed with foam, assaulted me otherwise than in the ear—"M'Levy, the devil of all devils!" responded to, without the foam, "Adam M'Donald, my love of all loves!" Nor did my grip, nor even my blandishments, calm him. He swung himself from side to side in sudden writhings, breathed more laboriously, flared upon me more luminously with his flaming eyes, which I could see in the dark; and yet he could not get away. I answered every movement by an action equal and contrary, and, as the crowd increased, his determination at length began to be less resolute. Yes, I had nearly conquered this hero of twenty-five years' triumphs, when Mulholland, having returned from Princes Street, and seeing a crowd down the High Street, made up, and laid his helping hand on my antagonist.

"Adam M'Donald," said I.

"Adam M'Donald!" echoed he, in wonder.

"Long looked-for, come at last," rejoined I.

"Yes, you have caught a man," said Adam, with a

bitter sneer ; " but nothing else. I defy you. I have done nothing that 's wrong, and have no man's property."

" Here is the watch," said a man of the name of M'Gregor, who kept a tavern at the head of the wynd ; " I was standing at my door when the robber came rushing in, and the moment you closed I heard the clink of something at my foot. On taking it up, I found it to be this watch. I give it to you, Mr M'Levy."

" I know nothing of it," cried Adam ; " you cannot prove it was ever in my possession."

" I saw you throw down Mr Kerr on the street," cried a woman, looking into M'Donald's face.

" It's a lie," cried the infuriated demon.

" He's lying there yet, man," persisted the woman.

And it was true, for Kerr had been so stunned by the fall, added to his state of drunkenness, that he lay where he fell, and the rush to the wynd so confused the people that some short time elapsed before he was looked after. Just as we emerged from the wynd with our prisoner, they were assisting Kerr up. We left him in good hands, and proceeded with our prisoner to the office. I never was very fond of crowds to witness my captures, but in this case I thought I could understand a little of that feeling delighted in by mighty conquerors, crowned poets, and such celebrities in their way. We have all at times our portion of pride, and who knows, when I don't deny, but that when now taking Adam M'Donald to my stronghold I felt myself to be as great a man as any of them ; for when had a conqueror watched fifteen years

for his enemy? When had a poet taken as long to write his poem? The only difference between us was, that, while these think they are working for immortality, I did not just come to the conclusion that the capture of Adam M'Donald by M'Levy would be celebrated by anniversaries or jubilees. Not that I did not think that future ages, thus neglectful, would be ungrateful, if not foolish, but that I did not want to dwell upon it.

But there we are with our prisoner before Captain Stewart, after this something like ovation, as they call it, but of the meaning whereof I am doubtful; not so of my captain's reception of one who had been so long as a lion in his way; for no sooner did he cast his eyes on Adam than he exclaimed—

“Here at last! but, M'Levy,” he whispered, “you have committed a grave error.”

“Not at all.”

“We have no evidence that it was he who robbed the gentleman last night.”

“No more we have; but he has robbed another to-night, and, see, there's the evidence—no other than the watch of Mr Kerr, the road-officer.”

“And where was the deed done?”

“Where, amidst all laughter, I said it would be—in the High Street.”

“Most wonderful!”

I don't think so. They tell us that truth is very simple, and that lies are very knotty. I have yet a way of getting at the road where men are likely to tra-

vel, and there I meet them. I told you that robbers and thieves have a yearning for the places where their pride has been flattered, and so you see it is. Even Adam, the cunningest fox that ever went back to the same roost, with his ears along his neck, his eyes like fire, and his mouth all a-watering for the second hen, couldn't go against the common nature anyhow. But we have Chisholm to get—his old henchman, a foxy-headed fellow too, who held Kerr down while Adam swept the chain over his head. I must complete my work.

But, here, as I went down the High Street again with Mulholland, I saw our difficulty in so far as Chisholm was concerned, for I doubted whether anyone saw *him* in the fray. He had learned of Adam, and knew of alibis, and scape-goats, and all the rest of the resources of men who put themselves in a position where they *must* be greater vagabonds still. So it was. We found he had gone into a publican's house in Carnegie Street, where he had collected a number of sympathisers, who were ready to swear that he was there drinking at six o'clock,—as so he might have been,—and thereafter, till long past the hour of the robbery, so that it was impossible he could have been engaged in it. Yet I was not daunted; we went to his house, and found him in bed by the side of his wife (?), who, the moment she knew our message, insisted that he had never been out of the house since six o'clock.

"That's true," he rejoined.

"An alibi everywhere," said I. "Your wife swears to

your having been here ; the man in the public-house in Carnegie Street, and half-a-dozen others, say you were there ; and I saw you, with my blear eyes, in the High Street robbing Kerr at eight. You were thus in three places at one time !”

And my man was actually inclined to abuse my religion, because I would not admit he was a god. I confess this roused me a little, and being, besides, impatient of his delay, I seized him perhaps more harshly than I am in the habit of treating my prodigals to get them out of the troughs of the swine, and give them bread and water in place of husks. Yet he was disobedient and struggled ; then began one of those scenes which in my trade are unavoidable, and very disagreeable to a quiet man like me, who, if I had occupied the place of Simpson, would have done as he did with his children,—clapped them with the one hand, as kindly grooms do restive fillies, and put the kench over the head with the other. The wife clung to him and screamed ; her fine black hair—and she was a regular beauty all over—falling over her back and shoulders, quite in the Jane Shore way, and looking, as it lay upon her white skin—where shall I get anything like it ?—but what would be the use if I should try it, when I am satisfied you could detect nothing to come up to it anywhere, except in Mohammed’s showroom of temptation ? Then her arms were fixed round his neck, and I could see one or two rings, which should have been in my keeping, shining on fingers that were just as fine as any lady’s ; and why not ? for she was “ a

fancy," and wrought none ; and so she held on, crying and weeping, as the tears rolled down on a face so pure in its colour, and so delicately tipped off in the curved nose, with the nostrils wide from excitement, and the thin lips open too, and shewing equally fine teeth, that my heart began to give way, though not a melter. Somehow or other, he liked the grip of this lava-Venus better than mine, and no great wonder, I suspect ; and as she clung to him, and he to her, I could not separate them anyhow, until Mulholland, getting to the back of the bed, drew her to him, while I pulled him out.

"Hold her on," said I.

A request which my assistant—very modest man as he was—did not disobey, but he had no easy task, for the creature, who had got hysterical, writhed in his large hands like a beautiful serpent ; till, at last exhausted, she sank in his arms, with her face turned up to him, and her beseeching eyes so fixed on his, that he afterwards declared, that if it had been possible to save Chisholm, he would at that moment have given two weeks' pay (40s.) to send him back to so faithful a creature. But I had something else to mind.

"Get on your breeches, sir."

But my prisoner was slow indeed ; never before, I believe, did a man dress so slowly, with the exception, of course, of those who dress for the last home, under the impression that the clothes are to go, without a testament, to him who finishes all toilets with the hempen cravat. Yet there was excuse for him, which

one might have found in his eyes, fixed as they were on the girl, as she lay still, as if dead, in the arms of Mulholland, and, it may be, not to be seen by him again, whose first step out would be in the direction of Norfolk Island.

I might notice all this, and have some qualms about my heart as I thought how strange it is that vice makes "no gobs" at good looks, but gets into very beautiful temples. Even Chisholm was himself a good specimen of the higher sort of the higher animals, and really the two should not have been what they were, nor where they were. But no help; away he must trudge. Mulholland laid the poor girl gently on the bed, and left her alone, but with little of that glory she might have been encompassed with in another quarter, if more fortunately fated.

M'Donald was easily disposed of at the trial before the High Court, but it was a tough job with Chisholm, who, with his witnesses from Carnegie Street, battled for his alibi in noble style. No use; they got a lifetime of the other hemisphere.

The Swan.

THE genialities of the most genial of us are not eternal ; and I have found this in my own case,—not because my kindness has been so often scorned, or received with anger if not oaths, but on another account, which the reader will scarcely suspect. We have all heard of the madman who went to the doctor at Morningside, and, with a grave face, opened his subject with—

“ Sir, I am concerned about Mr ——,” (the keeper.)

“ Why?” answered the doctor.

“ He is in a very bad way, sir.”

“ In what respect ?”

“ That’s for you to find out, sir. It is for me, who hope I am a humane man, to take prompt measures for his benefit, or I’ll not answer for the consequences. I do enough to give you the hint. It is necessary, in the first place, that you shave his head ; secondly, that you submit him to the shower-bath ; thirdly, that you should bleed him freely ; fourthly, that you should purge him ; fifthly, that you bind him down with strong ropes to his bed ; and, sixthly, that you set watchers over him, of whom, for humanity’s sake, I am willing to be one. I

discharge my duty in making this announcement ; and if my advice is not followed, you will abide by the consequences."

The keeper, though a genial man, could not have suffered all this without being angry. Neither could I resist a feeling of indignation at an act of a similar kind on the part of those under my charge.

For some time, in 1846, I was aware that many pockets were picked by two of the most cunning of their tribe I ever met, George or Charles Holmes (I forget which) and Angus M'Kay. They went always together ; and if they had by their cunning^d resisted or baulked me,—nay, if they had even stood up to fight me,—I might still have retained my temper ; but all the while the people were sending us charges, with complaints of emptied pockets, they were busy taking care of me. I believe, if they had had their will, I would have been shaved, bathed, bled, purged, bound, and watched ; but their care was limited to the last. When I went home at night, I observed that they regularly followed me, saw me housed, and then went to play in their old way of lightening the pockets of the lieges. Nor were they content with seeing me home—they actually posted a companion of the name of Bryce, who went by the name of "The Watcher," to hang about my stair-foot all the evening ; so that when "The Watcher" was not visible by them while plying their art on the Bridges, they could make certain that I was not in the way.

This was to my temper rather too much. I never cared for patronage, but these honours were hard to bear; and what made it worse was, that they thought I was utterly ignorant of all this care taken of me, just as if they were satisfied with the consciousness that "virtue is its own reward." I bear only to a certain extent, like the most patient, and that extent was reached. On a certain day, when I knew their pockets were absolutely filled with the results of their successes of the previous night, I observed them at their old patronising care. There they were after me, with "The Watcher" on the other side; nor did they leave me till they saw me safe in my house, at the foot of the Old Fishmarket Close, in the Canongate. For this kindness I could repay them in another way than by being excessively angry at them. They would be busy that night in adding industriously to their store, and my opportunity was apparent.

After taking my tea, I sat down and wrote a note to my assistant:—

"Send down an officer, and take up Bryce, whom you will find hanging about my stair-foot, and give him in charge at the office; then dress in plain clothes, and, with another man also plain, wait for me below the south arch of the bridge, at seven."

This note I despatched in a basket, carried by a girl who lived ben in the adjacent flat, and proceeded to effect as good a transformation in myself as would enable me to pass for a countryman come in to Hallow Fair, (then being held,) with, it was to be hoped, a hundred

pounds or two upon him, received for stirks, in a pocket-book in the outer breast-pocket of his rough coat.

I was at my post by seven, and found my faithful assistant very well changed, and his companion along with him. I opened my plans to them, after being satisfied that "The Watcher" was safe. We then mounted the long stair leading to the North Bridge. We then separated, but only on the condition that we should never lose sight of each other. The streets were much crowded, in consequence of the fair. The big gudgeons, all supplied with the money derived from their sales, were stalking about; the mermaids were trying their fatal charms in every direction—not combing their own hair at so busy a time, but rather trying to tie that of their victims; and the sharks were plentiful, greedy, and shy as ever. There was that night more of concert between the two latter than we find in books of natural history, where they are represented as working on their own individual hook; but otherwise they were true to their kind: the yellow-haired sirens, when they got a victim in their arms, plunging with him to their caves—not pure coral—and there devouring him in the dark; and the blue sharks gobbling them up just where they caught them,—the one courting embraces, and the other shying them, but both equally fatal.

Of the real blue kind there were my patrons and keepers, Holmes and M'Kay—sharp, active, and hopeful—turning up their bellies every now and then, as they tried a bite. They were sure "The Watcher" was not to

be seen, and therefore I could not be seen either ; neither was I ; and hence their confidence, and hence, too, mine. Perhaps the pleasure of that condition called *incognito*—into which, I rather suspect, all men and women, when their eyes have been glared upon by the disturbing sun of curiosity or notoriety, love to glide—was equal on both sides. Ay, where is the man and woman without their occasional mask ? If you search well, you will *detect*, not only the skeleton which is behind the green curtain over the recess in every house, but also the mask which is in some spring-guarded drawer in the bureau,—often beneath the pillow,—sometimes at the back of the death-bed, when the parson (who has one often in his pocket) is praying over the expiring wretch ; sometimes it is put into the coffin along with the corpse, so that no one shall ever know what deeds he or she, who looks so calm and innocent there, was doing for the sixty years of their pilgrimage in this world of masks.

Opposite Mr Craig's shop, my attention was for a little taken off my two friends—it was not my time yet to renew my acquaintance with them—by the attraction of "The Swan," a long-necked nymph, who was doing "Charlie [Holmes] is my darling," in a very good street style, to an admiring circle extending over the pavement. She was a true *Vesuvienne*, and a good devourer of the gold-fish, probably from that fine, long, white neck of hers ; nor had I seen her at the minstrel trade before. Why now, when, in place of halfpennies and pennies—which I knew she despised—she might have been, like her

companions of the lava streets, picking up crown-pieces, or perhaps pounds, which had been given for fat gimmers or stots in the forenoon? The question was only to be answered by me, and it was not a difficult one. I saw Holmes and M'Kay among her crowd, paying great attention to her siren strains—"The Swan" was not dying just then—that is, with their eyes; and, then, hands and fingers are not necessary to the enjoyment of good music. Nay, it was even with a little humour in his small gray eye that Holmes went and put something into her hand, very likely a small portion of the price of the foresaid gimmers and three-year-olds; and you could not have detected in "The Swan's" looks the slightest difference between the gratitude conferred on the giver and that with which she favoured some stalworth Peeblesshire feeder, who wanted to shew his admiration of Charlie and "the darling" at same time, by giving her a penny.

I have said it was only I that could explain this. "The Swan" was the "fancy" of Holmes, and her singing on the street was just the *treble* of his *base* on the pavement. She collected the crowd, and he collected the money from the crowd, without the trouble of "Please, sir, help the poor girl,"—"A penny, sir, for the singer,"—or simply, "Please, sir." All that was unnecessary, when the fingers were even more subtle than the tongue. To say the truth, I was amused by the play, even to the suspending for a time my own proper part of the performance, if I did not entirely forget my anger at my patrons. Certainly, though I saw some smaller actors in the

walking-gentleman line trying to do a bit of business, I had no heart for watching their pickeries, so insignificant by the contrast of the true Jeremys. I did not even notice our worthy captain, who, as he was passing to the office, stood for a moment listening to the assiduous damsel, as innocent of all this by-play that was going on, with his favourite M'Levy in the *rôle*, as if he had been one of the bumpkins from the grazing hills himself. It was not just then convenient to renew my acquaintanceship with him, so I let him enjoy himself a little, with the intention probably of reminding him next day of the figure he was cutting as a dummy, though the sharpest head in the city. At length he left, to resume his arduous duties in the High Street ; and it was for me to let him go, if I was not glad of his departure, from a place where his presence could only interrupt, not only the playful tricks of my patrons, but my own.

But I must now act ; to delay longer was to run a risk of being foiled, for so many good opportunities for the transference of pocket-books presented themselves, that my friends might succeed in a great effort, and be off, contented with their booty, without bestowing any attention on me. My assistant was behind me, and still kept his eye on me. I became still more entranced by the strains of "The Swan ;" nor was Holmes—whom I now contrived to get near—less captivated. Though not requiring much elevation of the head, I was so intent upon catching every note of her voice, that I stood on tiptoe, looking over the heads of those before me, and

with no more attention to that valuable pocket-book of mine—so proud of its contents that it poked its head out of its place—than merely sufficed to let me know that it was taken away. Could Holmes resist so ardent a gudgeon, entranced by a living, not a dying swan? Not likely, when he was, by my skill, just alongside of me, with M'Kay behind him, to get handed to him, if he could, that same pocket-book which was determined also to be in the play. I never put on a pair of handcuffs in a kindly way with more pleasure in the touch than I now permitted Holmes' hand to have its own way. My book was off in a moment, but not given to M'Kay before my assistant had Holmes in his grasp. The other policeman seized M'Kay. The strains of "The Swan" were hushed; nor did she begin again; she was too much affected to be able to sing when her tender mate was in the claws of the eagles. I was the victim, and required to keep up my character, in which I gained a kind of honour, or rather sympathy, which I had never before had an opportunity of enjoying. The crowd, many of whom were Hallow-Fair men, crowded about me, inquiring how much money was in my pocket-book; and I was in the humour.

"A hundred pounds; the price of six three-year-olds, and all I'm worth in the world."

"Might have been me," said another, "for I've as muckle in my book."

"But, Lord, how cleverly the villains have been nabbed," said a second.

"They'll no try that game again," rejoined a third.

All which I heard very pleasantly as I proceeded, still the victim along with the captors. Meanwhile my assistant retained the pocket-book, which he had caught as Holmes was on the eve of throwing it away. As yet neither of the fellows had recognised either me or my assistant, and they were indignant at being seized by unofficial personages; nor did they know in whose hands they were till they were fairly before the captain, who, as we entered, was sitting altogether oblivious of "The Swan's" strains, whatever effect they might have produced upon him while listening to them.

"Sir," said I, as I stood before him, keeping my face as much from my patrons as I could; "I have been robbed of my pocket-book, wi' the price o' a' my three-year-olds, by thae twa vagabonds there."

"Why, these are old offenders, I suspect," said the captain, not very well able to restrain himself, as he looked in my face and recollected how I had been watched and annoyed by them; "but I hope your money's safe. Let me see the pocket-book;" and getting it from Mulholland and opening it, "The price of all your stock, good sir; why, there's nothing in it but rags and paper!"

"Sold for nothing, by G—d!" said Holmes to M'Kay.

"More than your value," said I, turning round, and looking them straight in the face, in the midst of the laughter of the men; "and yet not so cheap as you think; search them."

A process not so soon accomplished, for out of every pocket there came various waifs, some of them singular enough ; a net purse with two sovereigns and a penny, a small clasp leather one with some shillings, three or four handkerchiefs, two or three pound-notes crumpled up, a number of shillings and coppers, a lady's wig-frontlet carefully rolled up in a piece of paper, and other curiosities.

"We will get customers for all these to-morrow," said I ; "so that it will not be necessary for the farmer to charge you for the price of the beeves."

"Who could have thought that it was the rascal himself?" muttered Holmes between his gnashing teeth.

"Ay, and he so snugly watched in the Old Fish-market Close," said I, for a man has sometimes a pleasure to let an old friend know a grievance he (that friend) has put upon him. In short, I was for once revengeful in my humour, and what is the use of revenge unless the wrong-doer knows your triumph? "But we are not quite done yet," I continued ; then, turning to my assistant, "Go to 'The Swan's' nest, and see if you can find any more of that kind of articles,—she may be a magpie in disguise."

"I only gave her a penny," said Holmes, sneeringly ; "perhaps you'll find that. I've nothing to do with her."

"Beyond getting her to sing for a crowd you might work upon," added I. "You see you are scarcely masters for me, whom you took so much care of ; but now I'll take care of you—lock them up."

And they were taken off, swearing and threatening in their rage and disappointment.

It was not long till my assistant brought in "The Swan," and with her a great number of valuable articles, of which she had been the resetter from Holmes. Many of them, on being compared with the books, answered the description of valuables robbed or stolen a good while before, and the charming singer was deposited in a suitable cage, where (*Charles Holmes* being her lover) she could sing, as she had done that night before,—

"Charlie is my darling,
My young chevalier,"

without adding *d'industrie*, for fear of hurting his feelings in the neighbouring cage. But by and by the tune was changed, when the Sheriff gave them their *terms* as old offenders,—not too hard terms either, when it is considered how much anguish they had caused in many houses, not forgetting some anxiety in my own.

The Topcoats.

IN the year 1845, a respectable agent in Aberdeen for one of the Steam Navigation Companies, having occasion to go down to the pier to look after some duty connected with one of the steamers, bethought himself, as he considered wisely, to put the contents of his cash-box in his pocket, so that before going home, where he kept his money during night, he would not require to go back to the office. I have always found that people have more confidence in their pockets than even in a safe, though certainly thieves would rather reverse the faith, and I would be inclined to back them. There was a crowd on the pier, and certain parties, who love a jostle,—in which they have nothing to lose, but something to gain,—raised such a commotion about our agent as took his mind off his pocket, in place of directing it there, as all such commotions should. He accordingly lost his bag, containing about £60, part in notes and part in sovereigns. Though so far north, the young gentlemen who had “fingered” him did not shew a northern adroitness in crying out, as they should have done, “Yonder’s the thief making off through the crowd,” whereby they might themselves have

escaped notice. On the contrary, they tried to make off with their booty, whereby they brought upon them a sort of painful attention ; for these gentlemen, unlike most clever people, don't like admiration or patronage, not due to their humility and love of retirement. Cries were accordingly got up, "They're off, yonder," where the fingers pointed, and two policemen, of the Aberdeen Doric order, went in pursuit.

It would appear that either the scent was too weak, or the Highland noses too strong—I mean not delicate enough for a man-chase—the most difficult of all hunts ; for by the time they got to Union Street, the youths—for there were two—had hired a cab, and gone south by the coast line. This information I would have considered something valuable, and no doubt the policemen took that view as well. So getting another vehicle, with a fast-going horse, they began the pursuit ; nor were they drawn off the scent, even among villages famous for Finnan haddies and red herrings, till they got to Stonehaven, where their noses became either faulty, or were not properly supplied with the scent of Laverna's ointment-box, as a learned friend once, in my hearing, called that unctuous mean whereby her children become so slippery. They, however, *caught* the driver of the young gentlemen's cab, and somehow he proved as slippery as they, having got himself anointed with the said unction, probably through the palm.

"You drove'twa chields frae Aberdeen, didna you?"

"Oh, yes—perfect gentlemen——"

"We dinna want to ken whether they were gentlemen or no, ye brect," said one of the men, furious with his disappointment.

"It's not my fault if they *were* gentlemen," rejoined Jehu, who had been south; "nor am I to blame that they paid me handsomely out of a big purse. I like a man as is liberal."

"You're a tamned leear," said the other officer; "they're a pair o' big thieves."

"Maybe we're wrang," rejoined the other; "we canna be sheer about them, for we never saw them."

"Oh, you didn't?" said the cabby, a deal sharper than the Aberdonian detectives; "then, you know they were gents—regular gents—a little out o' sorts in the garments, from roughing it, but regular gents."

"And whaur did ye set doon the fine gentlemen?" said the last sharp one.

"Why, at the inn, to be sure, where all as are gents are set down."

"And whaur did they gang?"

"I never looks after gents when they pays me handsomely."

"Then it's aw up, Saunders; we maun jeest gae back the road we cam'. Tam shame to set us on this wild-guse chase."

"I'd strongly recommend your return," said the cabman, laughing within his teeth; "they're twenty miles on by this time, and you couldn't overtake them anyhow."

And these men-hunters, as reported to me, with noses so strong as to afford a good crop of red hair from each nostril, and yet so weak as to be unable to draw up a scent which, though I say it, would have made my olfactories quiver, actually did return to Aberdeen, with the opinion that they had been on the trail of gentlemen, in place of two of the most seedy blackguards that ever changed clothes with the proceeds of a robbery, and threw away the old habiliments behind a dyke. But, what was even worse, the authorities in Aberdeen did not communicate with us in Edinburgh. Meanwhile, and in perfect ignorance of the robbery, I happened to be coming up Victoria Street, with my assistant a little a-rear, when my eyes caught two faces, one of which was well known to me. Indeed, I may repeat, under the peril of a charge of egotism, that I can't forget a countenance if once its lines are well fixed in my mind ; and certainly, but for this faculty, which works its way in spite of all changes and shifts of dress, or assumption of whiskers, or cutting them off, or any art of metamorphosis, I could not have recognised my old friend in his new dress, with his fine coat and overcoat, French boots, nobby hat, and so forth, all according to the highest style. Nay, there was even the air and swagger of a man of *ton*.

"Well, Jem, my lad," I said, standing right before him, "at what shop were you fitted? What an effect a change of fortune has! You were inclined to cut an old friend, and yet I have tried to put you on the way of amendment."

"What is it to you where I was fitted?" replied he, with that scowl of firmness which lies ready among the muscles to frown out at every instant.

"Nothing," replied I; "but something to you. I have a whim in my head. I want you and your gentlemanly companion up to the office."

"You have no charge against me," said he, doggedly. "Can't a fellow dress as he likes?"

"Yes," was my answer, "unless he meet the like of me, whose taste is a little put out o' sorts by inconsistency. No apology. Just come quietly along—don't want to shame a *gentleman*, you know."

And, upon my calling up my assistant, he saw that it was of no use trying a fight or a run, so gave in quietly, in that way they can all do, for they have a kind of pride sometimes in yielding handsomely.

Arrived at the office with my friends, I immediately stripped them of their fine top-coats.

"So," said I, "you choose not to say who was your tailor?"

The old answer:—"You have no business with that. What have our coats done?"

"Perhaps what the sheep's clothing did that covered a certain animal," said I. "No more argument. I detain you for inquiry."

Next day I had them before the magistrate, merely on the plea of the coats. I had no other charge; and I took this step, though I had as yet got no proof, with a view to justify my detention of them until, after a

continuation of the diet, I might seek my evidences. While waiting for the case being taken up, a gentleman who was in the court came up to me.

"Why are you watching those fellows?" said he.

"Because I suspect they have been after some foul play, probably in the north."

"There's a robbery reported in the *Aberdeen Advertiser*," he continued. "I'd advise you to go to Hart-hill's and read it."

"Something better than the topcoats," I thought, as I nodded to my informant.

Having got the case continued, and the gentlemen again in their proper place, I set off for the Waterloo Room, where I got the paper, and read a very edifying description of my charges,—so true, that every feature corresponded to a nicety; but no mention of the topcoats. Nor did I expect it. Neither did I see then, which I did afterwards, that the Jehu at Stonehaven was perfectly right in admitting that his fine fares' clothes were only the worse for roughing it; only he might have said that nothing could be worse,—for the *Hue and Cry* described their habiliments as so very seedy, that they ran a risk of being shaken to the husk by an ordinary wind. That same afternoon I got Captain Moxcy to report my capture to the Aberdeen superintendent, that he might reclaim his *protégés*,—a request that was immediately complied with. Nor did we fail to make them carry on their backs the topcoats, so that

they might make as *good* an appearance as possible before the Aberdeen authorities.

But I was not destined to be done with the topecoats, for, as love or luck would have it, I was, two days afterwards, in Aberdeen at a Circuit trial,—and, as my reputation was pretty bright in the north, I was consulted by the fiscal, who thought that, as I caught the coats and what they contained, I might also catch evidence as to where they had bought them, as well as proof of where they had deposited the cast-off garments. I promised to do my best, and next morning I set off for Edinburgh, passing on my way Dundee. I was sure enough that there was no refitting at Stonehaven,—for, according to Jehu's account, there was no time, whatever might be the necessity,—and bonny Dundee held out charms for my wooing,—a reluctant and shy mistress indeed, but I had conquered her before,—nay, in sober truth, a wide and dreary field, with the wind in the tail of my game. Yet the one sticking idea, to which I have already alluded, was there again in my head. The serpent burrows in the sand before casting his skin. They couldn't go to fine lodgings in that *travelling* dress of theirs; so, being acquainted so far with the town, I went to the Overgate, where the waifs are thrown up, among the rotten wood, dulse and tangle, and dead star-fish. Got a clue to a likely lodging-house, where tramps find rest to their limbs,—but, alas! not often to their minds,—up a very close close, then up a stair, at last confronted by a door. Knocked with a detective's hand, softly and gently; and

why not?—crime angers us no more, however we may lament it, than does the dead subject the anatomist, who is to lay open the mysteries in that forsaken tenement where once was the warmth of God's breath. An old woman opened the door,—always old these door-openers, poor souls, for there is no joy outside to them, and they can, at least, let others more hopeful and happy out and in.

"You keep rooms for letting, my good woman?" said I.

"Ay; do you want lodgings?"

"No," said I, as I stepped in, and sat down; "but I want a lodger, or rather two."

"You look vexed, guidman," said she, gazing into my face, which somehow got full of sorrow on the instant.

"You are a mother, no doubt?" said I, lugubriously enough, and yet not all a feint; "but I hope you don't know what it is to have lost a ne'er-do-weel."

"Atweel do I," replied she, "and mair; but whaur are ye frae?"

"Edinburgh."

"And maybe ye'll ken Mr M'Levy, the thief-catcher?" she continued. "He grippit my laddie, Geordie, in Leith, and put him in jail; but they tell me he's no a hard man; and oh! if I could just get somebody to see him, and maybe he would deal gently wi' him. Ken ye the man?"

"I'm rather intimate with him," said I; "and if you will tell me your son's name, I will try what I can do."

"Geordie Robertson."

Bad case, I recollected; housebreaking in Leith.

"I will try," I again said. "And now one good turn deserves another. My two sons, I fear, are no better than yours—perfect vagabonds. They ran away last week, and I'm just seeking for them to get them home again to their disconsolate mother."

"Weel, there were twa callants slept ben the house last Thursday," said she. "What-like laddies are they? But, eh, fule that I am, ye wad maybe ken their claes?"

"Too well, my good woman; worn and ragged, I fear, and"—it would be out—"no topcoats."

"Topcoats!—the deil a topcoat had they, puir callants; but, Lord bless you, you maun hae gien them siller, or they maun hae stown it frae ye, for they came in next forenoon wi' new suits—topcoats an' a'—rowed up in muckle parcels, and then they despised the auld rags just as if they had been ashamed of them. They tirmed to the skin, and awa they gaed like gentlemen, leaving the auld skins, as I may say, just whaur they tuik up the new. I'll shew ye them."

And trotting away, she returned in a few minutes with the precious wardrobe,—a little the worse for roughing it, but gents' notwithstanding.

"The very identical clothes," said I; "and good *evidence*—of my misfortunes. Now, I'll just pin some bits of paper to the coats and breeches. Can you write?"

"I can sign my name—no muckle mair; but what for?" she added, suspiciously.

"Just in case they should deny that they have brought

such a disgrace on their father and mother by wearing such beggarly clothes."

"To shame them, like?" said she, with a faint smile.

"Precisely."

"Just as they do in the foundlings I hae heard o' some-gate abroad, whaur they keep the duds, to mind the unfortunate creatures o' what they aince were?"

"The very thing."

"And a maist sensible thing, sir," continued the woman; "but there's nae care o' that kind taen wi' my Geordie."

"I will see about him when I get to Edinburgh," said I, as I cut the pieces of paper from the back of an old letter I had; and having got all the articles labelled, I got Mrs Robertson to mark them with her name. And now—

"I will pack them off to Mrs Justice," said I. "You will let them remain till I send for them."

"Nae doot, and thank ye, Mr Justice," said she. "But oh! will you mind that fearfu' man, M'Levy, and saften him wi' kindly words; and tell him I'm a lone woman, who looked aye forward to Geordie helping me in my auld age. Ay, just mak your ain case to him, and say that maybe his ain bairns may live to need the help o' a kindly hand, even like yours, Mr Justice, and maybe ye may saften his heart, and get him to deal mercifully wi' Geordie Robertson."

"I will do the best that Justice can do for him," said I, smiling inwardly at so strange a scene,—almost oppres-

sive to me, however, for my playing, as it were, with God's favours, and repaying the use of His leading hand by a falsehood ; which yet, for good ends, so far was justifiable, at least as His own world goes, and we go by necessity along with it.

And bidding Mrs Robertson good-bye, I hastened and got a man to carry the bundles, which I had addressed to the fiscal at Aberdeen, to the coach-office,—thereafter intimating my gift to the good Lady Justice, at the same granite city, by a letter, which I wrote in Mrs Hendry's inn, near the Fishmarket.

So far I had succeeded according to what I have always thought my luck, but which a friend has often told me is something he calls instinctive logic,—words I can't well detect the meaning of. Whatever it may be called, it must again serve my purpose in respect to those topcoats, the source of which had become a *crave*. I beat about till I came to "The Globe," where I entered with that question in my mouth I have put so often, and to so many different kinds of people. Finding a likely face—

"Did you, about Thursday last, fit out a couple of young men with clothes?"

"I think I know what you mean, Mr M'Levy," said he, smiling in my face,—an Edinburgh shopkeeper come over here, but quite unknown to me there. "Yes, we did ; and what is more, I knew one of the fellows in Edinburgh ; but we had no right to refuse their custom, you know."

"What did they buy of you?" asked I.

"Why, whole suits. They were quite flush of money, and I'm rather astonished they did not fear exposure, from the contrast between the shabby outside and the rich pockets within."

"Any sovereigns?" said I.

"Plenty."

"Such gentlemen couldn't do without topcoats."

"Not likely, in this cold weather,—and with delicate constitutions, you know," smiling.

"And tender training," I added.

"Ay."

"Read that," handing him the Aberdeen newspaper, "and tell me if that description applies."

The young man glanced over the "Literary Portraits"—
—"The very men to a hair."

"You served them yourself, and can speak to their identity?"

"Yes, we don't forget these customers."

"Not likely," said I, as my mind recurred to what I knew of their habits. "No customer, I suspect, like a newly-enriched thief,—never hucksters, nor haggles, nor chaffers about shillings?"

"No, nor pounds. Then, they get so fanciful. They buy whatever is most fashionable, cost what it may."

"I see you know my children," said I, inclined to be more communicative to this intelligent lad than I generally am. "Yes; they put on a red hackle to catch a gudgeon like me."

"Or a golden pheasant's feather," said he; "no doubt fond of the *Dighty*."

"Or make themselves phantom-minnows, to tempt me to rise more effectually."

"Yes, or even a 'terrible devil,' to make sure work," added this knowing dealer in soft goods.

"Well, but to business," said I. "There can be no doubt they got the topcoats from you?"

"The match of that hanging there," replied he, pointing to a coat.

"The very twin-brother," said I, as my eye glanced on the 'charming' garment. "Ah, ironed by the very same goose?"

"The same goose."

"Your name?"

"James B——."

"Some more gifts to Justice," I muttered to myself, as I left him, to make a study of any indications I should meet of St Crispin's qualities emblazoned over door-heads. I tried only one before I entered a likely shop, into which I was tempted by seeing in the window some showy French goods,—the pheasant's feathers.

"You deal in French boots, Mr G——?" said I, bowing as I entered.

"Yes, sir," replied the man, "but I would recommend our good Scotch make, such as these;" and the garrulous dealer went rattling away in the old there's-nothing-like-leather way; "why, sir, these Frenchmen beat us hollow in fine work, but—would you believe it?"

—they are perfect cobblers at a coarse, useful, crush-clod article. They seem to lose not only their genius but sense in it, just as if they thought they threw away their work on it. No, sir, they can't comprehend a neat-rough, or a rough-neat, anyhow, and so make a bungle."

"Let me see those boots in the window," said I, after allowing his wind fair swing.

"Jacques Moinét, Rue de St Hilaire," I read out, and compared within, as I remembered the name on those slight and genteel feet-coverings I had helped to draw off from two gentlemen in the office in the High Street of Edinburgh so shortly before.

"Did you sell two pairs of these to a couple of youths on Thursday last?"

"Yes; they said they had been roughing it in the north, and had got out at elbows a bit; but plenty of money."

"Sovereigns?"

"I saw they had them, but they paid me with a couple of notes."

"How did you come to get notes and yet see the sovereigns?" said I.

"Why, no doubt a little weakness, to shew they were gentlemen; when the one drew out his notes, the other brought forth a handful of the gold bits, and so generous were they to each other, they seemed to strive for the honour of paying."

"Then you thought them gentlemen?"

"Only from the excuse of roughing it, and the money,"

replied he, with a smile; "otherwise, I would have thought them Q.C.'s; not exactly Queen's Counsel," he added drily, "but queer customers."

"Something in that way," said I, handing him the "Literary Portraits," and then watching to study the face of this also rather Q.C.; and truly, if it had been one of the children's mock phizes, made out of India-rubber, it could not have gone through its twitches of transformation more ludicrously.

"The very men;" he cried, as he burst out into a laugh, with the identical India-rubber wide mouth; "the very men, sir. You have got the foot-mark in the soft mud."

"Your name on the door?" I rejoined.

"Yes."

"And you can speak to the gentlemen, if you saw them?"

"Perfectly. I could have no hesitation."

"And perfectly willing, I presume?"

"Yes, if called upon by the authorities."

And so, I finished my labours in Dundee, which were something to amuse me on my journey south. I immediately despatched the names, with a short jotting of precognition, as a companion to the bundles; but, oh, the vanity of human wishes! The reader will scarcely credit me when I tell him, more pathetically than lies in my way, that these children of mine were insensible to, nay, ungrateful for, all this trouble of their father, Mr Justice. They actually refused my gifts; for when

tried at the next Aberdeen Circuit, they pled guilty, without intending amendment ; and thus all my trouble was comparatively vain, except that they got "twelve months" to think over their ingratitude to their loving, but disconsolate father.



The Belfast Key.

I HAVE never been able to ascertain where all those images of people go to in my mind. I am sure they are not packed up, each with its little film of card away back, the last got being always nearest the eye, like a barrel of herring on its side ; for in that case I could not get out some fifteen-year-old one, as I do so easily, to confront it with some of my children, who have been away round the world and come back again. Nay, the older they are the brighter they are, and then they don't trouble me any more than if they were dead,—like the flies in Dr Franklin's bottle of Madeira, I have read of somewhere,—and are always brought alive again just when they're wanted. Neither do they trouble me, as they certainly do others, who have what they call a fancy, where the little things are eternally getting restive, rising up and flapping their wings, and flying hither and thither in confusion, bothering the soul, so that it becomes terrified at midnight with ghosts and phantoms, and producing hysterics, and Heaven knows what more. I have no fancy. If I had had, I would have been dead long

ago ; for how could I have borne such a host of thievish and murdering-looking likenesses of banished or hanged men, rising up on me in myriads, and haunting me everywhere, as if I had banished or hanged them in spite of the innocence they all protest, and sometimes look so much like ? No ! thank Heaven, I sleep, and have always slept, not like a top with its unobserved whirl, but like a log. And if I should be wakened, to catch some Bill Brash who has taken it into his head to come back from Norfolk Island, whither I had sent him, I find the image of Bill as ready at my call as if it had been fluttering and tormenting me all these seven years.

It is now a pretty old story, that of the lifting of two piles of valuable tweeds—worth a hundred guineas—from the door of Mr Young's shop in the High Street. I got notice almost on the instant, and hastening down, saw how the affair had been managed. The glass door inside had been shut, and the piles had lain on either side of the space between the outer door and the inner. The affair looked curious. The piles were four feet high, and every web rolled on a pretty heavy piece of wood, so that it would have been a considerably tough job to have *snatched* even one and made off with it in the very heart of a passing multitude. The shopmen had, of course, their theory, as all people in such circumstances have. There must have been, they thought, at least half-a-dozen about it, each taking a piece and running off with it, just as ants do their bags when they want to get them out of the sun. I knew better ; such a scene

would have been noticed outside, because the very *succession* of the liftings would have taken greatly more time than the pauses of passengers could have permitted. In short, I saw that one person could do it better than a dozen, taking quietly, after a survey, first one web and then another, depositing in succession, and coming and going. Then there was the inevitable conclusion that the webs were not far off,—a great point; but the webs *were* deposited, and would be where they were; so my case was not one of chase, and Time to be taken by the forelock.

Nor was I long in getting my theory confirmed. Just as I was inquiring up and down for a hint, I met a woman who said she had seen a young man turning the corner of Borthwick's Close, with a piece of cloth under his arm.

"One piece?" said I.

"Ay, ane," replied she, a little groggy; "and plenty, for, my faith, he was staggering wi' the weight."

"Do you know where he got it?"

"No; but he looked as if he had come up the street, and what was I to think but just that he was a snip? and then they aye walk quick, the snips, they're so glad to get on their feet."

"They don't stagger, though," said I.

"Sometimes on 'little Sunday,'—that's Monday,—for they're aye a day or twa ahint the other workmen in their weekly jubilees."

I listened patiently, for I never repress witty wit-

nesses; their conceit makes them say more than your grave informants, who have no tickling inside their clay heads.

"Did you see enough of him to enable you to speak to his appearance?" I inquired again.

"Only the hinder-end," said she, with a groggy smirk, "which is aye big in them. I could swear to the hinder-end o' a snip, but no to a particular ane, for they're a' alike; the swivel, too, that maks them rock sae when they're in a hurry, is a' o' a piece; and then, they aye snuff with the right nostril, which they haud to a side, to save what they're sewing."

And so on she would have gone,—for, as I have said, she had had a dram,—but I had got all she could tell, and, inquiring her name, I got on with my thoughts. Could it, after all, be possible that this bold fellow had returned and returned to the treasury, and picked off twenty bales of goods all one by one? The man that achieved this was worthy of my acquaintanceship, and even this consideration alone would have inspired me to a capture; but then, such an artist could scarcely have been unknown to me, unless he were a new importation, and that was unlikely, for he must have arranged his resetting-place, and have known the closes.

On what I had got, my theory was formed. Going down to Hunter's Square, I went south by Blair Street, till I came to the Cowgate, and then along to the foot of Borthwick's Close; I then stepped into a grocer's shop,—always the historical register-office of the neigh-

bours, who can't do without their penny candle, red herring, and ounce of tea.

"Any strangers about the close, Mr Heron?" said I.

"I believe the turner's son has come home," he replied.

"You mean by the turner, the old man whose shop is there, but who lives elsewhere?"

"Just so."

"But Brash can't live in the shop?" I rejoined.

"Not sure, the father is weakly, and has not been working for some time."

"And perhaps the son may sleep among the saw-dust?"

"Not unlikely. I'm sure, at least, he hangs about here, for I saw him lig-lagging wi' the women opposite my window yesterday."

"But he has never bought any cheese, or herring, or bread, or a candle, and taken it away as if to use them somewhere here about?"

"Yes; he bought bread and herring yesterday,—no candle,—and he went up the close with them."

"If he had been living with his father, he wouldn't have come here."

"No; the family were never customers of mine."

So far well enough. There was some one in that close, who, if *my* memory served me, was very well able, from *experience*, to do the bold and clever thing that had been done; but it was no business of mine to be seen thereabout just at the time when I wanted somebody, and when some other body might say to another body,

that M'Levy was there, for the people had got into their heads that I could be nowhere but where I should be. I would rather, at that juncture—it was now getting late—be among the light-o'-loves. Really, in these very squeamish days I know not how to get rid of my old vocabulary; we used to have good sturdy names for a certain class,—not those of Mohammed's paradise, with the black eyes they have at their heavenly birth, but those who have black eyes of another kind, generally given by one to another, and not just so productive of love. So I have been careful in avoiding slang,—a kind of language rather beneath me,—but then, certain names are useful, if not necessary. Were I a scholar, I might profit by example, such as that of one of our lieutenants, who said, perhaps not seriously, that they should be called, not w——s, but *Vesuviennes*, and their district the *Lavoro*; I think probably because lava is found there,—pretty hot to the touch, and apt to leave reddish marks, only curable by such gifted creatures as Mercury. Under whatever name you like, I was accordingly soon there, with a notion, not at all unjustified, that my tweed-lifter—like other people who have done a great feat and made a fortune—would, in place of going home and snoring out his triumph, go where “pleasure waits him,” were it for no other purpose than just to give his relieved heart some play, or get some recompense for his trouble. And who that by his own hands had made £100 in half-an-hour, upon a capital of a bad shilling, would not feel happy, and inclined to be among merry people, like

these black or blue-eyed damsels, always jovial, even in the very midst of their wretchedness and tears,—not Christ's tears, alas! as the wine of my lieutenant's Lavoro is called, they say, but of a hotter and bitterer kind?

I was thus naturally led to Hyndford's Close,—a very good specimen of a rut in a dried stream of lava, which, I fancy, is just a kind of cinders. I went through several *establishments*; and last came to the great one, with nine or ten beds, if you can call by that name the four fir-posts, with the lath bottoms, and the pieces of yellow cotton sheets, and scarcely less yellow blankets, and strips of old carpets or horse-cloths spread over them, and the pillows,—little bags, sometimes filled with teased oakum, among which I have often found jewels and gold watches. In that house I once discovered as sharp a trick as ever I played, if it was not sharper than the discovery. I had traced a £20 watch to the pocket of "The Crow," and there lost it just as she was supping her sheep's-head broth out of a capacious bowl, with what they call a horn cutty. I searched about everywhere and could not find the watch, yet I was certain it was in that room. I had almost given up, when I noticed her very slow with her kail. I knew it wasn't fear prevented her satisfying her appetite, for "The Crow" feared me no more than she did her mother, whom she was in the habit of thrashing, because, as she said, the old woman had taught her her trade. There must be some secret under this sudden want of appetite.

The kail would not go down in the bowl, because she would not put them down into her stomach. I suddenly caught a thought. "Let me taste your kail, Bess;" and my first sup was of the watch, which she had slipped into the bowl when she saw me enter. When she took flight to the South Sea, I would have taken a year from her banishment for her magpie trick, Crow as she was.

I need not say how vain it is to question these queens of Rougedom—another modern name—as to any gentlemen of the light-fingered tribe being among their subjects,—unless you are to go direct contrary to their contraries,—nor with what confidence they lie in your face as they hold up their queenly countenances. They are all of a piece, these queens, and a strange piece indeed. You may know every section by mark,—the purple face, always with a rotten-like tumefaction about it, set on the thick bull neck, which again is set on the bundle of flabby stuff she calls her bosom, which again is just the top of a sack-like heap of undulating matter, swelling out here and there as she moves, all surmounted with the sleazy mutch, set off with a crop of faded French flowers, collected from her subjects. And there is pride in this corporation, as she looks big, talking of "*my* house," sometimes, at least once in my experience, "*my* establishment," "*my* young ladies;" sometimes these one day without a shoe, and the next (a pawn redemption-day) decked out with articles every one of which has its eventful history; how it belonged to some fine lady in Moray

Place,—how it came down to the lady's maid,—how it ran the gauntlet of passing turn about among the household, with a dogging envy of its possessor for the hour,—how it had charmed a “colley” from George Square to Hyndford's Close, where he lost his watch,—how it has been pawned a hundred times, and yet retained its power of drawing.

Even with so proud a dame I seldom did more than give her a nod, as I opened the door and took my walk, as I did now among the beds and cells. I searched everywhere,—all the working bees out among “the flowers of Edinburgh” to bring home the *honey* in the shape of *money*,—but there was, far ben, with a window looking into a ruinous area to the east, a room I remember very well, and the door of which I had passed. I returned to enter, but found it shut, and locked inside. These crazy hindrances I have often made short work of, by putting my back to them, in obedience to which they generally fly open, with the advantage of anticipating the preparation the inmates honour me with. I applied that force-key now, for I knew that any suspected denizen of that inside heaven would rather jump the window for the opposite place than welcome me to his bower of bliss. A gas-burner was flaring away right in the faces of three persons, two women and a man. I saw nothing, of course, but the three faces, with the six eyes looking clear, but in nowise bewildered with anything like consternation, only the man did not seem easy in a position which, judging from the apparent cosyness, he

might have thought enviable by *some* whose tastes lie in that heavenward direction.

"You seem to be very comfortable, my friend," said I; "I am sorry to flutter your wings in that paradise."

A growl repaid a handsome compliment; but such is the way of the angels in these paradises.

"I will thank you to get up," said I.

"Don't, Jim; he has no right," said the guardian angel on the left.

"Ay," said the other on the right, "what right have you to disturb *decent* people in their own apartments?"

"Come, I say, get up; don't you see I'm waiting?"

"Shan't," growled the man; "you've no charge against me. I came to Edinburgh only yesterday."

"Where from?"

"Belfast."

"What street?"

"Huntly Street."

"No such street there, I suspect," said I. "Come, get up, and dress, and the ladies can cover their faces with their hands."

"Won't do, Bill," whispered the left one; "it's McLevy; if anything's wrong, it's all up."

"So you won't rise?" I persisted.

"What for?" roared the swain, getting at once into a rage, as he probably contrasted our cells with his present angel-guarded position.

"Just to don your clothes," said I; "I want to know if, by searching, you can find anything in the pockets

which I may think curious in the arts ; but I have some delicacy in rifling pockets. There may be money in them, and you might charge me with a deficit. Come."

"I never rifled pockets anyhow," said he, as he fixed his eyes on me, with a look that did not change my conviction that I had had his image for a good many years in my mind, associated with the honours offered to him by a judge, and a jury, and a full court, before he sailed for Norfolk Island.

Yes, even though thus translated, with the light of his sister angels shining on him, I knew him the moment I threw my eyes over him.

"Well," he cried at length, as he started, and stood before me, yet, I thought, under the belief that I did not recognise him.

"Quick and cover ; here's your breeches. I will be your footman ; here's the vest, and next the coat, stockings, neckcloth, boots,"—all in succession, with proper intervals. "All right ; now you are in a position to appear before the ladies."

"What next ?" said he, sneeringly.

"Ripe, and tell me what is in your pockets."

"There's a handkerchief," said he, pulling out, "a pen-knife, a quid of tobacco, a pipe, a bit cheese, an empty phial,—that's all. Does any one of them belong to *you* ?"

"Nothing more ?" said I. "Try again. I thought I heard the phial strike against a bit of steel, perhaps a key. Come, out with it ; I am curious in keys."

But he wouldn't.

"I'll help you, my good fellow," said I; "you know I'm your flunkey."

And plunging my hand into the right outside-pocket of his coat, I brought out a good-sized outer-door key.

"Where's the door that key opens?" asked I.

"In Belfast."

"Belfast again, and in Huntly Street! No doubt the house will have a number too—10,060?"

"No. 11."

"Well, we shall go there to-night," said I. "Are you ready?"

And not waiting for a reply I took him gently by the arm, and moved him out. The inevitable all-up was now in the ascendancy, and he went like a lamb till we got to the High Street, where I gave him in charge to my assistant, there waiting. I had the key in my hand; and, coming to Borthwick's Close,

"This way," said I; "I have a call to make before setting out for Belfast."

Nor did I take any notice of the change that, like a flash, came over his countenance. He was a ruddy, healthy fellow, new from a voyage, and had not yet taken on the close-colour, but he was in an instant pale enough to satisfy even Despair herself. Proceeding down the close, my man and assistant before me, we came to the turner's shop.

"I want to go in here," said I.

"I have nothing to do with that place," said he; "this is not Huntly Street, Belfast."

"No, nor No. 11 ; but just you open the door," (handing him the key,) "and let me in."

Though the key seemed to burn his fingers, he was yet so satisfied of the all-up necessity, that he seemed to grasp it nervously, and proceeded with his own hand to open the door.

It was much too dark to see into the hole, but there was light in an opposite window ; and getting, upon a rap, the end of a halfpenny candle, I came over.

"I want to see," said I, "whether this turning-lathe turns out any tweeds."

And straightway our eyes beheld all the webs of Mr Young's two piles of cloth, built neatly up against the wall. I counted them carefully, for I had a pride in the exact number—thirty pieces, all there, not one wanting.

"You can identify these, Mr William Brash," said I, looking my prisoner directly in the face, "as the webs of cloth you stole from Mr Young's shop-door some four hours ago ?"

"Brash is not my name."

"Not now, but it was before you went on your travels ; for which jaunt you were indebted to me, I rather think."

His courage couldn't stand my last appeal, and he seemed as well satisfied that I could do no more for him as any one with a cancer could be with the doctor who administered a hemlock poultice, which could nip, but never heal.

Having taken him to the office, and provided for him carefully, as a valuable addition to our stock of moral curiosities, I got the thirty bales up, which were all safely delivered to Mr Young ; but that gentleman, I rather think, had no less difficulty in accounting for the seizure, so near his premises, than in understanding how these thirty heavy webs could have been carried away, in so short a time, by one man. That there were no assistants, was admitted by Brash himself, who was sent abroad a second time for ten years.

The Dead Child's Leg.

SOME years ago, the scavenger whose district lies about the Royal Exchange, came to the office in a state of great excitement. He had a parcel in his hand, and, laying it on the table, said, "I've found something this morning you won't guess."

"A bag of gold, perhaps?" said I.

"I wish it had been," said the man, looking at the parcel, a dirty rolled-up napkin, with increased fear; "it's a bairn's leg."

"A bairn's leg!" said I, taking up the parcel, and undoing it with something like a tremor in my own hand, which had never shaken when holding by the throat such men as Adam M'Donald.

And there, to be sure, was a child's leg, severed about the middle of the thigh. On examining it, it was not difficult to see that it was a part of a new-born infant, and a natural curiosity suggested a special look to the severed end, to know what means had been taken to cut it from the body. The result was peculiar. It appeared as if a hatchet had been applied to cut the bone, and that the operator had finished the work by dragging

the member from the body,—a part of the muscle and integuments looking lacerated and torn. The leg was bleached, as if it had lain in water for a time, and it was altogether a ghastly spectacle.

"Where did you find it?" I asked.

"Why," replied the man, "I was sweeping about in Writers' Court at gray dawn, and, with a turn of my broom, I threw out of a sewer something white; then it was so dark I was obliged to stoop down to get a better look, and the five little toes appeared so strange that I staggered back, knowing very well now what it was. But I have always been afraid of dead bodics. Then I tied it up in my handkerchief, more to conceal it from my own sight than for any other reason."

"And you can't tell where it came from?" said I.

"Not certainly," answered he; "but I have a guess."

And the man, an Irishman, looked very wise, as if his guess was a very dark ascertained reality, something terribly mysterious.

"Out with your guess, man," said I; "it looks like a case of murder, and we must get at the root of it."

"And I will be brought into trouble," answered he; "faith, I'll say no more. I've given you the leg, and that's pretty well, anyhow. It's not every day you get the like o' that brought to ye, all for nothing; and ye're not content."

"You know more than you have told us," said I; "and how are we to be sure that you did not put the leg there yourself?"

"Put the leg there myself, and then bring it to you!" said he; "first kill the bairn, and then come to be hanged! Not just what an Irishman would do. We're not so fond of trouble as all that."

"Trouble or no trouble, you must tell us where you think it came from, otherwise we will detain you as a suspected murderer."

"Mercy save us! me a suspected murderer!" cried he, getting alarmed; "well now, to be plain, you see, the leg was lying just at the bottom of the main soil-pipe that comes from the whole of the houses on the east side of the court, and it must be somebody in some family in some flat in some house in some part of the row that's the mother,—that's pretty certain; and I think I have told you enough to get at the thief of a mother."

The man, no doubt, pointed at the proper source, however vaguely; so taking him along with me I walked over to Writers' Court, and, after examining the place where the leg was found, I was in some degree satisfied the man was right. It was exceedingly unlikely that the member would be thrown down there by any one entering the court, or by any one from a window, for this would just have been to exhibit a piece of evidence that a murder, or at least a concealed birth, had taken place somewhere in the neighbourhood, and to send the officers of the law upon inquiry. Besides, the leg was found in the gutter leading from the main pipe of the tenements, and, though there was no water flowing at

the time, there had been a sufficiency either on the previous night or early morning to wash it to where it had lain.

But after coming to this conclusion, the difficulty took another shape not less unpromising. The pipe, as the man truly said, was a main pipe, into which all the pipes of the different houses led. One of these houses was Mr W—te's inn, which contained several females, and the other divisions of flats had each its servant; but, in addition to all this, there were females of a higher grade throughout the lands, and I shrunk from an investigation so general, and carrying an imputation so terrible. My inquiry was not to be among people of degraded character, where a search or a charge was only a thing of course,—doing no harm where they could not be more suspected than they deserved,—but among respectable families, some with females of tender feelings, regardful of a reputation which, to be suspected, was to be lost for ever; and I required to be on my guard against precipitation and imprudence.

Yet my course so far was clear enough. I could commit no imprudence, while I might expect help, in confining my first inquiries to the heads of the families; and this I had resolved upon while yet standing in the court in the hazy morning. The man and I were silent—he sweeping, and I meditating—when, in the stillness which yet prevailed, I heard a window drawn up in that stealthy way I am accustomed to hear when crime is on the outlook. It was clear that the greatest care had

been taken to avoid noise ; but ten times the care, and a bottle of oil to boot, would not have enabled this morning watcher to escape my ear. On the instant I slipped into an entry, the scavenger still sweeping away, and, notwithstanding of his shrewdness, not alive to an important part of the play. I could see without being seen ; and looking up, I saw a white cap with a young and pale face under it, peering down upon the court. I had so good a look of the object, that I could have picked out that face, so peculiar was it, from among a thousand. I could even notice the eye, nervous and snatchy, and the secret-like movement of withdrawing the head as she saw the man, and then protruding it a little again as she observed him busy. Then there was a careful survey, not to ascertain the kind of morning, or to converse with a neighbouring protruded head, but to watch, and see, and hear what was going on below, where probably she had heard the voices of me and the man. Nay, I could have sworn that she directed her eye to the conduit—a suspicion on my part which afterwards appeared to me to be absurd, as in the event of her being the criminal, and knowing the direction of the pipes, she never would have trusted her life to such an *open* mode of concealment as sending the mutilated body down through the inside pipes, to be there exposed.

After looking anxiously and timidly for some time, and affording me, as I have said, sufficient opportunity to scan and treasure up her features, she quietly drew in

her pale, and, as I thought, beautiful face, let down the sash, almost with a long whisper of the wood, and all was still. I now came out of my hiding-place,* and telling the man not to say a word to any one of what had been seen or done, I went round to the Exchange, and satisfied myself of the house thus signalised by the head of the pale watcher of the morning.

I need not say I had my own thoughts of this transaction, but still I saw that to have gone and directly impeached this poor, timid looker-out upon the dawn for scarcely any other reason than that she did then and there look out, and that she had a delicate appearance, would have been unauthorised, and perhaps fraught with painful consequences. What if I had failed in bringing home to her a tittle of evidence, and left her with a ruined reputation for life? The thought alarmed me, and I behoved to be careful, however strict, in the execution of my duty; so I betook myself during the forenoon to my first resolution of having conferences with the heads of the houses.

I took the affair systematically, beginning at one end and going through the families. No master or mistress could I find who could say they had observed any *signs* in any of their female domestics. The last house was a reservation—that house from which my watcher of the morning had been intent upon the doings in the court. It was the inn occupied, as I have said, by Mr W—te. Strangely enough, the door was opened by that same pale-faced creature. I threw my eye over her,—the

same countenance, delicate and interesting,—the same nervous eye, and look of shrinking fear,—but now a smart cap on her head, which was like a mockery of her sadness and melancholy. She eyed me curiously and fearfully as I asked for Mr W—te, and ran with an irregular and irresolute motion to shew me in. I made no inquiry of her further, nor did I look at her intently to rouse her suspicion, for I had got all I wanted, even that which a glance carried to me. But if she shewed me quickly in, I could see that she had no disposition to run away when the door of the room opened. No doubt she was about the outside of it. I took care she could learn nothing there, but few will ever know what she had suffered there.

I questioned Mr W—te confidentially; told him all the circumstances; and ended by inquiring whether any of his female domestics had shewn any *signs* for a time bypast.

“No,” said he; “such a thing could hardly have escaped me; and if I had suspected, I would have made instant inquiry, for the credit of my house.”

“What is the name of the young girl who opened the door to me?”

“Mary B——n, but I cannot allow myself to suspect her; she is a simple-hearted, innocent creature, and is totally incapable of such a thing.”

“But is she not pale and sickly-looking, as if some such event as that I allude to might have taken place in her case?”

"Why, yes ; I admit," said he, "that she is paler than she used to be, but she has been often so while with me ; and then her conduct is so circumspect, I cannot listen to the suspicion."

"Might I see the others ?" said I.

"Certainly ;" replied he, "I can bring them here upon pretences."

"You may, except Mary B——n," said I ; "I have seen enough of her."

And Mr W——te brought up several females on various pretences, all of whom I surveyed with an eye not more versed in these indications than what a very general knowledge of human nature might have enabled one to be. Each of them bore my scrutiny well and successfully—all healthy, blithe queans, with neither blush nor paleness to shew anything wrong about the heart or conscience.

"All these are free," said I, "but I must take the liberty to ask you to shew me the openings to the soil-pipe belonging to the tenement, but in such a way as not to produce suspicion ; for I think you will find Mary about the door of the room."

And so it turned out, for no sooner had we come forth than we could see the poor girl escaping by the turn of the lobby.

"*That is my lass,*" said I to myself.

The investigation of the pipes shewed me nothing. There was not in any of the closets a drop of blood, nor sign of any kind of violence to a child, nor in any

bed-room a trace of a birth, and far less a murder ; but I could not be driven from my theory. My watcher of the morning of day was she who had taken the light of the morning of life from the new-born babe.

I next consulted with Dr Littlejohn, and he saw at once the difficulties of the case. The few facts, curious and adventitious as they were, which had come under my own eye, were almost for myself alone ; no other would have been moved by them, because they might have been supposed to be coloured by my own fancy. Yet I felt I had a case to make out in some way, however much the reputation of a poor young girl should be implicated, and not less my own character and feelings. As yet, proof there was none. To have taken up a girl merely because she had a pale face—the only indication I could point to that others could judge of—was not according to my usual tactics ; but I could serve my purpose without injuring the character of the girl were she innocent, and yet convict her if guilty. So I thought ; and my plan, which was my own, was, as a mere tentative one, free from the objections of hardship or cruelty to the young woman.

About twelve o'clock I rolled up the leg of the child in a neat paper parcel, and writing an address upon it to Mary B——n, at Mr W——te's, I repaired to the inn. Mary, who was not exclusively "the maid of the inn," did not this time open the door ; it was done by one whose ruddy cheeks would have freed her from the glance of the keenest detective.

"Is Mary B——n in?" asked I.

"Yes," she replied somewhat carelessly; for I need not say there was not a suspicion in the house, except in the breast of Mr W—te, who was too discreet and prudent to have said a word.

"Tell her I have a parcel from the country to her," said I, walking in, and finding my way into a room.

The girl went for Mary, and I waited a considerable time; but then, probably, she might have been busy making the beds, perhaps her own, in a careful way, though she scarcely needed, after my eye had surveyed the sheets and blankets, as well as everything else. At length I heard some one at the door,—the hand not yet on the catch—a shuffling, a sighing, a flustering—the hand then applied and withdrawn—a sighing again—at length a firmer touch,—the door opened, and Mary stood before me. She was not pale now; a sickly flush overspread the lily—the lip quivered—the body swerved; she would have fallen had not she called up a little resolution not to betray herself.

"What—what—you have a parcel for me, sir?" she stuttered out.

"Yes, Mary," said I, as I still watched her looks, now changed again to pure pallor.

"Where is it from?" said she again, with still increased emotion.

"I do not know," said I, "but here it is," handing it to her.

The moment her hand touched it, she shrunk from

the soft feel as one would do from that of a cold snake, or why should I not say the dead body of a child? It fell at her feet, and she stood motionless, as one transfixed, and unable to move even a muscle of the face.

"That is not the way to treat a gift," said I. "I insist upon you taking it up."

"O God, I cannot!" she cried.

"Well, I must do so for you," said I, taking up the parcel. "Is that the way you treat the presents of your friends; come," laying it on the table, "come, open it; I wish to see what is in it."

"I cannot,—oh, sir, have mercy on me,—I cannot."

"Then do you *wish* me to do it for you?"

"Oh, no, no,—I would rather you took it away," she said, with a spasm.

"But why so? what do you think is in it?" said I, getting more certain every moment of my woman.

"Oh, I do not know," she cried again; "but I cannot open that dreadful thing."

And as she uttered the words, she burst into tears, with a suppressed scream, which I was afraid would reach the lobby. I then went to the door, and snibbed it. The movement was still more terrifying to her, for she followed me, and grasped me convulsively by the arm. On returning to the table, I again pointed to the parcel.

"You must open that," said I, "or I will call in your master to do it for you."

"Oh,—for God's sake, no," she ejaculated; "I will,—oh, yes, sir, be patient,—I will, I will."

But she didn't—she couldn't. Her whole frame shook, so that her hands seemed palsied, and I am sure she could not have held the end of the string.

"Well," said I, drawing in a chair, and seating myself, "I shall wait till you are able."

The sight of the poor creature was now painful to me, but I had my duty to do, and I knew how much depended on her applying her own hand to this strange work. I sat peaceably and silently, my eye still fixed upon her. She got into a meditation—looked piteously at me, then fearfully at the parcel—approached it—touched it—recoiled from it—touched it again and again—recoiled;—but I would wait.

"Why, what is all this about?" said I calmly, and I suspect even with a smile on my face, for I wanted to impart to her at least so much confidence as might enable her to do this one act, which I deemed necessary to my object. "What is all this about? I only bear this parcel to you, and for aught I know, there may be nothing in it to authorise all this terror. If you are innocent of crime, Mary, nothing should move you. Come, undo the string."

And now, having watched my face, and seen the good-humour on it, she began to draw up a little, and then picked irresolutely at the string.

"See," said I, taking out a knife, "this will help you."

But whether it was that she had been busy with a knife that morning for another purpose than cutting the bread for her breakfast, I know not; she shrunk

from the instrument, and, rather than touch it, took to undoing the string with a little more resolution. And here I could not help noticing a change that came over her almost of a sudden. I have noticed the same thing in cases where necessity seemed to be the mother of energy. She began to gather resolution from some thought; and, as it appeared, the firmness was something like a new-born energy to overcome the slight lacing of the parcel. That it was an effort bordering on despair, I doubt not, but it was not the less an effort. Nay, she became almost calm, drew the ends, laid the string upon the table, unfolded the paper, laid the object bare, and—the effort was gone—fell senseless at my feet.

I was not exactly prepared for this. I rose, and seeing some spirits in a press, poured out a little, wet her lips, dropped some upon her brow, and waited for her return to consciousness; and I waited longer than I expected,—indeed, I was beginning to fear I had carried my experiment too far. I thought the poor creature was dead, and for a time I took on her own excitement and fear, though from a cause so very different. I bent over her, watching her breath, and holding her wrist; at last a long sigh,—oh, how deep!—then a staring of the eyes, and a rolling of the pupils, then a looking to the table, then a rugging at me as if she thought I had her fate in my hands.

“Oh, where is it?” she cried. “Take it away; but you will not hang me, will you? Say you will not, and I will tell you all.”

I got her lifted up, and put upon a chair. She could now sit, but such was the horror she felt at the grim leg, torn as it was at the one end, and blue and hideous, that she turned her eyes to the wall, and I believe her smart cap actually moved by the rising of the black hair beneath it.

"Mary B——n," said I, calmly, and in a subdued voice, "you have seen what is in the parcel?"

"Oh, yes, sir; oh, yes," she muttered.

"Do you know what it is?"

"Oh, too well, sir; too well."

"Then tell me," said I.

"Oh, sir," she cried, as she threw herself upon the floor on her knees, and grasped and clutched me round my legs, and held up her face,—her eyes now streaming with tears, her cap off, her hair let loose,—“if I do, will you take pity on me, and not hang me?”

"I can say, at least, Mary," I replied, "that it will be better for you if you make a clean breast, and tell the truth. I can offer no promises. I am merely an officer of the law; but, as I have said, I know it will be better for you to speak the truth."

"Well, then, sir," she cried, while the sobbing interrupted every other word; "well, then, before God, whom I have offended, but who may yet have mercy upon a poor sinner left to herself,—and, oh, sir, seduced by a wicked man,—I confess that I bore that child—but, sir, it was dead when it came into the world; and, stung by shame, and wild with pain, I cut it into pieces,

and put it down into the soil-pipe ; and may the Lord Jesus look down upon me in pity !”

“ Well, Mary,” said I, as I lifted her up,—feeling the weight of a body almost dead,—and placed her again upon the chair ; “ you must calm yourself, and then go and get your shawl and bonnet, for you must——”

“ Go with you to prison,” she cried, “ and be hanged. Oh, did you not lead me to believe you would save me ?”

“ No,” said I ; “ but I can safely tell you that, if what you have told me is true, that the child was still-born, you will not be hanged, you will only be confined for a little. Come,” I continued, letting my voice down, “ come, rise, and get your shawl and bonnet. Say nothing to any one, but come back to me.”

But I had not an easy task here. She got wild again at the thought of prison, crying—

“ I am ruined. Oh, my poor mother ! I can never look her in the face again ; no, nor hold up my head among decent people.”

“ Softly, softly,” said I. “ You must be calm, and obey ; or see,” holding up a pair of handcuffs, “ I will put these upon your wrists.”

Again necessity came to my help. She rose deliberately—stood for a moment firm—looked into my face wistfully, yet mildly—then turned up her eyes, ejaculating, “ Thy will, O Lord, be done,”—and went out.

I was afraid, notwithstanding, she might try to

escape, for she seemed changeful ; and a turn might come of frantic fear, which would carry her off, not knowing herself whither she went. I, therefore, watched in the lobby, to intercept her in case of such an emergency ; but the poor girl was true to her purpose. I tied up the fatal parcel which had so well served my object, put it under my arm, and quietly led her over to the office.

Her confession was subsequently taken by the Crown officers, and she never swerved from it. I believe if I had not fallen upon this mode of extorting an admission, the proof would have failed, for every vestige of mark had been carefully removed ; while the deception she had practised on the people of the inn had been so adroit, that no one had the slightest suspicion of her. The other parts of the child were not, I think, got ; indeed it was scarcely necessary to search for them, confined as they were, probably, in the pipes. She was tried before the High Court ; and, in the absence of any evidence to shew that the child had ever breathed,—which could only have been ascertained by examining some parts of the chest,—she was condemned upon the charge of concealment, and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.

The Ash-bucket.*

IN the case I am now to give, I have no reason to make fault with my horn-and-hoof friend. I could find none of his ordinary weakness, for he certainly did not only his best, but in a style so adroit, that if he had been the only person in the world he would have had reason to gratify himself with his own blessing—always, of course, framed so as to suit the wish that formed it; but, fortunately, he is not the only person in the world, for he was foiled in even his very best laid scheme, so that Burns might have put him in company with the unfortunate “mice and men,” only he had no name to give him beginning with the lip-letter; and then the rhythm would have suffered, as a friend of mine said, knowing I could not discover such learned niceties myself.

A watch was amissing one morning from a house in Picardy Place, in 1834. The story was mysterious. A man called Gardner, a sleazy connexion of the servant's, had been in the kitchen; and when the girl's back was turned he had slipped into the drawing-room, where he had been seen by the lady, who he probably thought

* *Anglicè*, dust-box.

was out. She missed a gold watch, and running into the kitchen charged the man. He denied. A policeman was got, who searched him, but the article was not found on him. When he was brought up to the lieutenant he was discharged, though an old offender, for the good reason that no man saw him take the watch, nor was the same found on his person. Then the servant was suspected by us, but the lady had such faith in her that she could not join us in our suspicions; and the whole affair was rendered doubtful by the fact, that the door had been open during the forenoon while the girl was down to the cellar for coals.

It was altogether, in short, a mess, in which no detective "idea" could be discovered by Genius herself. There were suspicions as evident as millstones looked at through a microscope,—collusion between Gardner and the servant, the hiding of the watch by the latter, and so forth,—but these were rebutted by other considerations. The servant had been there for years with nothing amissing, and people don't fall into the devil's hands all at once with a fling as lovers do; and then the open door was enough itself to let in wind sufficient for the dispelling of these thin clouds of gas smoke.

When in the evening I walked down to Picardy Place, I did not take credit to myself, nor do I do so now, for supposing I could, merely by walking the street and looking at the door, clear up the mystery. I went only because the place had for me the usual charm of places where secret things have been done.

It was dark, and about nine o'clock. I was passing from York Place to Picardy Place, north side, expecting to see nothing thereabouts but those spectres of cinder-women, who, once in the lava streets, have a liking for charred things. After all, they are not very troublesome to us. If they get a silver spoon now and then, and don't give it up, we can't say much: the thing is thrown out, and they are so poor. Strange beings though, with characters never studied, for what interest can there be in a poor creature going about grubbing among ashes, and picking up things you would wonder at? for it must be confessed, that cinders, to give them a gleam of heat at night in the holes they live in, are not the main object. Hopeful souls even in ashes, they expect something to "turn up" out of what others cast away. Yes, I say, they have characters,—they won't steal unless the thing comes half in their way, for they have no courage to enable them to be regular thieves. Then they have almost always been *Vesuvienne*s, as they are to the end shrivelled toys of man's heartlessness, and all their anger burned out of them by misery. To ask how they live would be vain, for they don't live,—they only breathe and sigh, on food that is enough for their appetite, which is gone.

I saw them at their work, shadows of creatures going from bucket to bucket. They never look at you; they don't think they have any right to look at a human being, having renounced the thoughts and feelings of our kind. And few look at them; fewer still give them

anything, while sturdier petitioners get shillings and sixpences. But as I was thinking something in this way, I saw a male cinder-wife—excuse the expression; a man went up stealthily to a bucket, and bent down, and then left it again. I could not comprehend this anyhow. Why had he not the bag? and without the bag, what could he do with cinders? I suspected he had seen me, for he stood in the middle of the street for a time till I had passed. My curiosity was excited; yet, after all, what more easy than to suppose he intended transporting the bucket after turning out the ashes? a bit of humble larceny often enough practised by the lowest class of thieves. I stood at the turn of Broughton Street, and saw him approach the pavement again. This time he was bolder for his great enterprise, for I saw him lift the bucket and carry it off towards Leith Walk.

“And not turned out the cinders,” muttered I, as I came up to the spot where the utensil had lain.

Small things strike more sharply at times than big. I must see. He will empty it on the middle of the street. No, he doesn't; he carries it on and on. He didn't intend to empty it, and I might be left in rather a curious mystery.

“Well, my lad,” I said on getting up to him, opposite the end of the north side of Picardy Place, “what are you to do with the bucket?”

The old answer—

“What's that to you?”

An answer which, if he had recognised me, as he didn't, he would not have ventured, though I knew him. He had been six times through my hands, but I shied his looks, and kept my hat well down.

"I want to know what you intend doing with the bucket?"

"The bucket?"

"Ay, the bucket."

"It's my own."

"No, I saw you lift it."

"I'm going to empty it."

"Why?"

No answer.

"Then, Gardner," said I, looking at him, "why *don't* you empty it?"

"And so I do," he said, as he heard his name; and suiting the action, not only to the word, but the fear, he threw it down, and was for off.

"No, my old friend," said I, as I seized him; "not so fast, or there will be a greater *dust*."

As I held him, I cast my eye, not without an "idea," upon the ashes. There was something else there than charred coal. I stooped, still holding on by my man, and picked up a gold watch.

"How was I to know that was there?" said he, with an air of triumph.

"Because you put it there in the morning, when you were in Miss ——'s house, under the fear of a search."

"It's a lie, and a foolish one; how could I know that it would be allowed to remain?"

"Easily answered," said I; "but it is not my intention at present to satisfy your curiosity. Take up the bucket and come with me."

In the meantime, up comes the servant, crying out if any one had seen a man with a bucket.

"Yes," said I, "here is the man and the bucket too."

"You, Gardner!" said the girl, "what, in the name of wonder, do you want with my bucket?"

"It was not the bucket he wanted," said I, "but this watch, which your mistress missed in the morning."

The girl's head ran round as she looked at the man and me, and the bucket and the dust.

"Good heavens!" she cried, "I will be blamed and ruined. It will be said I put it there that he, who is my cousin—oh that I ever knew him!—might find it when I put out my ashes at night."

"Never you fear," said I, for I saw by the girl's unfeigned surprise that she was innocent. "The whole story is clear enough."

"Ay, to you and to me," said she; "but how will I get my mistress to see it? Yes, the bucket was in the kitchen, and when the policeman came it must have been put there by Gardner."

"All too clear to need so much talk," said I.

"Oh!" cried the terrified girl, "but will you come with me now, and satisfy her?"

"No; I must take this precious cousin of yours to

the office, bucket and watch and all, and you will be called upon in the morning; meanwhile, go home and tell your mistress that M'Levy requested you to say that he thinks you innocent. If the lady has a spark of sense, she will see it all herself."

But still she wept pitifully.

"Ah, sir, our family have been ruined by this black-guard; my father fed him and cled him, and he has been a disgrace to us all through life; and now, at last, he would be the mean of making me suspected of robbing the best of mistresses."

All the while, the hardened scoundrel looked as unmoved as the piece of wood which he used as the mean of his villany.

"Dry up your tears, my good girl," said I; "we'll never trouble you again, take my word for it."

And still blubbering, so that the passers-by began to stand and inquire, she hung by me, imploring me to go with her and satisfy her mistress. It was with some difficulty I shook her off, but at length I succeeded; and as I proceeded upwards, I still heard her sobbing among the crowd. Gardner was silent—perfectly unaffected at the misery into which he had brought his relation. He was safely provided for.

In the morning I went to Picardy Place. The girl opened the door, with a look so thankful, as if she considered me her preserver.

"Have you told your mistress?"

"Oh, sir, I couldn't. I have not slept a wink all night."

"Not told her, foolish girl!" said I.

"No; but you will, and then she will believe."

"Of course she will, and she will be better satisfied when she hears, as I hope she will by and by, that Gardner gets a passage over the seas."

The girl ran quicker than she ever did along that lobby before, opened the door, then shut it behind me,—to watch and listen, no doubt; and who could blame her?

In a few words I explained the whole story to Miss ——, a sharp and benevolent woman; she saw through the trick in a moment.

"But your poor servant is in a terrible state about it, lest you should suspect she had any hand in it."

Without saying a word, she went to the door,—

"Mary," she called, with a loud voice.

No answer; Mary was caught; she was standing up by the wall, so that her mistress could not see her.

"Mary," louder still.

"Yes, mem," said a voice at her very side.

"Stupid girl, come in here;" and she took the timid creature by the hand, and dragged her in.

"What are you afraid of?"

Whimpering and sobbing.

"Give up; I have no fault to find with you."

"Oh, but you have been so kind a mistress," she said, in a choking kind of way, "that I could not bear—no—I could not bear—bear the very thought that you should suspect me."

And then came another burst.

"Girl, have I not told you that I am satisfied with Mr M'Levy's explanation, and that you are no more guilty of taking my watch than Mr M'Levy himself?"

"God bless you, mcm, and God bless you, sir, and now I'm happy."

And happy she ran away, relieved of a night-mare which had been upon her throbbing bosom all night, and, not contented with its night work, had clung to her all the morning.

"Ah, this accounts," said her mistress, "for the miserable look she has borne since ever she rose ; but that girl will be dearer to me than ever."

That same day Miss —— and Mary came up and were examined. There was no doubt of Gardner's guilt, yet it was viewed as a strange case, altogether without precedent. The magistrate said that "there really was no substantial evidence against the man upon which he could be charged for stealing the watch. It was altogether circumstantial ; no doubt he did it, but no one saw him put the watch in the receptacle where it was found, nor was the watch actually, in a proper sense, found upon him. He might say that if he wanted to find the article, he could have rummaged the bucket,—a far more likely act than running away with a load of dust. Indeed, it is not easy to see why he should have followed a course which was so likely to bring upon him the very people on the pavement. It is clear, however, that he may be charged with stealing the bucket itself,

and, if you please, the cinders ; and, as I am told he has been convicted before, the issue will be the same. It is proper for me to add, for the sake of the girl, that, in my opinion, she is perfectly innocent. It is impossible to bring home to her even a suspicion ; for even, on the supposition of concert, how could she know that the ashes and the watch would not be tossed into the cart before her cousin came to take it away ? Then she was not on the stair watching the result of a scheme ; she came down only after the article was taken away, and finding it gone, ran after the thief, not even knowing it was Gardner that took it."

Good news for poor Mary, and, perhaps, better afterwards, when her never-do-well relative was transported for seven years, just for stealing a bucket. He was obliged to swallow the shell and throw out the kernel.

In this case, vice did not shew her usual weakness. Everything was adroitly played, with the single exception, perhaps, of his running away with what he might have searched ; but then he did search, and it was only when he heard the cart that he gave way to what appeared to him to be a necessity. Is not all vice a necessity ? If it weren't, I fear I would have skeely for breakfast.

The Jewel-box.

SOMETIMES we detectives have moments of despondency. As the world is made, thieves, robbers, and murderers will persevere,—it is their nature; and the more they achieve, the more they would. They are artists inspired by their art. On the other side, we must progress as well. We are the checks to nature when she gets rampant, and a little out-o'-sides; and we are vexed when she gets ahead of us. The charges on the side of our books against honesty had been—I am speaking of August 1845—getting heavier and heavier; and Mr Moxey was nervous, because I was not bringing a *per contra*. Yet I was as keen in the nose, eye, and ear as ever; and never allowed a glimpse, sniff, or whisper to go without its proper attention and response. The artists were buzzing about me like blue-bottles, attacking fresh and stale, and yet their wings were unsinged. No wonder I was a little out of humour that day. I was walking down the High Street, with never a hope of a transportation to transport me, or a suspension to hang up my disappointment. My flies, to use my old simile, were either unsuited to the sky or the water, or

they were known, though they were changed from the red-hackle of my anger to the palmer of my humility. On my way, I happened to fix my eye on Mrs Bushe, (before, Miss Noel,) hurrying up the High Street. Ah! there is an actress, as I am an actor; yet how different our deserts! She transports, so do I. She charms by singing, I by swinging. No great difference in what learned people call the literal way, yet how wide asunder in reality! Her friends applaud her, and throw money at her; mine curse me, and would starve me. Nor was I altogether pleased with old Mother Providence, for I had a notion that I did as much good in my way as she.

Will any man, more knowing than I, account for such thoughts, brought up by a passing vision? I had seen Mrs Bushe before, and never thought of such things; and why should I now, merely because the lady looked a little more excited than she was when singing "Nid noddin'," or "Auld Robin Gray?" I fear I would get no answer; nor do I wish any, for I've been long satisfied that there are things in the world—even my own leadings and wonderful chances, as they are called—which your very wise gentry could make no more of than my poor self.

Still sauntering, with my aide-de-camp behind me, I could scarcely get quit of my regrets at these young gamesters on every side of me, who made such a difference between me, by allowing me no influence over them, and her, whom they went with their stolen shillings to

hear every night in the "gods" yonder, while I was among blue devils. I had got to the Bridge, had crossed, and was for down to the Canongate, where the stream, always turbid, with a shadow from the high sides, gives hope to the moral angler; and just as I passed the mouth of Halkerston's Wynd, the next to the Bridge on the left hand going down, I saw a clot of my celebrities standing a good way within it. No doubt they had arrived there by the stair behind the Theatre,—at least that was my thought,—and by and by they would emerge at the top. A glance satisfied me they were examining something. I beckoned my assistant—

"Down, and take a man with you, by the stairs by Adam Black's old shop,—get to the foot of the close, and there keep sentry. There's a nest in the middle of the close, and let none escape your way."

The man was off, and next I hailed two of the High Street perambulators—

"You stand here, each on a side; and if you see any young celebrities come running up the close, grip 'em, and hold fast till I come."

"All right, sir."

Giving time for my scout by the stairs, I walked down the close. The students of the piece of art which so claimed their attention were still there; and so studious were they, with all their heads huddled together,—so like Mr Faed's scholars over the school-master's watch, busy taking down the works, all the while the dominie, with birch in hand, was looking in at

the school door,—that they did not see my face until it was presented over the shoulder of him who held the object—no other than a splendid jewel-box, filled with gold chains, bracelets, necklaces, brooches, rings, and other *bijouterie*, which made even my eyes reel. Down went the lid with a click of the steel spring, and off flew the students in rays from all this glory. I seized, of course, him who held the treasure,—an old fricud, who had given me as much pain by his prudence as he did others by his imprudence. As for the others, the bags of the net were ready, each with its *cul-de-sac*; and the harder they ran, the greater the bang against the woven hemp. Two went up and two down, and the fifth was mine, jewel-box and all.

When I got to the top of the close, I found each policeman with his charge; and, looking down, I saw my assistant and his companion coming up, equally engaged with their couple. A few minutes brought us together, as lovingly as the different feelings of the parties would permit. So we all marched on, with a gathering crowd about us, to the office.

But here comes the mystery. We had scarcely passed the Bridge, when whom do I see coming down in front of us?—the same lady, Mrs Bushe, whom I had met as I came down. I looked at her again, but was now in no humour for dreary comparisons. Nor did she look less intensely at me. How is this, thought I; is there any sympathy between this artist and me? And still she looked, with her eye fixed upon my jewel-box. Nor was

this all, for she made her way through the crowd, and approaching me, said—

“Oh, you’ve got it? How clever!”

“What?” said I, as I went along, for I couldn’t stop.

“The box.”

“Yes; I have got a box.”

“My box.”

“Your box, madam? I do not know; but if you will have the kindness to follow up, I will speak to you at the office.”

She fell back, and no doubt kept close to us. We are landed.

Having delivered my men, Captain Moxey came up to me, joined by this time by the lady.

“God bless me, M’Levy,” said the Captain, “you got no notice, did you? I sent a man after you, but he came back and said he couldn’t find you.”

“I got no notice, but I’ve got the box, and a very valuable one it is.”

“Why, you must have met Mrs Bushe as she came up to give information of the robbery of her jewel-box.”

“I did meet the lady, but she did not speak to me.”

“No,” said she, laughing with delight at the sight of her jewels all safe. “I didn’t know Mr M’Levy, though I’ve heard his name, otherwise I would have claimed his services. But, good heavens! it seems like magic. Where got you it?”

“I have not only got your jewels, madam, but my jewels—ay, five of them—and very bright ones, too;

true diamonds,—sharp, cutting, and extremely fine set-offs to detectives like me.”

“But are they all there?—let us see,” she said, anxiously, even nervously.

And opening the box, she scanned over the contents all so carefully, as if they had been darlings, as no doubt they were.

“Not a ring amissing !” she cried, exultingly ; “wonderful interposition of Providence! for they are worth more than a hundred pounds, and many of them I am to wear this very night on the stage. You must take a ticket, Mr M’Levy, from me, for I would like you to be in the pit to-night, just to hear with what spirit I shall sing—

‘Oh, bright and rare
Are the jewels I wear.’”

And, laughing again, she thanked me, and went away, with Captain Moxey’s promise that the box would be sent after her, when an inventory was made, that she might sign.

But somehow the laugh of the lady was not joined in by those who admired jewels as much as she, and not the less that they were not their own. Nor am I sure that they ever overcame the sad disappointment, not even after the Sheriff congratulated them upon the jury’s verdict of guilty, upon which followed the distribution among them of the months,—three getting six; one, nine; and another, twelve. After which they might still study those envied trinkets from the gods, as they did before those from the devils.

The Padlock.

If we are required to be sharp, why not? Is it not that there is sharpness brought against us? If we had honest people only to deal with, we would not be needed; if only the committers of mistakes and blunders, we would require only common acuteness; if only honest rogues to expose, we would do with merely ordinary powers; but when we have to encounter ingenuity, sharpened to a razor-edge by rapacity, dishonesty, and fear of punishment, we must be even more than razor-edged. It is impossible to form any idea of the wonderful devices of practised thieves without being acquainted with them. Just look at animals with instincts of preservation, and see how wonderfully they work them; and then consider that men and women have not only these instincts, but reason to help them, and you may come to have a notion of what such as I have to encounter in bringing offenders to justice. I offer a case that may help you.

Sometime in 1856, two stots were stolen from a park in Linlithgowshire. Information was sent to us, with a view to discover whether the beasts were disposed of here. Stephen Cook, an Edinburgh man, was suspected;

but the Linlithgow officers, taking the charge very much upon themselves, chiefly conducted the investigation. I did not interfere, having something else to do. The Linlithgow officers failed. They were not even sure that Cook had stolen the beasts ; and as little were they successful in getting hold of Cook, who was a very mysterious kind of being. Some of the butchers seemed to know such a man as a kind of middle salesman, occasionally selling them a beast, which, as they thought, he purchased from some grazier ; but where he lived, or how far he engaged in this trade, they could not tell. Having paid him the money, they were done with him ; and no suspicion ever entered their heads that he belonged to the Rob Roy order.

Though not undertaking the search in 1856, I was impressed with some kind of romantic idea, which had taken hold of the Linlithgow officers, that Stephen Cook was a mystery. His mother's house, in Allan's Close, was known ; yet this gave no clue, for the mother knew far less about her son than any one else. He went about the country ; he was neither of this profession nor that ; he was seldom or ever with her ; in short, she knew less about her son than even the Linlithgow officers, who thought they knew he was a cattle-lifter, as well as a cattle-seller. These notions stuck to me, and often I thought of Stephen Cook, for whom, indeed, I retained a kind of affection, merely because, like other people, I am not proof against mysteries. There is only this difference, that, while the other people only dream over them, I

have generally a desire to unravel them, and make them no mysteries at all. In short, Stephen Cook passed into the back of my box of memories, and there his image stuck, ready for any light to bring it out.

It happened that, two years afterwards, on 15th December 1858, another stot was stolen from a park on the Dalkeith Road; and information having been sent, Stephen Cook became all at once one of my desires. On inquiry, I ascertained from a Mr Purves, a butcher in Edinburgh, that a beast answering the description—for a stot has marks as well as a man—had been sold to him—by whom? no other than Stephen Cook. The mention of the name made me start. Stephen Cook again, thought I; even the mysterious Stephen Cook, who is unknown to his mother,—lives nowhere,—only turns up to Mr Purves to sell him a beast,—and then disappears, no man knows where. It is clear that Stephen Cook and I are destined to be acquainted. The matter is settled by the powers above, and there's an end on't.

I had not forgotten Allan's Close, but in the meantime, in case of disappointment there, I asked about among the butchers. Still the same answer,—“Know nothing about him,—appears occasionally and disappears,—never drinks the luck-penny,—never chaffers long,—gets his money and off, till the next time; but when that time may come round no one knows,—that's all.” I don't despise the ingenuity of other men; I knew that the Linlithgow officers had searched the mother's house,—and, no doubt, they did it thoroughly,—but the

"idea" I have spoken of so often is with me, somehow or other, my guide, in spite of all arguments,—ay, sometimes a little mirth now and then, as if the humorous gentlemen were certain that I was wrong for this once, anyhow.

It was under this guidance, accordingly, that next morning—for I wanted no time to be lost, in case Stephen Cook should take a fancy to a stot somewhere else, perhaps in Angus, where they are so fat—I got up about six, before the men leave their beats, and, having dressed in my ordinary way, I took the road to Allan's Close. I saw there the man on watch, and told him to remain at the foot of the stair, while I would take his lantern and try to find an honest man in the dark.

I then went up three stairs, and came to a door. I rapped more than once, when, at last, a voice came from behind,—

"Wha's there?"

"Are you Mrs Cook?" asks I.

"Yes; what want you at this early hour?"

"Just to speak a few words to you; open the door."

"Can ye no tell me what it is? you may be a robber for aught I ken."

"No, no, my good woman; I would be sorry to harm you, but you *must* open the door; or, just to tell you the truth, I will force it; I am on the Queen's service."

I could detect the effect of this announcement in a

flutter behind the door. I even heard the quick-coming breath, and the nervous movement of the hand as it began to finger the key, but I did not consider this an evidence of the woman's guilt; anyone would have been startled by such an announcement. The door was opened, and I entered, shewing myself my way by the lantern.

"Have you any one in the house with you?"

"No, sir," she answered, in a poor way; "I am a lone woman; there is no one lives with me."

"But haven't you a son?" I asked.

"Ay, sir; but he is never wi' me."

"How is this? has he any house of his own, that takes him away from his mother?"

"No; yet he seldom or ever comes here."

"Then where does he live? he must live somewhere."

"Dinna ken; he never comes here."

"When did you see him?" I then asked, more and more impressed with the strange character of my hero.

"I havena seen him for twa or three months, sir."

"Did you see him two months ago, then?"

"Ay; I think I did."

"You only think you did; could you be sure if I were to make it three months?"

"Weel, perhaps."

"If you know so little of him," I continued, "do any of the people below-stairs know him?"

"Oh, no, they ken naething about him ; we hae naething to do with the folks on the stair."

"Did any of them ever see him?"

"I'm no just sure if they ever did ; but I dinna ken ; maybe they may, and maybe they mayna."

"Well," said I at last, "I must search your house."

"Oh, ye're welcome to do that ; but, besides my cat and myself, there's nae leeving creature here."

"And the mice," said I, as I began to peer about.

"And the mice," said she.

The woman went and put on some dress, and I went through the two rooms, opened the presses, looked below the two beds, and saw no sign. I then got her to open any drawers she had, to see whether there was any men's apparel—coats, or shirts, or shoes,—but no, not a trace that any male creature had anything to do with that house. Like the former officers, I was at my wit's end, and my "idea" was getting to be a fiction.

I forgot to say, that the house was at the top of the stair. Outside the door of the dwelling there was a kind of coal cellar, a dark hole with a door. I opened that, and threw the light of the bull's-eye upward ; but nothing was to be seen, but a bucket or so, and cobwebs. After throwing the door to, my eye was next arrested by another cellar-like door, which was securely guarded by a padlock. Why is the one door open, and the other padlocked ? I thought. A cellar is not usually padlocked.

"What kind of a place is this," said I.

"It leads to the roof, I fancy," she replied. "I

dinna ken the use o't; maybe it belongs to the landlord."

"Then, who has the key?"

"Dinna ken, sir, and canna tell."

"But I must get in, Mrs Cook; and if you haven't the key, I will go to the landlord; and before that, I'll try the people below. Yes, I will knock every soul of them up."

"Oh, it will make a noise in the stair, sir; and I hope you'll no do that."

"Well, I can knock off the padlock with an axe," said I, and proceeded into the house again for such an instrument.

"Lord bless me," she cried, as she trotted after me, "have I no tauld ye the door just leads to the roof? and what in the name o' that's gude can you want there?"

"And why should you want to prevent me?" said I, laying hold of her axe. "If I choose to take a walk on the roof, that surely can do you no harm."

"There's nae use for breaking doors ony way," she cried, as she became more excited. "'Twill rouse a' the neighbours."

"Indeed it will, and it would please me better to get the key."

"Aweel then, but you'll no seek up when you see it's just a trap-stair leading to the roof."

"We'll speak about that after the door's open; come away with the key, for I know you have it."

And then, what appeared to me very strange, she seemed to grope in a box of ashes.

"Surely the key cannot be there?" said I.

"I dinna ken, I am just looking, for ye ken it's o' nae use to onybody, except maybe the sweeps; and really I take little care o't; and—losh, there it is—but you'll sune be satisfied that it just leads to the roof."

A long parley this, but far from being useless,—the key, with its position among the cinders, was just as mysterious as my old haunting gentleman, Stephen Cook the cattle-lifter.

I then went and undid the padlock, with the old woman beside me, watching every motion. I opened the door, and looked in.

"Now, you see, sir, that I was right; just a trap-stair for the sweeps."

And a trap sufficient to catch a rat of my size it seemed to be, for the passage was so narrow that the effort would be to crawl and even force your way up, by squeezing the sides.

"Are ye no satisfied now?" said the indefatigable woman.

"Not until I go up and come down again," said I, as, going to the top of the common stair, I called for the policeman.

He came up directly, and taking his station at the bottom of this strange passage, I put in my head and shoulders, having previously given the man his lantern to hold for a little, and hand up to me when I ascended. I found it a tough job for a man of my dimensions, but I forced my way; and having got to the top, there I was

in a garret, with the bare cupples running along, and the roof joists overhead. I now told the man to hand me the lantern, which having got, I began to glance about the bull's-eye light here and there, till I fixed it upon a man lying on a mattress in the corner. He must have thought me a strange visitor at that hour in the dark. Indeed, he could scarcely have seen my person—only the round disc of the bull's-eye glaring upon him. There was my mystery,—Stephen Cook. I took him up, he was tried at the High Court, and got twelve months. It will at once be seen, that the padlock was resorted to as a cunning mode of impressing one with the idea that the opening was to an outside lumber-room, where it could not be supposed that any one could sleep; but it was the very padlock itself—resorted to by cunning to divert suspicion—that roused my suspicion.

The Boots.

ONE morning, in the year 183—, information was sent to the office that a shoemaker's shop in the West Port had been broken open, and a quantity of new boots carried off. I got the intelligence, and having been always impressed, as I have said, with the conviction that in all such cases an hour at the beginning is worth a whole day afterwards, I hurried down to examine the shop, and have a few words with the man. On looking about, I ascertained that the robber or robbers had been wonderfully moderate in their depredations, after having been at so much trouble. Only a few pairs had been taken away, and, as it were, picked out pretty deliberately. Then, why at so much trouble with so humble a shop, when so many larger ones, containing valuables, might have been entered, with perhaps less manipulation, and with a hundred times more booty? I at once fell on the suspicion that some one acquainted with the shop was the depredator; and, moreover, that he was single-handed—altogether upon his own hook, as we say. On this supposition, I questioned the shoemaker back and fore, and he soon began to see that some one of his own

people must have done the deed. Nor was it much longer till he singled out a discharged workman, who had come to him as a kind of tramp from Glasgow.

"His name?" asked I.

"John G——."

"Is he presently employed?"

"No, he is going about idle."

"Did he ever hint of any intention of going back to Glasgow?"

"No, he told me in the shop here that he was going to Inverness."

"What brought him to the shop? Had he any other thing to say than that he was going to Inverness?"

"Now, when you set me a-thinking," replied the shoemaker, "he had *nothing* else to say."

"And therefore he came just to say that," I muttered, giving expression rather to my own thoughts than wishing to enlighten the shoemaker.

I did not see that I could get any more, nor was I dissatisfied with the mere fact that the peripatetic snab had been at the trouble, before supplying himself with more boots than he could wear the soles of in his journey, to make this kind communication to his old master. Thieves and robbers are great speakers by contraries, so that were you to *follow* them round the world, you would meet them mid-way about the Cape of Good Hope at that moment when you had no hope. They use an easy cipher, which we have only to turn upside down; but it is not that you must seek them south when they have

sworn they are on the tramp for the north,—you must often expect them at “Loch Drunkie,” in Perthshire, when they have been bent on drinking the sober waters of the crystal “Ninewells” of Berwickshire,—one well not being enough for the demands of what Dr Miller calls—so obscurely to simple people like me—their *nephalism*, which I have *detected* means no more than just temperance or sobriety. I must get my snab with the boots anyhow; and it was clear I could get no further help from the master.

On leaving the shop, I went direct to Princes Street,—of course with an idea in my mind, and somehow I have always been contented with one idea when I could not get another; and the advantage of sticking by one is, that the other don't jostle it and turn you about in a circle when you should go in a straight line. My line was accordingly straight enough, but not to *Inverness*. I went west, intending to question some people at the Hay-weights as to what kind of folks had passed about that early hour in the morning when even the most passable-looking gentry on the stravaig are kenspeckled. I suspected he would have a bag; and a man with a bag on his back at gray dawn does not usually carry it as an offering of faggots to the rising sun; and then a bag has a mystery about it even to those who never saw Burke with his. On going forward I met a man who had clearly come along the Glasgow road—even a better customer than those at the Hay-weights: at least I never yet encountered a traveller on a solitary road who

was not able to tell me something about the wayfarers he has met on his way,—nay, though they belong to the inferior tribes, he will notice whether it is a Brownie or a Hawkie, so curious are people about common objects when they have nothing uncommon to occupy their minds.

“How far have you come?” said I.

“About ten miles,” replied my man; “and the deil clip them short, for I’m tired, and my boots are clean worn through.”

“And what is that you are carrying?” said I, with that unavoidable curiosity that belongs to us.

“Just a pair o’ thae same things,” replied he; “I got them cheap for five shillings frae a pedlar, about twa miles on.”

“Let me see them,” said I.

“Weel, I didna steal them ony way, and ye’re welcome,” he said, as he undid the paper, and shewed me a pair of boots, with my West Port customer’s name stamped upon them. A cab at this moment came up.

“Ho, there!” I cried to the cabman, who drew up; and, turning to my friend, “You’ll just step in, and ride a bit with me. I want to speak to you a little about the boots.”

“The boots!” said the man, as he obeyed me almost mechanically, perhaps as much through fear as a kind of notion he had that I was to drive him into town; but when he heard me tell the driver to go on at a gallop along the Glasgow road, and found himself carried along

at so hard a pace, he cried out, "Lor', man, this is my road hame again, and it's to Edinburgh I am bound!"

"Well, well," replied I, "you'll be in Edinburgh by and by; but I am curious about the boots. They are so good and so cheap that I would like to get a pair from the same pedlar, and I'll just take you with me to help me to bargain for as cheap a pair to myself."

"The deil's in you for a queer chield," he replied, in amazement; "but this is ae way and a half to buy a pair of boots. I canna gang—stop there!"

"Be quiet, sir," said I, shewing him my baton, the sight of which calmed him in a moment. "Drive on."

Nor did my astonished friend speak a word more for several minutes, confounded as he was with his new position. The driver, who knew me, kept his whip in a whirl, and our speed rather increased than diminished, till we got beyond Corstorphine, when my companion shooting out a long neck,—

"Yonder he is," cried he.

"Stop," said I to the driver, "when you get up to a man with a bag."

Nor were we very many minutes when the cab stopped, and my snab—for it was the very man—stopped also to see what was to turn up. A moment satisfied him that he and his bag were the cause of all this trouble, though I am not sure if he knew me, only the sight of his customer probably told him that he had been informed on by the ungrateful wretch he had favoured with so good

a bargain. In a moment, the bag was thrown off his back, and he was off at only a cobbler's pace.

"No use, my friend," I cried, making after him; "I want a pair of boots of you."

And seizing him, I brought him back to where the bag lay.

"Open it," said I, "and let me see your stock. You sold this man a pair at five shillings, and why not favour me?"

Even through his suspicion and doggedness there gleamed a small light of hope in his eye, and having opened the bag and shewn the boots,—

"Oh, I'll take them altogether," said I, "and this man's pair to the bargain."

And throwing the bag—into which I placed also the countryman's pair—into the cab, I put him up too, by which time he knew that he was fairly caught, and became very quiet.

"To Edinburgh, again."

On arriving at the place where I took up the countryman, I set him down.

"And now, sir," said I to my prisoner, "you pay this poor man his five shillings, and I'll *pay you* for the whole stock when I get to the High Street."

The five shillings were reluctantly told out. The countryman was overjoyed beyond measure, and I took Mr Snab to the office. The shoemaker got back his boots, and my friend six months in a place where a pair would have lasted him, if they had been *lasted* by so cunning a hand as his own, for six years.

The Blood-stained Moleskin.

MISS BALLENY, a maiden lady with considerable means, and advanced in years, occupied a first flat, with front door, and an area flat beneath, in Buccleuch Place. From some peculiar choice, it would seem, and not from necessity, she kept no regular servant, employing a woman to come occasionally, and do any duties she could not herself perform; nor is it thought she had any extreme penuriousness in her nature, that led to this choice; rather, it would seem that she preferred being alone, having discovered perhaps that the Edinburgh servants are not remarkable for either fidelity or affection towards their employers. It is certain, at least, she was an inoffensive lady, and in many respects amiable and kindly in her feelings.

One night, in February 1845, she was preparing to retire to rest, it being near ten o'clock,—seriously disposed, she had been reading her Bible, and engaged in those thoughts that become one of her years. It has often been remarked, as a strange fact in the economy of nature, that the nearer to a catastrophe, the further the thoughts from it—a kind of security into which we

are lulled by a false quietude, betokening a continuance of that peace which we could have wished to be unbroken, and which at least might be expected by those who desire to be in friendship with all men. She was startled in the midst of her lonely musings by a noise, as if some one was endeavouring to force an entry through one of the windows of the lower or area flat. Greatly fluttered, she groped her way to the lobby, which ran from the front arca-door to the back, and before she got half-way along it, she encountered a man. Giving a suppressed choking scream, she retreated towards the kitchen, where, being followed by the man, he seized a heavy poker, and struck her a terrible blow on the head. This, with all its severity, had not it would seem deprived her of sense, for she had set forth such a yell of agony, that it was heard by some of the neighbours. I have heard it said that the intention to kill is rather confirmed and made furious by a thrilling cry—a species of resistance which, expressing horror, is felt by a murderer as an impeachment of his cruelty, besides rousing his fears of being detected; and it is thought that the cruel man was thus roused, for he laid on blow after blow, till the head of his victim bore cuts to the bone as the bloody traces of the terrible onslaught. A single minute or two sufficed for the work—the woman was bathed with blood, and the hand was again raised to put a certain end to life, when an alarm was raised by the neighbours. The poker was instantly dropped, and the murderer, flying along the dark passage, tried the

door to the back ; it was locked, and he escaped by the window just as the neighbours were at his heels. He got off, but not without being so far noticed, that they could speak to his general appearance and dress.

Immediately afterwards, doctors were called, the interest displayed by the sympathisers excluding for a time all efforts at tracing the man. So far as was thought, he had made a clean escape, for the indistinct notice got of him could not have amounted to identification, and the lady, almost at the point of death, could not be questioned, nor, as the attack took place when there was scarcely a glimmer of light, could it be expected she would be able to add much to the vague notice of those who saw him escape. I was at the house next day, but it was four or five days after before I could be permitted to question her ; and even then, I found it possible to get only some marks which could not afford me much aid. I ascertained, however, partly from her own lips, in broken accents, and partly from the neighbours, just as much as satisfied me, that the man was a young fellow about eighteen or twenty, and that he wore a lightish moleskin jacket and trowsers. Nothing could be more indefinite, as the dress is that worn by thousands of working men, and the age amounted to nothing.

Next day I was in the High Street, not knowing well how to turn, for where, in the wide expanse of the old town, filled with so many dens, and those often crammed with people of all kinds, was I to find the owner of *the* moleskin jacket and trousers ? There were hundreds

around me dressed in this common garb : he might as well be among these as in a house, for being certain he was not seen, he would not think it necessary to skulk ; and then he had taken nothing with him by which the crime could be brought home to him. The allusions I have made to chance may tire readers, as well as lay my narratives open to suspicion ; yet certain it is, that at that minute, when my eyes were busy surveying the crowded street, my attention was suddenly arrested by one I knew to be a thief, and who wore a moleskin jacket and trousers. I immediately walked after him, and it struck me that his dress looked like as if it had been washed and dried very recently. This made me curious ; and as he walked on, I quickened my steps till I came nearer him, so as to have a better view of his jacket. I thought I could perceive blotches here and there, very like as if marks of blood had been ineffectually attempted to be washed out. I became at length so satisfied, that I stopped him.

“George,” said I, for I knew him of old, “you have got your jacket newly washed ; but, oh, man, it’s not well done.”

“What do you mean ?” said he.

“Why,” said I, “you have forgotten to rub out the stains of Miss Balleny’s blood.”

In an instant every trace of blood was absent from his cheek, however it stuck to his moleskin—yes, he was instantly pale, and struck dumb.

“Come,” said I, “I wish to examine those marks

better, and I would rather make the investigation in the office."

I accordingly took him there, in the midst of all the ordinary protestations and threatenings, and soon got my suspicions confirmed by the opinions of others. As soon as Miss Balleny was supposed to be able to stand the look of him, he was taken to her bedside. I shall never forget the look of that lady, as she brought her nervous eye to bear upon the man who was supposed to be he who did all that bloody work upon her. A shiver seemed to run over her whole body, as if the sight had brought back to her the terrible feelings of that lone and dark hour. It seemed that there had been some glimmer, either from the kitchen fire or from the street lamp through the window, I forget which, but there had been enough to enable her to distinguish his dress and general appearance ; for, after gazing at him for a time, she said, "O God, that is the very man!" We afterwards got some of the neighbours to add something like identification, and we thought we had enough, with the blood-stains, to authorise a conviction.

The Crown officer having got all the evidence that was to be had, George Kerr was brought to trial before the High Court for the attempt to murder and the housebreaking. Miss Balleny was put into the box as the principal witness ; but it became soon apparent that the poor lady had suffered too much to permit of the continuance of that recollection which had served on occasion of the prior meeting. Her mind was gone,

At one time she was positive, at another only suspicious, at another doubtful, only to be more positive again, as the changing thought flickered through her brain. The other witnesses were decided enough as to the dress and generalities ; and the washed blood-stains were as decidedly spoken to as marks of such a kind could be ; but the fatality lay in Miss Balleny's incapacity ; and the jury, after a discriminative charge, brought in a verdict of "not guilty."

All my efforts had thus gone for nothing ; but my pride of detection was hurt, and I felt much inclination to stick by my man. I accordingly ascertained that he had gone by the boat to Stirling ; and though he had thus left my bounds, he did not take with him my desire to look after his welfare. Nor was it long before my kind demon helped me in my solicitude, for a day or two afterwards the Stirling authorities sent us information that the shop of a Mr Meek had been broken into, on *that* very evening Kerr had left Edinburgh, by a young man answering to his description, and a sum of money, as well as a silver watch, had been abstracted as booty.

It was now my duty to watch again for my man, though I had small hope he would return so soon to town ; nor did he. He had gone direct to Glasgow, with the view of getting the silver watch disposed of at a pawn-shop. There he was signally unfortunate, for the Stirling authorities had sent a description of the watch and the man to the Glasgow police, who had spread the

intelligence among the pawnbrokers. Accordingly, when Kerr offered the article at a pawn-shop there, the man to whom it was presented declared immediately that it was stolen, and, sliding between Kerr and the door, endeavoured to detain him. The effort was vain. Kerr darted past him, and outran his pursuers.

Of all this we got timely knowledge, and now I had another chance. Always keeping the moth-instinct in view, I suspected that he would be back to his old haunts; and in this case I was made more than usually hopeful, in counting that the money taken at Stirling must have been spent, and the want of wings to fly further would send him crawling to his old nest. My former inquiries had enabled me to know that his mother lived in Macdowall Street. Thither I went, and somehow or other I felt a kind of certainty that I would find him. I knocked at the door with much confidence, and perhaps, on that account, with much humility and gentleness. Mrs Kerr herself answered, and I remember the conversation—

“Well, Mrs Kerr, have you any one living with you?” asked I.

“Nobody, sir.”

“Quite sure?”

“Perfectly sure. I’m a lone woman, and after what has befallen my poor innocent son, I am very miserable.”

“And so you may well be,” said I, “for that was a terrible business; but have you no notion where George is?”

"No, no. I have never seen him since that day of the trial; and I fancy the poor fellow is so ashamed of having been suspected of murder that he'll never shew his face in Scotland again."

"And have you no lodgers?" I inquired.

"Not a living soul, sir."

"Well," said I, "I'll just step in and see."

"You are very welcome," she answered, just in that involuntary way that has told me a hundred times that there is somebody in some place where there is nobody; and so we often need to act against the rule that a person cannot be in two places at the same time.

And passing her, I looked round the place she used as a kitchen. No concealing place there. I then opened the other room, and saw nobody; nor did I expect, as she had time enough before answering my knock to make any convenient arrangements.

"Here is a closet," said I.

"No, sir; just a cupboard for odds and ends."

"Locked," said I. "Do you usually lock up your cups and saucers?"

"What I use are in the kitchen," she replied, getting, as I saw, alarmed.

"And have you not got the key?"

"No, it is lost."

Ah! the old story, I thought.

"Well, if it is lost," said I, quietly, "it is the more necessary that search should be made for it. You go and get it *where* it was lost."

"How could it be lost if I knew where it is?" said she, thinking me serious, no doubt.

"Why, that is just a curious part of the case," said I; "and another is, that if you don't go and get it where it was lost, I will get an axe in the kitchen and break open the door."

"What? do you think my son is there?" said she, in affected wonder.

"Yes," said I. "I think his shame has gone off, and he has faced Scotland again. Get me the key, quick, or ——" and I made for the kitchen.

"There," said she, as she drew it out of her pocket; "the Lord's will be done."

And there, upon opening the door, was that blood-thirsty man who had so ruthlessly smashed the head of the aged lady, who never did him a trace of injury, standing bolt upright in a narrow cupboard, which scarcely permitted him to move.

"Ah! once more, George," said I.

The fellow absolutely ground his teeth against each other till I heard the very rasping; a scowl sat on his low brow, so demoniac that if I had not been accustomed to such looks it might have made me recoil; and I believe if he had had Miss Balleny's poker, or any other poker, he would have tried his skill at laying open heads on my cranium. But for all these indications the cure is unshrinking firmness; and sure I am, if I had shewn a trace of weakness, he would have fallen upon me on the instant like a tiger.

"There is no use for these looks with me," said I; "you know me of old; so take the cuffs kindly, or worse will befall you."

"But, sir," cried the mother, when she saw her son bound, "is this never to be ended? Has George not been tried and found innocent?"

"Yes," said I. "But we are informed that he robbed a shop in Stirling that very night after he was released; so you see the trial did not shame him quite so much as you thought."

"It's a d——d lie!" burst out the fellow; "I have never been out of Edinburgh."

"To that I can swear," said the parent; for, although she had said, "The Lord's will be done," the mother came back again to lie for her murderous boy. No, no; there is no appeasing of this yearning. I have seen it working in all forms. Even if she had seen those hashes in the head of the poor lady, and the body drenched in blood, drawn by the hand of her son, she could not have stayed that yearning. The moment's horror would have been succeeded by a tear for the victim and a flood for the murderer. So true what some one said to me once—the mother's heart is the sanctuary that shuts out all detectives. It even makes sinners of good people, just as if, being the very stuff the nerve is made of, it kicks heels-over-head all the virtues, which are only phantom things flickering about in the brain.

I confess here to a weakness. When I was taking my

man up to the office, I thought all the world was looking at me. Why so? Since ever that day I saw the mangled head of that poor lady, the vision had haunted me like a ghost, and, having failed in getting the murderer convicted, the spectre followed me more and more, as if insisting I should bring him still to justice; so when I walked him up, I thought, It is done now—I have got him, and, though he won't be hanged, he will be better than hanged, for he must get on the chain and the horrible clogs, and pull his legs after him in Norfolk Island, under a scorching sun, and then he will not be obliged to *draw* the bloody head after him, for it will follow of its own accord, and every gash will make gobs at him.

So we think, and yet I have my doubts whether a man who *could* bring a heavy poker down with all his strength on the head of an unoffending female—I take the one peculiar case—is capable of relentance. The softness is not in him. I do not say that God is not able to bring it, but I do say that where such a change comes it must be a miracle.

We next sent intelligence to Stirling that the now famous George Kerr was safe in our hands. Meantime we knew that the Glasgow police had sent on the watch there, so that the watch and the watch-stealer would meet opportunely, where Mr Meek could speak both to the one and the other. It soon got known to the Crown agent who it was that had broken into Mr Meek's shop, and I do not doubt that this knowledge helped to quicken

the Stirling fiscal's wits in making a clearer case of the robbery than the Edinburgh official had been able to do. The trial was fixed for the next Circuit. Every effort was made, witnesses called from Glasgow, and all those ferreted out in Stirling that could say a single word to help so good a cause as bringing so cruel a man to justice. If it had been some years earlier, he might have been tried for his life as a housebreaker ; but as it was, it turned out as well as could be expected. He was sentenced to ten years' transportation.

No case ever gave me more satisfaction than this. The people of Edinburgh had been disappointed by the issue of the former trial, and when it was known that he had been sentenced to transportation for a robbery committed on the day of his liberation, the satisfaction was great, and all the greater that the robbery made sure of the real heartless, incurable character of the villain. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the act was worse than murder, for the lady was so desperately maimed that her recovery, with ruined intellect, was rather an additional evil to that first inflicted.

The Broker's Secret.

I HAVE often heard it said that the past part of my life must have been a harassing and painful one ; called on, as my reputation grew, in so many cases,—obliged to get up at midnight, to pursue thieves and recover property in so wide a range as a city with 200,000 inhabitants, and with often no clue to seize, but obliged, in so many instances, to trust to chance. All this is true enough ; and yet it fails in being a real description, inasmuch as it leaves out the incidents that maintain and cheer the spirit,—for I need scarcely say, that if any profession now-a-days can be enlivened by adventure, it is that of a detective officer. With the enthusiasm of the sportsman, whose aim is merely to run down and destroy often innocent animals, he is impelled by the superior motive of benefiting mankind, by ridding society of pests, and restoring the broken fortunes of suffering victims ; but, in addition to all this, his ingenuity is taxed while it is solicited by the sufferers, and repaid by the applause of a generous public. A single triumph of ingenuity has repaid me for many a night's wandering and searching, with not even a trace to guide me.

On the 28th of September 1848, the house of Mr Gravatt, butcher in Hanover Street, was entered, in the forenoon, by keys, and a large quantity of jewelry and articles of clothing were abstracted. I got immediate notice; and having examined the people who saw the thieves coming out of the stair, I was enabled, from my general knowledge of almost all the members of the tribe—at that time, though only twelve years ago, so much more numerous than now—to fix upon my men. I have made the checring remark, “so much more numerous then than now,” and it is suggestive of a consideration. Society itself has always made its own pests, and it astonishes one to think how long we have been in coming in to this thought,—nay, it is comparatively only a few years old, as if we had been always blind to the fact, that there are two kinds of thieves and robbers: one comprising those that have no choice but to continue their early habits, got from their parents and associates, and who are wicked from the necessities of their position; the other, those that are born outlaws. The latter are not so numerous as one would imagine, and though, from their natures, independent of any care or culture, could be easily managed. To reclaim them is nearly out of the question; but a speculation on that subject is beyond my depth, my duty being to catch them, and get them punished. But I repeat that I don't believe they are so numerous as is generally thought. As for the other class, let our Social Science friends just act up to the modern invention of anticipating the natural wants

of human creatures, and the numbers of thieves and robbers will diminish further still.

The young men engaged in the robbery I have mentioned were just a part of these pests which we have been making for ourselves, by allowing parents to do what they like with their children,—a privilege we don't allow to the masters of dogs, which, if they shew a tendency to be dangerous, may be laid hold of before they bite. Yes, Alexander M'Kay, David Hunter, and Thomas Ogilvy, who committed the robbery, and whom I apprehended, would probably have never been in my hands if they had been simply put to a trade, through the medium of a ragged school, or some other mean of that kind of benevolence ; which is a duty to society itself. I had got my lads,—for men they could hardly be said to be,—but where was the jewelry ? The mere fact of their having been seen coming out of Mr Gravat's stair was not enough even for a small supplement to habit and repute, if it was anything more than a trace to discover them by.

I therefore set about the discovery of the jewels and clothes,—a far more difficult task, if the thieves are cunning, than the seizure of their persons,—and here I found myself at fault ; notwithstanding the most unwearied trudging among brokers, resetters, houses of bad fame, and inquiries and searches into even most unlikely places, not a ring or even a handkerchief could I find, so that I was fast arriving at the conclusion that the articles had been “planked,” as they call it, somewhere,

perhaps in the outskirts of the town, behind a hedge, or under the ground, or in some of the many holes and bores about the old town, left by the gentry, it would almost seem, for the accommodation of their successors. I must try another mode. I have often succeeded in getting young offenders to be communicative. Though all adepts at using their fingers, they are not all so adroit in using, or rather not using, their tongues. One of the three,—Hunter,—seemed to me to be a likely blabber, if I could once set the instrument a-going. Having got him by himself,—

“Now, Hunter,” I said, “I want you to tell me where those things are you and your friends took out of Mr Gravat’s house.”

“Know nothing about them ;”—the old story.

“Well, I’ll convict you, anyhow,” said I ; “a single handkerchief will do the job ; you know you have been ‘up’ before, and it don’t take much in that case.”

“But you haven’t got the handkerchief,” said he, as he began to watch my face.

“Don’t be too sure,” I said, as I noticed some sign of his being, at least, apprehensive. “I think you know I seldom fail.”

He was silent, but not dogged.

“I will be your friend,” I continued, “and make you a witness.”

His eye began to gather some light. “What do you want ?”

"Just to tell me where the stolen things are, no more. I don't want you to confess that you were one of the robbers,"

"Do you not? and you will make me a witness?"

"I think I will manage that for you, if you don't deceive me."

He thought for a while. "But I wouldn't have the life of a dog were I known as a peacher."

"I'll take care of you; don't be afraid, and something may be done for you."

Still doubts, and still the terror of being set upon by the gang. I could not help pitying the condition of these slaves to a tyranny that leaves them no chance of penitence or amendment; but seeing the turning-point—the assurance of security—he was easily screwed up, yet I was, by his very first words of disclosure, discomfited. Looking up in my face,—

"It's no use," he said.

"What do you mean?" I replied, as I noticed something like a mysterious look about him.

"Why, the things," said he, as if it was a revelation of something very dark, "are beyond the reach of anyone. Hamilton has got them, and we all know that when he has them they never can be found."

"That's Hamilton the hawking broker in the Canon-gate," said I.

"Yes; but you don't know," he continued, "that Hamilton has a secret place in his house, which no man has ever found, and nobody will ever find, where he puts

all the stolen articles he gets, and, I tell you, you'll never find them."

"Where is that secret place?"

"I don't know; nobody knows but himself and his wife."

"You are certain it is within the house?"

"Yes."

"And if you cannot tell in what part of the house it is, nor what kind of place it is, whether above ground or under, how do you come to know of it at all?"

"I cannot tell how it came to be known," said he; "all I can say is, that it is a secret among us."

It now flashed upon me that this man, Thomas Hamilton, had been long able to put us at fault; and the information I now got explained to me his way of doing business. He was thought to be rich, and rich he might well be, from a lucrative trade said to have been so well conducted. He was known to be a hawker as well as broker, going about the country, and disposing of articles which he could not have exposed in Edinburgh; and having this secret place of deposit, whereby he could, as he so often had done, elude our diligent search, he was always at his ease. I had no doubt he had carried on the system for a long period, and been enabled not only to save a deal of money, but to preserve among the fraternity, or rather sisterhood, of brokers a fair reputation.

Taking four men with me to watch, in case, upon my disturbing the secret fountain, some streams might take

to running outside, I went in upon Mr Hamilton, whom I found in his lower place of business, among those piles of furniture and other things which form so peculiar a feature of a broker's shop in the Canongate. He knew me too well, and I did not require to tell my errand ; yet, though perfectly aware that I had come, as so many had done before, to search his house, he betrayed no fear ; if, indeed, he did not appear perfectly indifferent.

" You are quite welcome," he said ; " I don't think you will find any property here which has been stolen."

I saw no necessity for a reply to a statement which I was in the habit of hearing every day, and silently commenced my survey through the shop or warehouse. I saw nothing there to take my fancy, though one might have supposed that a mass of furniture was a very good covering for a concealed hole in the floor, and I might recur to that if I failed elsewhere. The only thing that I envied was a hammer lying within reach ; and, taking it up,

" Excuse me," said I.

" You may say so," said he ; " for I made that except the head with my own hands."

" Oh, I'll not injure it," I rejoined.

He did not seem to understand this proceeding at all, but he never for a moment lost his confidence, if there was not rather a faint smile on his face, just as if he thought, " Oh, you're vastly clever, but I am a-head of you."

I then proceeded up an inside stair, which communicated between the shop and the dwelling-house above, followed by my man, who led me into a sitting room. I expected nothing from a place into which I was *led*, but I did not object to look about me, which I did very cursorily.

"Where is your bed-room?" I inquired, as I turned and went to a closet door. "This will be it, I fancy?"

"Ay," drily, and to me hopefully.

On entering, I immediately began, without a moment's notice, to apply the hammer to the wall, continuing my soundings gradually along over the fire-place, and on the next wall, and on and on till I came to where the bed stood. It had curtains on it,—and here the weakness of vice, as usual, betrayed itself by its whispering revelations: Hamilton became uneasy about his bed, held up the side curtains against the wall, and said, "Nothing there you see."

"I didn't expect anything in the bed, Mr Hamilton," said I; "but please let the curtain fall till I see if the wall is all sound and healthy over the top of the bed, it may come down and bury you and your wife some morning."

A grim smile followed my remark, and I could have read the fate of my enterprise in his face. I continued my soundings, till, after half-a-hundred dull and very unsatisfactory answers, there was one which thrilled through me, and, I have no doubt, Hamilton also. Perhaps he had never in all his life heard any sound so

like that produced by the shovelful of mould on the coffin-lid. Yet, so differently do we estimate things, it was to me more like the ringing of a marriage-bell.

"You're not sound here, just at this spot, Mr Hamilton; and then, to think it is quite over the head of your bed, where you and Mrs Hamilton sleep so innocently after the day's toil."

On getting a chair and mounting, I observed a slight ruffle on the paper,—a part of that which covered all the four walls,—and, examining still more minutely, I thought I observed a very thin fine crack, appearing as if a knife had been brought along it to the extent of a couple of inches. I then took out a small penknife, inserted it into the crack, gave it a slight pressure down, and out started a very miniature door, which, on afterwards measuring, I found to be 8 inches by 6. It had a very peculiar and ingeniously-made hinge, on which it went so secretly, that the paper over it appeared to be entire.

"A regular pigeon-hole, Mr Hamilton," said I; "what is the use of this?"

"I never knew there was such a hole there," he said; "it must have been made and left by the last tenant."

"Who has perhaps left some jewels in it," I rejoined; and, putting in my hand, I pulled out a very valuable gold watch.

"A good beginning," I said, as I laid it on the bed. My next handful was a parcel containing a great portion of Mr Gravat's jewelry.

"Quite a pose," I continued, as I now laid that down ; "there's no use in people going so far for gold, when one can dig it out here with a penknife."

And, proceeding in the same way with all proper and decorous deliberation, I pulled handful after handful of all kinds of valuable things, from gold time-pieces to tiny rings, till I emptied the large jewel-box and covered the bed.

"And now, Mr Hamilton, have you any large box or trunk about you, of small value, which you can lend me for an hour, to contain these things, and then my men will take them up to the Police-office ?"

"They must all have belonged to the last tenant," he persisted in saying, as he turned out to comply with my request.

Presently he brought in a chest, and I then called in two of my men, who soon got the valuables packed, and carried them away.

"There are just two other *jewels* I want," said I,—“you and your wife.”

And, calling the other men, we marched the couple—the wife having come in, and been below, wondering what all this work was about—up to the office.

The parties were all brought to trial except Hunter. Hamilton was sentenced to seven years' transportation, and the two lads to eighteen months' imprisonment. The wife was acquitted on the plea that she was under the command and influence of the husband.

No one can say that the fate of Hamilton was too

severe. His resetship was probably not more criminal than others, but the effect, in giving confidence to young men sufficiently inclined to their evil ways otherwise, aggravated his case. I believe that the common remark that the resetter is worse than the thief, and upon which our judges proceed, is correct, if it may not, indeed, be nearly self-evident ; for while he in effect makes the thieves, he profits more than they, and, besides, escapes their risks of personal danger.

The Whisper.

I HAVE often thought of the different kinds of outlaw characters which have fallen in my way. If you take the general term "thief," then you can arrange them into sneakers, fighters, bolters, and pleaders. I need not go into a description, where the traits are so evident; but if I were asked to say which of the kinds is the most troublesome, I would fix upon the first. You can overcome a fighter, watch a bolter at the window, replead a pleader, but a sneak, gifted with cunning, who lies, crawls, lurks, winds, and doubles, requires all your wits. To match them all demands many powers both of body and mind, but, beyond all, courage, both moral and physical; and it is not to be wondered at, nor attributed to me as self-praise, if I say that in my experience I have not found many men who combine the gifts. One man has one, another another, and they are useful each in his department, where the character of the criminal is known. That, however, cannot be ascertained till the gentleman has been tested, and the whole tribe flit about so much that they become *new* in the various towns.

David Howie, originally belonging to North Leith,

was famous about 1836, chiefly for his escapes by *bolt-ing*; not that he escaped always, for we had him several times through hands, but that he had as yet been successful beyond our wishes, and had a great objection to the other side of the water. We repeatedly were within arm's-length of him, but his recklessness in leaps from windows, his speed, and confidence in these qualities, enabled him to baulk us oftener than any man I have known. Still he stuck to Edinburgh; a strange fatality that in thieves and housebreakers,—their remaining in a town where they not only know that they are known to the officers, but where they have been again and again convicted. However this may be explained,—and I won't attempt it,—it is clear enough that as the knowledge of them increases, they become gradually defiant. They become settled in a trade which they think (and, as our society is formed, they are not far wrong) it is absolutely necessary they should follow; the necessity being, of course, a consequence of their own acts; which necessity again renders it necessary that society should have nothing to do with them.

Howie, unlike many of them, tried other places,—that is, “went to the grouse,”—and we thought we were quit of him; but intelligence reached us from Stirling, in the same year, 1836, that he had cleared out a watchmaker's shop there, got the stolen property sent to London, and escaped the fingers of the officers by leaping from a high window, in his old Edinburgh style. A considerable period elapsed. It was known afterwards that he went

to London, and got the large quantity of watches and jewelry disposed of. Knowing, as I did, that he must now have been what they call "flush," I expected him to his old haunts. I had experience as well as theory to justify this expectation. A "flush" thief has the same yearning to get back to his native place that a rich Indian has, after he is sure he can overtop his old school-fellows. Nor are they without an object; often a great desire to figure among the girls, whose affections are competed for, and earned just as the gentleman has it in his power to gratify them with money. Perhaps, were I permitted to look out of my profession a little, I might say they are not unlike their neighbours in this respect, though I would not take it upon me to say that *every* man has a side-look to the sex in his efforts to make cash to gratify them when wives.

At least, in Beau Howic's case, I was just as sure that he would have a "fancy" with him, or get one here on his return, as I was satisfied he would turn up in the old dens. Nor was I wrong. "The Bolter" was in due time seen, dressed in the first fashion, so that he would not have shamed "plush" at the club-house in Princes Street if he had gone to ask whether His Grace or My Lord was in town; but our David was, in one respect, even more sensible than another of that name,—insomuch, at least, as he did not demean himself so as to earn the ridicule of his "fancy." Nowhere, indeed, can we see the wonderful effect of dress and money working with more effect than in the attraction a "swell" excr-

cises over the lower class of unfortunate females. He is a very god among them ; but David had made his choice of a help-meet and a worshipper in a woman—Ann M'Laren—whom we all knew as "The Hooker," from her art in transferring,—a dark gipsy-looking wench, with eyes that could see to the bottom of a pocket a foot deep, and fingers that could search it for other things than a psalm-book ; and withal, so far as genius and a pretty face went, quite worthy of so clever a fellow as "The Bolter," and so accomplished a gentleman.

The moment I heard he had taken up with this woman, I considered him secure, for women make a dangerous "trail" to men of this stamp,—not that they betray willingly, which they seldom do, but their activity, and gossiping about their "fancies," and the endless ramifications of their small ways, soon get to our ears. I had only to trace the female to find the male bird ; but soon found that she was, as they call it in their slang, alive or awake. One day, I got my eye upon her in the High Street. She had no time for doubling that day, and was bolder, or perhaps off her guard, for no creature can be for ever a watcher,—the mind must have a rest ; perhaps, too, she was hungry. At any rate, I traced her to a stair in the Grassmarket ; but I must wait long enough to be certain it was not merely a house of call. Indeed, from my knowledge of the stair,—and what stair was I not compelled to know ?—I was pretty well made up to the conclusion that there she and David passed their sweet lives of innocence and ease.

By inquiries, I was able to fix upon the room they occupied. There were several windows connected with the lodging, and these required to be looked to. It was a part of the many wonders told of "The Bolter," that, knowing his genius for leaping, he took his lodging accordingly; not on the ground-floor, because he might expect an ordinary watch at the window,—nor very high, for then he might break his neck,—but something between, not beyond his hope of getting to the ground, but greatly beyond the notion of a policeman that he would attempt it. I must have him at any chance for the Stirling affair, and required not to be scrupulous. Otherwise I must give up, and wait for a new charge. A little refining on the danger of his not being identified by the Stirling witnesses,—and, after all, he was only suspected,—or of not finding any of the watches,—which I could hardly expect,—would have ruined my enterprise. "The Bolter" was too important a personage to let slip, from my fears of myself being liable to the charge of taking up a man innocent, at least, of any *unpunished* crime.

I selected the hour of midnight, the most auspicious for many reasons,—though, no doubt, often cruel, for while a man is most easily taken in bed, so it is proportionally hard to drag him from the twining, soft arms of love to the encircling grip of unkindly iron; but, then, what right had he to call me and my men from our homes and beds to look after him? I had several officers prepared for an encounter. There were all the windows to guard, because he might leave one room and fly to

another. To make sure work, I posted a man at every window, ready to receive David in his bolt, reserving for myself the high privilege of paying my respects to him personally.

All was ready,—a dark and still night, no light at the back of the lodging where the men stood concealed, and scarcely a sound anywhere, except the echo of some tread of a late passenger going along the Grassmarket. I ascended the stair with no more noise in my step than a velvet-footed cat would make in nearing a rat-hole. Got to the landing-place,—listened at the door,—no noise. Gone to bed, thinks I, happy in each other's bosoms. Hard fate of mine, to be obliged to part such hearts! but then a comfort it was to part those whom God had not joined,—and then, peradventure, join them again in a honeymoon trip over the sea. It was no fault of mine that their lives had not been lovely. Knocked very gently,—no answer. Again,—no answer, but a whispering. "It is, Davie," I heard Ann say; "get up." Anon came a rumbling noise, the meaning of which I understood,—they were barricading the door. Then with my knowledge of the man, it was for me now to be obstreperous, yea, as noisy as I could. In a *batteue* you profit by making as great a kick-up as possible, to get the animals in the safe place. I would either catch him or drive him out of the window into the kindly embrace of my nurses outside. These crazy doors are no impediments; I placed my back to the pannels, my foot to the opposite side of the narrow pas-

sage, and drove it in with a crash, for the table and chairs behind flew off, adding their confused noise to that of the splintered door. At that instant the window drew up, and all I could see of "The Bolter" was the tail of his shirt as he disappeared from a height of fifteen or twenty feet. Thinking I had not seen the flight, Ann ran to the window, drew it down, and met me, prepared ; and I, knowing he was safe, was as much at my ease.

"Where is Howie gone?" said I.

"You are on the wrong scent," said she ; "he doesn't live here."

"And whose clothes are these?"

"These! why, they belong to my husband, who has gone out. If you will wait"—(no doubt to give David time to get off)—"I will tell you all about it. My man's name is——"

"I am not curious, Ann," said I, "about your *husband* ; I only want to search the house. This I accordingly did, smiling as I saw "The Hooker" so keen to hook *time* by even helping me in my search where she knew nothing was to be found. Yes, there was absolutely nothing. The watchmaker's stock had melted away into the usual fluidity in London,—a result a little alarming to me, if I had been by nature capable of being alarmed, which I am not ; for though "The Bolter" was sufficiently habit and repute to justify his being at that moment snug in my nurses' arms, I had yet no charge against him, except the old suspicion of the Stirling

affair,—a suspicion merely,—and I stood exposed to the risk of being defeated by a verdict of “not guilty,”—always, in such cases as this, as disagreeable to me as agreeable to the panel.

The longer Ann could get me to wait the more light-hearted she got,—waxing merry as the hope rose upon her that she had “done me” by detaining me from a pursuit of her master, lover, and copartner. I was in no hurry to undeceive her, and, moreover, I had no available charge against her. I knew her subtlety too well to try to get anything out of her. So quietly bidding her good-night, and hoping her husband would soon be in to comfort her for my intrusion, and the smashed door and broken tables and chairs, all of which she passed over without a charge for breakage, I left her. On reaching the foot of the close, I found the shirted David in the embrace of his tender nurses, having been caught in the arms of one of them just as he threw himself from the window. We proceeded to deposit him in his crib, sending back afterwards for his clothes.

Next morning I had a conference with the Captain. Information was sent off to Stirling, but he feared we would be defeated, in consequence of nothing being found in the house. I was a little uneasy, and was meditating as to whether I could make sure work by getting some other charge against him. And now occurred one of those extraordinary coincidences which have made my life a romance to myself. I happened to be standing in such a position down-stairs—thinking

of what I was to do—as rendered it quite possible for me to hear a prisoner speaking to any one outside in the close ; and just at that moment I thought I heard the very low and cautious sounds of two persons conversing. I could gather scarcely anything, but I was satisfied a woman outside was talking to one within the bars. I have already alluded to my sense of hearing, from which I have derived so much advantage. Yet withal I could catch but little. I detected the words, “Run and make away with the boots,” spoken in a kind of loud hissing whisper. Next instant I saw Ann standing in the close.

Losing no time, I proceeded to the Grassmarket ; got into the room easily enough, for the broken door was not yet mended ; got hold of *the boots* ; and met Ann at the close-foot, as she was hurrying, with flushed face, and the keen light of anxiety glancing from her gipsy eyes, to execute the commission.

“I have got them,” said I ; “and will save you the trouble of carrying them up to your husband, who did not return to you last night.”

If the glance which followed had been steel—and it had all the light of steel—I would have detected no more in this world.

On getting to the office, and searching the books, I ascertained that a pair of boots had the day before been taken from the house of Mr Craig, in Church Lane, leading to Stockbridge. To Mr Craig I went. They were the very boots ; and that gentleman described to

me how they were taken. They happened to be standing on a table opposite the window, and were abstracted by some one who quietly drew up the sash, and deliberately *let it down again*. With my information thus obtained, I looked in upon Howie.

"I have brought the boots, David, which you asked Ann to go down to the Grassmarket for. What purpose do you intend to turn them to here?"

"What!" he cried, "has the b—tch betrayed me, after having spent all my money upon her?"

"No," replied I; "I knew you were anxious about them, and got before her."

"How, in the devil's name, could you know unless you had got her over?"

"That's my business."

"You're the old man," he said coolly enough, for he had no notion that I could discover their owner; "always in compact with the devil, but you'll not hang me yet."

"I don't want. But were did you get these boots?"

"Try to find out," he growled. "They're paid for anyway; no one could stop me at the *shop door*."

"*Window*, David, lad."

He knew he was caught, and became as dumb as the boots themselves,—satisfied, I believe, that I was in compact with the devil.

He was thereafter taken to Stirling, that the fiscal might try to connect him with the clearing out of the watchmaker's shop. Meanwhile,—so soon do these

"fancies" forget their loves,—Ann got another partner ; and here, though not much inclined to notice matters out of my own peculiar line, I cannot help remarking how strangely these outlawed beings carry their ties of love and friendship. They are like the knots of ribbons on women's persons,—very nicely bound themselves, but binding nothing else ; and, taken off at night, are pinned on next morning to some other dress. Habit enables them, both men and women, to mix old griefs—for they have griefs—with new joys, and these they have, of a crude kind, too. However true the "fancy" is to her swell, she always contemplates the probable shortness of her obligation, and is quite ready for a new bond when some very ungallant Sheriff or Justiciary Lord severs the existing one. I have known cases where one of these Arab-like creatures has sat in the court and sobbed at the fate of her darling mate, and when he was sentenced to death or banishment, hopping away with a new swell from the court, pass perhaps a month or two with him, then to sob for his fate ; and so on. There is something affecting about many of them, which would melt very stony hearts. Often interesting, kindly creatures, with bosoms that would have been fountains of love and kindness to husbands and children, if they had been better starved,—and they had no voice in the casting of the form of their fates,—they throw away their devotedness on heartless scoundrels, who make tools of them, and mistresses of them, only to leave them on an instant's

notice. But then the very changes reconcile them to a fate they can't escape ; and thus there is nothing but unhearty laughter and very hearty tears—love's griefs and love's tears again, love's mirth and love's groans for ever. But it does not last long, thanks to the fate that is so cruel to them. A few years is the average of their lives. You would be astonished were I to tell you how they have passed from my watchful eye. Three, or four, or five years, and a new set are on my city beat. They come and go like comets, blazing for a time with wild passions, and then away to make room for others. As for the real *artistes*, one has less sympathy. In place of being kept by men, they keep them—often prostituting themselves for them, robbing for them, suffering for them in a thousand ways, ay, even by imprisonment, and often cast away by the heartless scoundrels to die, or, what is worse, to rot without dying. In the case of our Ann, I traced her for a year or two, and then heard she had died of disease and want. She, no doubt, had had a foreboding of the fate of "The Bolter," nor was it false. He was sent to Stirling as I have said. The fiscal could not identify him as the robber, and he was sent back to us. The charge for the boots remained. It was urged against him as an old offender, and there being no doubt of his guilt, he got seven years. His fate hung upon a whisper ; for if I had not overheard the direction to Ann, to make away with the article, I would not have thought of tracing *their* origin any more than that of the rest of his fashionable clothes—all of which

we would have thought he had bought and paid for out of the proceeds of the watches and jewelry, very soon spent, as all the money of such persons is, let it be what it may. Nay, they can't keep it. It burns their hands till it is cast away, and then the hands itch again for the touch.

I believe Howie never knew that the breath of a whisper sent him "over the seas and far awa'."

The Laugh.

I BELIEVE I have said that the devil, if well examined, would be found to have a limp ; and, perhaps, this notion of mine may aptly enough be termed a detection, seeing I have had so many opportunities of getting near to him in those places where he rests himself in his long journeys from his principal dominions. Nor am I less satisfied that Chance is one of his female angels, who, having been slighted by him, “peaches,” and tells the like of me his infirmity. Surely I cannot be blamed for an opinion, however absurd it may appear to those slow-pacing people who go so little to a side, where the real curiosities of human nature lie, when I have such a case to report as that of the robbery of Mr Blyth’s shop in the High Street, a little above the Fleshmarket Close, by M’Quarry, and a friend of that accomplished shop-lifter.

One morning, a good number of years ago,—1847, I think,—I was going from my house in the Canongate to my duties in the office, at my usual hour of eight in the morning. I had not much on my mind on that occasion. No charges were then on the books, and I was begin-

ning to think I was gaining ground against the workers of iniquity. Perhaps my mind was perfectly vacant ; no one of my images being called upon to stir in their quiet resting-places in my head, and shew their likenesses to their originals. In this negative state of mind, whom should I see coming up but a well-known personage of the name of M'Quarry, with whom, though so well known to me, I wished much to be even more intimate, probably with the selfish view of knowing some of his secret adventures ? It was quite natural I should fix my eye on him before he saw me, because, while I had nothing else to do, he was bent upon something.

As I wish to mix a little instruction with the benefit derived from the mere lesson I teach of the insecurity of criminals, allow me to go aside with you for a moment to a close-end,—always my school-room,—and tell you that there is a great deal more in faces than is generally supposed. All men and women pretend, less or more, to the subject, but really their study is generally limited to the inquiry whether one is pleased or displeased with you when in a talk. How few ever aspire to read people as they run, to guess what they are bent upon, and how things are going with them ; and yet, what a field is open to the student of human nature here ! I exclude the perambulators and loungers, of course, who are always simply engaged in being looked at. Their faces are set in a fix, and you can find nothing there but a steady waiting for admiration ; but in the business people, and those not above domestic troubles, you can

always find something readable. I keep to my own peculiar race, and I say I am seldom *out* when I get my eyes on them. I can, for instance, always tell an unlucky thief from a lucky one,—one with “speculation in his eye” from one without a job in contemplation,—one with full fobs from one with empty pockets,—one who suspects being scented from one who is on the scent. And therefrom I derive a kind of benefit; for, just as I observe a great and sudden amount of cheerfulness in the eye of a celebrity, so do I become cheerful, and a dull dog infects me like sympathy. The reason is plain enough; their cheerfulness is the cause of that cheerfulness which is in me, insomuch as it inspires me with the wish to know the particular transaction which makes them happy and so many others sad, while their sadness implies that I have nothing to discover.

On that morning, when M'Quarry came down the High Street, he was so cheerful that, as I have said, he did not see me. “Luck makes people lightly their best friends,” and so he lightlied me—the very thing that fixed my gaze on him. There was something more than the mere blythesomeness in the usual clod face, which was a sure proof that he had made some others unhappy—perhaps even Mr Blyth, whose shop he passed in a kind of half run, darting his eye inside with a kind of humorous triumph,—and, continuing the same excited pace, he passed me. His copartner, whose name I don't recollect, but who was quite familiar to me, was behind him some few yards. He went at the same pace, had

the same look of merriment, threw the same darting look into the shop, passed on, and overtook his friend. Though not quite polite to look back upon your friends, I could not resist the impulse, and I just looked in time to see them burst out in a pretty joyous laugh together, and away they went arm-and-arm.

A very simple affair. There was nothing wrong with Mr Blyth's shop, so far as I could see; and, after all, what was there in a look into a shop to interest me? It might have been different at night, when a loungee is reconnoitring for the purpose of a bolt in and a bolt out; but, independently of its being the morning, the young men were off with merely a laugh on their cheek. Yes, but I was satisfied of one thing, and that was, that some game of *draughts* had been played in that shop the previous night. "Ah!" thought I, "the little fishes, when too happy with the light of the sun on the top of the waters, get tipsy, and then topsy-turvy, and, turning up their white bellies so as to be seen by the gulls, get both picked up and gobbled up."

With these thoughts I proceeded up the High Street, and entered the office. The Captain was already there, with a gentleman standing by him—no other than Mr Blyth, whose shop had so occupied my attention in my walk.

"Oh, McLevy, you're just in time," said the Captain. "Here is Mr Blyth with information that his shop has been broken into last night from behind, and a great quantity of silks carried off."

"It is just a case for you, M'Levy," said Mr Blyth, who gave me no time to speak; "for I fear that it is almost a desperate one. I mean we have no means of tracing, except through the goods. No one in the neighbourhood saw the burglars."

"It is a mere case of a search for the articles," continued the Captain. "M'Levy, you can take charge. Call up some of the best searchers, and distribute them in the course of the day among the brokers. But we can expect nothing for a day or two—until the robbers begin 'to give out.'"

"There's no occasion for calling in any of the men," said I; "neither is there any occasion for troubling the brokers. I know who the robbers are, and will have them up in a couple of hours. Nay, if you wait, I will bring them to you."

"What," cried the astonished silk-mercier, "already! You're surely joking. Have you been up all night?"

"No; in bed all night, sleeping as sound as a bat in winter."

"Then some policeman has been on the look-out, and told you."

"I have not spoken to a policeman to-day yet."

"Then how, in the name of wonder, have you got it?"

"Just through the means of a laugh," I replied, laughing myself.

"Why, you are making a joke of my loss of a hundred guineas."

"A laugh is not quite so useless a thing as you ima-

gine. The cackle of a goose saved a city on one occasion, and the cackle of these men, who are not geese, will save your silk-mercery. I tell you I will have the burglars with you, ay, in one hour, and with them your goods. Wait till I come."

"Well, no doubt you're famous in your way, but I fear it won't do to apprehend a man for a laugh."

"I've done it for a *breath*," said I, "merely because it told me there was some fear in the breather of his breath being interrupted by a certain kind of handkerchief which you don't deal in. Sit down, and keep yourself easy."

I accordingly set to my task, going direct to M'Quarry's mother, in Hume's Close; my assistant, as usual, with me. I opened the door, and went in just as his mother was giving him his breakfast.

"You didn't notice me this morning, M'Quarry, when you passed me at Mr Blyth's door?" said I.

The word Blyth struck him to the heart.

"Blyth, wha is Mr Blyth?" said the mother, as she looked into her son's pale face, her own being nearly of the same colour.

"Why, bless you, don't you know the man you bought these silks of, up in that bole there?" pointing to the likeliest place, at the same moment that I observed something like a fringe hanging out from the crevice made by the shrunk door.

"There's nae silk there," said the mother.

"All a d——d lie," growled the son.

"There's no use for any words about that," said I, placing a chair and mounting.

On opening the door of the old cupboard, sunk in the wall, there were Mr Blyth's scarfs, neckcloths, and ribbons, all stuffed in except that bit of fringe, which had claimed my eye, and convinced me more and more that the devil has a halt; but at that very moment the door of the room burst open, overturning the chair on which I stood, and laying me sprawling on my back, confounded, but still able enough to hear the words of the intruder.

"Run, M'Quarry; M'Levy's in the close!"

"Yes, and here," I cried, starting up and seizing the speaker, just as he had got alarmed; no other but my friend whose laugh, along with M'Quarry's, so delighted me in the morning.

"The laugh's on the other side now," said I.

The fellow struggled, but he was only a sapling; and as M'Quarry saw there were two to one, he started upon his feet and laid hold of me by the throat. I instantly changed hands, seizing the younger and weaker with my left, and, using the other against M'Quarry, pulled away his right, at the same time getting hold of his neckcloth, which I pulled so tight that he instantly became red in the face. I was afraid of the mother, who still held the knife in her hand with which she had been cutting the bread for her son's breakfast; but the sight of her choking son produced such an effect upon her that she set up a scream sufficient to reach the head of the close.

The sound had been heard by Mulholland, who, hastening up, relieved me of one of my opponents.

"We give in," said M'Quarry, as he gasped for breath.

"That's sensible," said I. "Then you walk up with me you know where ; on with your bonnet. And as for you, Mrs M'Quarry, I have to ask you to accompany us ; not, perhaps, that I will trouble you much, as the silks may have been placed there without your knowledge ; but as I need the room for half-an-hour, and must be sure of your not entering it when I am away, you go with us, and I lock the door."

They all came very quietly. I locked the door and took the key with me, and in a few minutes had them all lodged, without communicating my capture as yet to Mr Blyth, who, I understood, was still waiting. I would by and by, however, and taking two men I hastened and got up the silks.

"Now, Mr Blyth, here are your silks and the robbers," said I, as the prisoners were brought and the mercery. "It is not two hours yet, and as this affair began with a laugh I wish it to terminate with one."

A wish complied with on the instant by every one except the culprits.

My story is ended, but there is a postscript. Mr Blyth could not, after he went away, understand my allusion to the laugh, and one day, as I was passing, he called me in, with a view to an explanation. That I gave him, much in the same way I have given it to the reader. After considering a little, he said,—

“Well, how simple this affair is after all. It was not so much your cleverness, M‘Levy, as their folly, that got me my goods.”

“You never said a truer thing in your life, sir ;” said I, “for people give M‘Levy great praise for some extraordinary powers. It is all nonsense. I am just in the position of the candid juggler, who tells his audience that there is no mystery at all in his art, when all is explained. My detections have been and are very simple pieces of business,—far more simple than the schemes that end in non-detections,—and yet these have all the intricacy of some engines, which look fine on paper, but the very complexity of which prevents them from grinding your meal.”

The Breathing.

ONE night in 1832, I was at the station in Adam Street, at that time a very disreputable part of the town—it is better now—in consequence of the many bad houses and whisky-shops in the vicinity. There were often rows there, chiefly occasioned by the students, many of whom lodged in the neighbouring streets, so that when our men were called upon it was generally to quell a quarrel, or carry off some poor degraded wretch of a woman for some drunken violence or pocket-picking. On the occasion to which I now allude the call upon us was different. The time was late,—past twelve,—and the streets were being resigned to the street-walkers and collegians. All of a sudden a shrill scream of a woman's voice reached my ear, and, running out, I heard a cry that a man of the name of M'—ie, who lived in Adam Street, had been robbed, or attempted to be robbed, on his own stair. Then there was a shout, and a pointing by two or three people,—“They are down to the Pleasance.” On such an occasion it has always been my habit not to take up any time by questions for an account of external appearances, because the answers are tedious, and there

is more to be gained by time in a rush in the proper direction, trusting to what I may call "criminal indications," than by ascertaining what kind of a coat or hat a man wore, or the length of his nose, or height of body, and so forth. So I noted the index, and took to my toe-points as fast as I could run, down in the direction indicated, but as lightly as I could, for fear of my tread being carried in the silence of the night on to the ears of the runaways. I may mention, too, that I stopped several sympathisers, who were inclined to join, but who, I knew, would only scare, and do no good.

I had the pursuit, if such it may be termed, all to myself, but was immediately "called up" by one of those rock-ahead incidents which are so tantalising to our class,—no other than two roads, each holding out its recommendations to me, the one that the robbers would certainly take to the deep haunts of the Old Town, where the fox-burrows are so inviting and the difficulty of unearthing not easily surmounted; and the other, that they would seek the outskirts, and so get down to the valley between the Pleasance and Arthur Seat, where they might skulk in the deep darkness of the night, and so escape. A minute or two would turn the scale, and I must decide even almost as I ran. I have often quivered in this dilemma, and seldom been wrong in my choice; yet I can't account for one out of ten of these instantaneous decisions. I really believe I have often been swayed by some very trivial incident, perhaps the shuffle of a foot, perhaps a gust of wind not heard as

such, but simply as something working upon the ear. The barking of a dog has resolved me, the shutting of a door, or even a greater silence in one direction than another,—nay, to be very plain, and perhaps weak, I have sometimes thought I was led by a superior hand, so directly have I been taken to my quarry. It was so now. It was just as likely the fellows would go north to the Old Town, or south to the Gibbet-Toll,—no gibbet now to scare them. I turned to the left, down the Pleasance ; even as I ran, and about halfway between my turn and Mr Ritchie's brewery, I met one of our men on his beat, coming south, pacing as quietly as if no robbery could have been suspected in his well-watched quarter.

“Met two fellows in a skulk or a run?”

“No, one ; but before I crossed the foot of Drummond Street, I thought I heard the sound of quick feet, but it stopped in an instant, and I then thought I might have been mistaken.”

“Then stand you there as steady as a post, but not as deaf. Keep your feet steady, and your ears open.”

I had got just a sniff, and it is not often I have needed more. They had, no doubt, gone that way, and, on observing the officer, had got into a burrow. I stood for an instant,—no common-stairs here, no closes, no *cul-de-sac*, no hole even for the shrinking body of a robber. The first glance brought me near my wit's end, but not altogether. I have always been led on by small glimpses of Hope's lamp till I got nearer and nearer her temple,

and never yet gave up till all was dark. I stepped to the other side of the street, where there are some bad houses. No door open, every window shut, and no light within that could be observed. I could walk with the lightest of feet, and proceeded noiselessly along the narrow pavement till I came to Drummond Street, where there is the recess in which the well stands. I had no hope from that recess, because it is comparatively open, and, dark as the night was, they could scarcely have skulked there without the man on the beat seeing them. Yet I was satisfied also that they could not have gone up by Drummond Street. I may mention that I could hear when almost every other person could discover nothing but silence; nay, this quickness of the hearing sense has often been a pain to me, for the tirl of a mouse has often put me off my rest when I stood in great need of it. I require to say nothing of my other poor senses here; they were not needed, for there was nothing to be seen except below the straggling lamps, in the pale light of one of which I saw my man standing sentry, but nothing more.

Expecting nothing from the recess, I crossed to the angle, rather disappointed, and was rather meditative than listening, foiled than hopeful, when my ear was arrested by one or two deep breathings,—scared robbers are great breathers, especially after a tussle with a victim. I could almost tell the kind of play of lungs; it speaks fear, for there is an attempt to repress the sound, and yet nature here cannot be overcome. On the in-

stant I felt sure of my prey, yet I tested my evidence even deliberately. There was more than one play of lungs at work,—I could trace two,—and all their efforts, for they had seen the man pass, and had probably heard our conversation, were not able to overcome the proof that was rushing out of their noses, (as if this organ could give out evidence as well as take it in,) not their mouths,—fear shuts the latter, if wonder should open it,—to reach my ear, just as if some great power adopted this mode of shewing man that there is a speaking silence that betrays the breakers of God's laws. Now certain, I hastened over to the man on the beat, and, whispering to him to go to the station for another man, took my watch again. I knew I had them in my power, because if they took themselves to flight, I could beat them at that trick ; so I cooled myself down to patience, and kept my place without moving an inch, quite contented so long as I heard the still half-suppressed respirations.

In a few minutes my men were up, coming rather roughly for such fine work. I took each by the coat-neck,—

“Steady, and not a whisper ! They are round the corner,—batons ready, and a rush.”

By a combined movement, we all wheeled round the angle, and before another breath could force itself, we had the two chevaliers in our hands,—even as they were standing, bolt-upright against the gable of the house that forms one side of the recess. Like all the rest of

their craft they were quite innocent, only their oaths—for they were a pair of desperate thimblers, whom I knew at once—might have been sufficient to have modified the effects of their protestations. They were, indeed, dangerous men. They had nearly throttled M'—ie, and in revenge for getting nothing off him had threatened to murder him. My next object was to get them identified by the people who had raised the cry, for if they had dispersed we might have been—with nothing on them belonging to the man—in want of evidence, though not in want of a justification, of our capture of two well-known personages. Fortunately, when we got to the station some of the women were there who identified them on the instant, whereupon they became, as sometimes the very worst of them do, “gentle lambs,” and were led very quietly to their destination in the High Street. Remitted to the Sheriff, their doom was fourteen years.

“And the breath of their nostrils shall find them out.”

The Archin.

My reminiscences, I find, contain so many of those turns which are called coincidences, that it may be asked, why so, when such occurrences in ordinary lives are so very few and far between? Yet it is to be remembered, that I was always on the trail of crime, and that when these startling incidents occurred, I was at the place, and among the persons, where some such discoveries might transpire. In short, as I have said, if Chance so often favoured me, I was as often poking at her.

In that close or pend leading to Tweeddale Court, so famous as the scene of Begbie's murder, by Coulson or Moffat, a robbery took place in July 1848. It seems that a small manufacturer of Galashiels had come into town with some bales of rather valuable goods,—tweeds, shawls, &c.,—and that during his sojourn here, he had taken up his residence in a flat led to by a door on the right-hand side of the pend. While the man had been out, probably disposing of some of his goods, some persons had entered the house with false checklock keys, and made a clean sweep of his bales. One person could not have done the deed, because the weight was at least

equal to the strength of two stout men or full-grown youths. We got notice instantly, and I set out on the adventure of trying to recover the poor man's stock-in-trade.

The greater part of stolen things find their way generally to the bad houses, for it is among these the male thieves—and here I suspected that sex—almost always lurk, with this advantage that they can get the women to help in the disposal of them. In this instance, the probability of the housebreakers being among these haunts was, to my mind, increased by considering the nature of the articles stolen, particularly shawls. I accordingly commenced a search among the brothels; expecting chiefly to find some pair of shoulders adorned with so envied an article as a fine new plaid, in justification of which expectation—the short time taken into account—I may just state, what is well enough known, that the desire to put on new fancy articles overcomes all prudence, and defies the danger of the mere recentness of the theft. Yet my calculations in this instance failed, though I believe I visited twenty of the most probable dens in the Old Town, neither finding the said adorned shoulders, nor the bales from which the adornments might be taken. Discomfiture generally, I may admit, or rather boast, nettled me, and I was on this occasion very loath to give up, however harassing my labours. I wandered and wandered everywhere, as curious an observer of plaids as a Galashiels weaver or Paisley manufacturer. This may be said to have

been very vain, for I did not know the patterns ; and then hasn't almost every woman a shawl ? Very true, but then I knew so many of the likely ones, as well as their tawdry dresses, that I might have found it somewhat fortunate if I had met such as Jane or Kate Smith, or Lucky Maitland, swaggering away under the pride of a Galashiels plaid, span new, and all her own too.

But I did not meet these celebrated personages in any such condition, so tempting to culleys. Completely worn out, and as yet without hope, but still stiff enough in my determination, I was dragging my legs up Blackfriars' Wynd, intending to give a look in upon the paradises there, to cheer me in my terrestrial troubles. Perhaps I would have continued my searches into that hopeful sphere, Halkerston's Wynd, where Lucky Maitland and her nymphs spent their happy days ; for when I began these hunts I was, like the red-coated hunters,—who can never tell when they are to be home to dinner, because Reynard does not condescend to tell them where he will be caught,—entirely uncertain when I should give up. A sniff might inspire me, and blow my soul up into a flame, at the very moment I was among the cinders of, I won't say despair,—for I don't know what it is,—but of considerable pulverisation. Indeed, I couldn't tell the humour I was in, but it was not a good one ; just in that state when a little whisper would revive me and bring me up again. I believe I was so far gone that I had my hands behind my back, not the best sign of a detective on duty, when a little urchin of

a girl—with just as much upon her as would entitle one to say she was an improvement upon Eve after the catastrophe of the apple—peered up into my face, and with a leer, which might either have been fun or devilry, cried—

“Man, do you want a shawl for your wife?”

“Shawl, eh! ay,” said I.

“Because thae twa women there,” pointing to Jane and Kate Smith, whom I had the honour of knowing, “hae bonny anes to sell.”

“Ho there, lasses!” I cried on the instant, and going slap up to them in an intercepting way; “I want to buy a shawl from you.”

“We have nae shawls,” said Kate.

“Wish we had,” said Jane.

“Then what bundles are these you have under your arms?”

“Nae business of yours,” said the one, and then the other.

“If it is no business of mine to buy a shawl, having no wife, neither is it yours to sell. Come, let me see them.”

The women knew me, and probably thought there was little use in battling the watch with me. At least I got easily from them their respective bundles, which I undid upon the spot, and found, to my great surprise, a fine Galashiels plaid in each.

“You would not sell them,” said I, “and now I will take them for nothing; and what’s more, I will pay no

price for you; so come along with me to the Police-office, to answer for the manner in which you got this stolen property."

After some of the ordinary cursing, they went along with me, and I took them to the office, where they were retained. I was aware I could get nothing out of them, and therefore lost no time in going away to Halkerston's Wynd, where I knew they lived, with a famous mother of harpies,—no other than the said Lucky Maitland.

On entering the den, I met the old mother at my first approach, stationed with the determination to keep me out,—the best reception I could have got. She was growling like a she-bear whose cubs are in danger.

"Ye hae nae business here,"—the old address I have heard so often,—*"there's naebody here but decent folk—awa' wi' ye!"*

"It's not indecent folk I want, Mrs Maitland," said I; *"it's dishonest folk; and if you have none of these about you, you need not be afraid."*

"Ou ay, the auld gibes. Man, can ye no just say, 'I'll be d——d but I will be in?' Faith, I would like the ane better than the other."

"But I came here to please myself, mother," said I, *"not you;"* and so I pushed her to a side, and went forward, followed by the hag, muttering her sworn wrath.

On getting further in, I found sitting, or rather lying, in a dark small room, two *"halfpins,"* as we call them, —neither men nor boys,—whom I knew to be Glasgow thieves—James Wilson and John Morison. They were

living there among half-a-dozen probably of young women, among whom, though so young, they could keep their places, if not command them, by the charm of money got by thievery. I may mention that people are often under the mistake of estimating such youths by the common standard, not being aware that they have lived twice their years, and have more cunning, trickery, boldness, and "worldly wisdom" of their kind, than probably their fathers. The women were all out, but what is the day to these owls? When night comes, they revive like torpid snakes, and revel in all the sins of Gomorrah, amidst ribald songs, oaths, dancings, jolly bouts, and prostitution. I would stop the next night's revelries anyhow. Without saying a word, I called in my assistant to take care of the young tigers, as well as the old tigress, while I should search for the Galashiels bales. Search! why there they were, piled up between two truckle beds, almost entire, if the plaids carried by the Smiths were not all that had been taken out of them.

"Whence came these?" I said to old mother.

"They're a hawker's, wha left them here this morning; and a d——d ill-pleased man he'll be when he kens they've been stowen frae him by riff-raff o' police."

"Step up to the office," whispered I into the ear of the constable, "and bring down two men to carry up the bales, and I'll remain here in the meantime."

"An' ye'll be blaming the twa puir callants," she continued, "wha are as innocent as the baby born yesterday."

"I never said they were guilty, Mrs Maitland," said I.

"Na, na ! ye canna say that, God be thanked ; I ken their parents,—decent, honest folk, as mine were, an' a' my kith. And wha says no ? I wad like to see him, and maybe thae nieves an' his nose would be as sib as lovers' mou's."

I sat down on a crazy easy-chair, and allowed her to go on ; for I knew the woman, and that to try to stop her was to excite her.

"An' wha turned your nose this way ? Was there nae scents in Blackfriars' Wynd, or ony ither wynd, that ye cam' here, whaur the deil a thief or limmer is ever seen frae January to December ? But touch thae laddies if ye daur. They're brither's sons o' mine."

"The name of the one is Morison and the other Wilson," said I, more for amusement than anything else.

"It's a lee, sir ; but the police are a' leears, every mother's son o' them. Were I a man, and a' men were like me, we would rise upon ye and hang ye like Porteous ; but no on a barber's pole—it's owre guid for ye," and then she laughed hideously.

Nor would she have stopped for an hour, if my assistant, who had met two constables at the close-head, had not come in, and put an end to her oration. I proceeded to put the bales on the men's backs, amidst the terrible cursings of the hag ; and having despatched them, my assistant took one of the youths by the arm, and I the other.

“Good day, Mrs Maitland,” said I.

“And an ill day to you, ye scoondrels,” she yelped, as she followed us. “But a waur’s waiting ye, when ye’ll roast in hell-fire, for banishing and hanging honest men’s bairns, when it’s yoursel’s should be in the rape; but indeed a rape’s owre gude for sae cut-throat ruffians.”

The remainder—if remainder it could have been called, which would have gone on till next morning—was cut short by the shutting of the door as we left her, but not without being honoured by a scream of vengeance, which made all the old tenement ring. Even when up near the top of the close, we heard her, as she had sallied out, yelling at the top of her husky voice, and calling down upon our heads all kinds of punishment.

But luckily there are two sides to a question. If Mother Maitland cursed us, the Galashiels manufacturer saw the case in another light, and showered upon us his blessings, and probably he would even have gone the length of reversing the deserts, by hanging the good mother at her own door. Nor did I forget her either, for when I brought away the thieves, I merely left the resetter for a little, till her rage cooled. In a short time, I sent for her to join the four already in custody, as fine a company as ever met together to enjoy the pleasure of a pannel-box.

On examining the bales, I believe they had just been taken in time,—a day would certainly have reduced both their bulk and their value; as it was, they were entire with the exception of the two plaids. And I believe fur-

ther, if the manufacturer had been able to find out the funny urchin, she would have been clad, very much to her wonderment, from top to toe, in real genuine tweed ; but if goodness in this case went unrewarded, not so evil, for the whole four were duly punished. The Smiths got twelve months, Wilson eighteen months, Morison fifteen months, and the good Dame Maitland, six months.

This case suggests a remark. The judges, when they pronounce such sentences, no doubt think they are inflicting punishment, and philanthropic people will even pity the victims. Yet I have often doubted if our prison punishments are really punishments to them. The thralldom, no doubt, keeps them from the objects of their wishes ; but their lives, in spite of their assumed jollity and wild mirth, are really in such opposition to human nature, that they never can be called happy : so that if their punishment is an evil, it is only one evil in place of another ; and so we find them treating their sentences with a levity which is just a symptom of a kind of despair influenced by drink and debauchery.

The Pirates.

ALMOST every case which has come into my hands, and in which there was difficulty in tracing, has had something to mark it as demanding a treatment suited to its peculiarity. In following that treatment, I have had occasion, in conformity to the latitude intrusted to me, to differ from my colleagues, but seldom with much cause to repent of my pertinacity. In the case I am now to narrate, this occurred to a greater extent than in some others ; and, perhaps, it is on that account—for the transaction itself is of frequent occurrence, the robbery of a tar—that I recur to it.

In 1845, we were called upon by a sailor of the name of Geddes, a Newhaven man. He was in that state in which these good-natured fellows often are, after having passed a night in some of the low houses, in the midst of half-a-dozen of depraved women, collected around him by the attraction of a bunch of notes. He came in very unsteady, and withal jolly, with the indispensable quid in his mouth, and the hitching up the breeches as usual. I asked him his errand.

“ Why, you see,” said he, “ I was boarded and robbed

by a nest of pirates over in that creek there," pointing towards the other side of the High Street.

"When?" said I.

"Last night, second watch."

"A very loose watch, I fear," said I. "Why didn't you keep a better look-out?"

"Right, sir; but then you see we had too much grog, and got hazy about the eyes, so that we couldn't see the enemy nohow, until fairly boarded, and now it's all up with my cargo."

"What had you on you? have you been at sea?"

"Why, yes, your honour, I had been cruising in the South Sea, and came to Leith yesterday, where I laid in a cargo of notes, twenty-eight of 'em, and wanted to have a scour among the fire-ships up in this dangerous sea, and so got robbed you see; everything gone, sir,—not a penny—nothing left, but this piece of seal-skin, with an inch or two of pig-tail."

"You have paid for your fun," said I; "but where did this happen?"

"I think the name of the creek," he went on, "is Galloway's Close. The captain in charge of the pirates, Hill, or something of that shape. Then there was Nell, Grace, Moll, and Agnes; but I couldn't tell one from t'other now."

"But why didn't you take care of your hard-won money, man?"

"And so I did,—lockers bolted and barred; but they silenced me with their charges of gin and whisky, and

when I went to sleep, scrambled up the sides of my craft, and robbed me of every penny. So if you can't make sail and catch 'em, I must off again to sea ; but catch me next time,—I'll give that creek a wide berth, or my name's not Jack Geddes."

"Can you tell me what like the women were?"

"All of a piece to my eyes—just women, every one of them, that's all ; all the same you know when a man's groggy ; but I wouldn't mind it so much if they hadn't sheered off, and left me a disabled hulk, without a biscuit in the locker, and nothing to comfort me, but a sore head and two quids or so."

"You have mentioned four names ; do you remember any more ?" said I.

"No, can't say,—half-a-dozen anyhow."

"Why had you so many sweethearts?"

"Oh, we like a choice you know," said he, laughing ; "at first there were only Nell and Molly, then one told t'other as how I had a rich cargo, and so the fleet collected."

"Well, I'll try what can be done for you," said I.

"I hope you'll give 'em a taste of the grating and cat anyhow."

"Wouldn't it be of more importance if I could get the money?"

"Oh yes ; wouldn't require to go to sea again ; and then mother would get something, you know, and old father."

"If you had given it to them to keep," said I, "you wouldn't have been here to-day."

"Yes," he replied, with a comic kind of seriousness stealing over his face, if there was not something like a drop gathering in his eye, of which I was the more certain that he brought the sleeve of his jacket over his forehead. "Yes; the old ones will get nothing till next time, and I'd rather not see 'em till I've gone to sea again, and come home and make 'em happy. I'll keep out of Galloway's Creek next bout, I warrant."

"Would you know them if you saw them?"

"Wouldn't I know the cut of the enemy?" said he, getting into his old humour. "They came to too close quarters for my not knowing 'em."

"But you cannot tell which of them took the money?"

"No; I just remember a low room, stoups and glasses, and a fleet of women. I was singing 'Tom Bowling,' and Nell was helping me,—others singing something else, and one or two dancing,—all merry and jolly,—when I must have fallen asleep, for the next thing I remember was that they were all off, the gas out, and nothing to be seen but darkness—and all my money gone; nothing but the seal-skin pouch and the quid to go to sea with again."

"It's a hard case, my lad," said I; "but you have brought it upon yourself by your folly. I'm sure you all know well enough of these tricks, and yet they are always coming fresh upon us. I will set about trying to get hold of the pirates, as well as your money. Call back in the afternoon, and in the meantime keep a

look-out about the streets, and endeavour to lay hold of them."

So away he went, hitching in the old style. I had no great hopes of his case. The women he had mentioned were known to me very well, as residing in, or frequenters of, a Mrs Hill's establishment, in the close he had mentioned ; but they were experienced hands, and so well up to "planking" such an easily disposed of article as money in the shape of bank-notes, that to get hold of the thieves was making scarcely any progress. But the difference I have alluded to was as regards the first step. Going direct to the den is often held to be the best method of getting hold of a beast who is glutted with prey ; but women, even of their depraved kind, are not exactly beasts, though in many respects worse. They are not altogether deprived of the glimmer of reason sufficient to tell them that their lair will be first searched. To go there is simply to give them warning, and put them on their guard. Yet this is the common way of many detectives ; and I was only taking my old way when I insisted, against a contrary opinion, that we must in the first place avoid the house.

But there is another consideration, derived from the inevitable nature of women. The moment they get hold of more money than will serve them for their always crying immediate wants, including the eternal whisky, their very first thought is dress. They will go a-shopping at all hazards. Their trade is to attract, and it often enough happens that the very shawl, or bonnet, or gown

which helps to ensnare the victim, is the produce of a robbery similar to that they will practise upon him ; so that, I believe, it has occurred that, as the money is distributed from one to another, a man has been caught and robbed by means of the cash he had in his pocket a night or two before. There is a pretty bit of retribution here, very instructive ; but I believe it's all one whether understood and felt or not. If sin were to be cured by the scab of its own cautery, it would have been off the face of the earth some thousands of years ago, down to the pit, never to be allowed to come up again to taint this fair world.

Proceeding upon my theory of avoiding the house, I, accompanied by one or two constables, betook myself to the Bridges, where are the shops most frequented by women of this stamp. I just wanted to know if the thieves were true to their old nature. They had had time enough to sleep off the effects of the whisky, and to awake to little else than the madness of their conviction that they had each a bundle of notes in their pockets, which it was necessary they should scatter, by purchasing new things, to enable them to get quit of the old rags. I accordingly kept pacing the Bridges, as if in no hurry consequent upon the sailor's story ; and I believe if they had seen me, they would have been satisfied either that Jack was still in Mrs Hill's, or that he had never been to the office. On the other hand, if I had seen *them*, I could have read money in their eyes. Yes, as I have hinted before, if you know the general cast of the features

of people who live from hand to mouth,—and a very artful hand sometimes, in the case of that class over whom I exercise a fatherly care,—you can almost with certainty tell whether any windfall has come in their way, for you may be assured that nothing but money can make them look happy; and then the happiness has a kind of hysterical excitement about it that carries a mark to a good observer. Nay, when a good haul is got of £20 to £100, there is often observed a commotion in the whole sisterhood, even among those who don't participate in the plunder, for doesn't it shew that there are prizes in their lottery?—their fortunate turn will come next; the victims are getting rich and unwary;—and, above all, there is the inevitable envy of the lucky sister or sisters who have been so unspeakably fortunate, without taking into account that there will be drink going in the “happy lands” for a week to come, until the money is all spent and gone.

After keeping up my watch for more than an hour, I observed Helen Mossman and Grace Edwards coming out of a respectable shop, each with a neatly tied up draper's bundle. I kept my eye upon them. They had the happiness of shopping in their hearts, and were babbling, as money-holders do; nor did they seem to have any fear of being laid hold of, though, of course, they did not see me. In the midst of their talk, they met Agnes Pringle and Mary Cameron bouncing out of another shop, where they also had been getting their neat paper parcels, and then they commenced a quadruple conversa-

tion, apparently extremely interesting to them, for they laughed heartily, and even, you would have thought, turned their eyes contemptuously on the passengers on either side of them, as if they said to themselves, "We have been shopping as well as the best of you;" for to what woman is the pride, let alone the pleasure, of shopping not dear? But as I stood and watched them, another thought occurred to me. There stood four women, who had taken from a poor seaman the wages of a year's voyage to the other side of the world, and left him not so much as would get him a day's tobacco, while he had an old father and an old mother looking to him for help, and only to be met with the miserable intelligence that their hopes were blasted. What did this poor fellow do to them that they should render him penniless, even make his stout heart swell with pity for these parents, and bring the tear to his eye, to be brushed off in shame of what he thought his weakness? No, they cared nothing for these things,—Jack was not even mentioned, only collars, and ribbons, and handkerchiefs, to deck them out for some other seduction.

I was in no hurry. Here I had Jack's Nell, and Moll, and Grace, and Agnes, all in a neat clump, while, if I had taken the advice given to me, I might not have had one of them; for a visit to Galloway Creek would have sent Sarah Hill, the daughter of the keeper of the house, out upon a hunt after them, to tell them to keep out of the way; and this they might have done till every penny of the £28 was gone. My men were now

behind me, for they had also seen the birds getting into the net ; so, stepping up to them,—

“You are blocking up the way, my ladies ; walk on.”

“Walk to the devil !” said Nell Mossman. “The street is not yours.”

“We will walk any way we please,” said another.

“Which way do you want us to walk ?” said a third.

“This way,” said I, pointing north ; “this way, come along.”

And so they did ; for in spite of their bravery they began to get alarmed.

I walked along with them to the Tron.

“Oh, not that way,” stopping them as they moved for the Canongate ; “this way, past the Tron.”

“And why that way ?”

“Never mind, come along, and here is a friend who will go with us and bear us company ;” and who’s this but Jack, all sober and tidy, with a clear light at his poop and a fine breeze in his main-sheet ?

“All right,” he cried, as he came up ; “direct for port, four passengers and a valuable cargo.”

And Jack came to my side, as the cowed and heartless creatures still kept mechanically trudging by our side.

“Old mother and father have a chance yet,” said I, in a low tone to the tar.

“Oh, God bless you, sir,” rejoined he ; “were it not for them I wouldn’t have cared a d—n, but since ever I

saw you this morning my heart has been thumping against my ribs, like a moored lugger against the wooden fenders of a pier, all for the thought of the old ones."

And there the drop came again.

"D'ye know, sir," he continued, "I had made up my mind——"

"For what?"

"Not to see 'em after eighteen months' absence, but just away to the West Indies again to-day."

"This way, ladies," said I, as we came to our haven.

And as they turned and stood for a moment in hesitation, though they had seen plainly enough for several minutes whither they were bound, Jack stood and surveyed his jolly friends of the preceding night's revelry and madness. There was a good-natured triumph in his clear eye.

"Why," cried he, with an oath, "this is so jolly good a thing, I'd have the same fight again to have these land-pirates at my stern."

"Step in."

And thus I had the entire company within my harbour; and then we began to unload the outlaws, an officer being sent to the house to search it. A part was found there, and the rest had been pretty fairly distributed, so that, making allowance for the purchases and a few drams, we got, one way and another, almost the whole of Jack's £28. Thus old father and mother would have a chance, after all, of getting a few comforts through the

mean of their good-hearted son. Yet, I believe, the most curious and lamentable feature of this case is that to which I have partially alluded,—the utter want in these women of anything like a sense that they had done anything that was wrong in reducing *a poor man* to beggary. It is nothing to see them hardened in cases where the victims are rich,—the “serve-’em-well” doctrine applies there with perhaps a touch of retribution, for such women are in that predicament from the selfish licentiousness and hollow-hearted deceit of rich seducers.

Nor, do I believe, did they feel more when, tried by the Sheriff and a jury, they got their rewards: Helen Mossman twelve months, Grace Edwards six, Agnes Pringle and Mary Cameron nine, and Sarah Hill, the bawd’s daughter, as resetter, seven. “The pirates’ doom.”

The Look-out.

PEOPLE who boast of a little courage are generally very averse from the cunning that skulks and gets behind screens and defences ; they can't submit to such degradation ; and therefore it is that when a man is found at this kind of deceit he is set down as being a coward. I fear, however, that my courage would be pretty doubtful if it were measured in this way, for I have often enough been *perdu* in holes that would scarcely hold me, peering out for curiosities in my way, with much zest, and not at all ashamed when, bouncing out, I could catch a robber by the throat and bring him to justice.

Some sixteen years ago, Mr Tibbetts, hat-maker on the South Bridge, was greatly annoyed by that kind of disappearance of property over the counter which has no *per contra* of the appearance of cash. It is a common thing, and speaks ill for the honesty of our people as well outside as inside the counter. In this instance, the affair was a puzzle ; for while Mr Tibbetts suspected his lad, there were disappearances that could not be accounted for by his dishonesty. Articles went amissing while the lad was there, but the same thing occurred

when he was not there. He had tried many ways to get at the real truth, but as yet had failed, when he applied to me.

I went and examined the shop, and got all the information I could get; very unsatisfactory it was. In some views the lad seemed to be the thief, in others not; so that I saw nothing for it but a secret watch. I looked about me for a hiding-place. Mr Tibbetts recommended beneath the counter, where I might hear something but see nothing. I must have a look-out, but the difficulty was where to find it in an open shop, every corner of which was known to the lad, and where any screen or artificial covering would have been suspected in a moment. At length I fixed upon the recess behind the fanlight on the top of the door, where I could see all that took place in the shop, as well as take a look out on the street, if I chose to have a variety. Of course, I behaved to be as careful in the one direction as the other, for verily it would have been a strange thing for M^r Levy to have been seen doubled up behind a fanlight in a hatter's shop, waiting for a victim. To render my look-out complete, I proposed that he should surround me with bandboxes, as the milliners' apprentices are sometimes seen on the street. The notion pleased Mr Tibbetts, and was the more acceptable, as it had often been the custom to place hat-boxes there when there was no room for them elsewhere.

Mr Tibbetts was in the practice of opening the shop in the morning himself about eight o'clock, going home to

breakfast at nine, when he was relieved by the lad. To make sure work of both suppositions,—as well that implicating the lad as that applicable to outsiders, whoever they might be,—I proposed to mount into my look-out, with my handboxes about me, as soon as the shop was opened. Next morning at eight I was accordingly at the shop. I got up to my place by means of a ladder, and Mr Tibbetts began his part by piling up before me the handboxes, which, as he placed them, I arranged in such a way as that I could see over the entire shop and yet not be seen by any one who had no suspicion of my being there. All things being thus prepared, we took to our respective offices ; occasionally, when no customer appeared, speaking of things in general, without my feeling much of that discomfort I had awarded to so many, viz., that of a prison ; myself for once being a prisoner. It is said that if every room of a house were seen into by a secret watcher, it would be a show-box even more wonderful than a travelling exhibition ; and I rather think, from my experience, the remark is true. About half-past eight, a respectable-looking man, whose appearance was familiar to me, as going up and down the High Street, but whose name I did not know, came in.

“I want some hat-trimmings,” said he, giving the trade description, which I did not well understand.

Mr Tibbetts shewed him some specimens of hat-trimmings ; but the customer appeared to me to be very ill to please, so that the suspicion got into my mind that

the man had some other object in view than to get the article wanted ; nor was I wrong.

"I must go up-stairs for it," said Mr Tibbetts.

"Just so," said I to myself ; "and while you are up-stairs, I will see what the very particular customer does."

And I did see it. No sooner was Mr Tibbetts mounted to the other storey, than the very particular customer swung himself over the counter, filled his outside pockets with trimmings—he was not now particular by any means—from a drawer ; and then, vaulting over again, resumed his position.

"Ah," thinks I again, "if you just knew that M'Levy is here, up in the fanlight recess, looking down upon you with these eyes !"

But he did not know it, and that was his comfort ; and then, lo ! all his particularity had vanished.

"Oh, just the thing."

And, after all, the quantity he bought—no doubt of an old fashion he didn't need—was so small in comparison with what he had in his big pockets, that the one, the smaller, might very well represent the amount of his real honesty ; the other, the larger, standing for his assumed honesty or hypocrisy, whereby he cheated the public more effectually than he had done Mr Tibbetts.

After he had gone, I shot my head over the band-boxes.

"What is that gentleman's name, Mr Tibbetts ?"

"Taylor, a small manufacturer in the Canongate, and an honest man, I believe."

"Very honest. Bring the ladder as quick as possible, and let me down."

"What do you mean? That man surely did not steal anything?"

"I'll tell you when I'm down. I never shoot secrets at people as if they were partridges."

So he got the ladder, and let me down.

"That man," said I, "is off with trimmings of at least ten times the value of what he bought of you."

"An old customer, ill to please," said he. "Ah, I see now where my goods have gone; but why did you not tell me to stop him?"

"Just because I didn't wish," said I. "He will lead us himself to the store; and, besides, it's close upon nine, and I don't wish your shopman to see me, which he might have done if there had been a protracted bustle here."

"Ah, I see," replied he.

"I wait for you on the opposite side: join me when the lad relieves you."

I took my new station, and by and by I saw the lad enter and relieve his master; who, coming out, walked on his own side towards the north. I then joined him.

"Taylor," said I, "the moment you went up-stairs, sprang the counter, filled his pockets, and again took the outside, and met you as like an honest man as the most other very honest men are like themselves."

"You perfectly astonish me; though any man had sworn——"

"Yes, yes," said I.

Just the old thing, which I hear rung in my ears every day, and which I have no need to repeat ; because, really, I must proceed upon the cruel and very selfish principle of taking the greater part of people for rogues until they are proved by some test honest,—not that I think honest people are fewer than others say, but just that I have somehow a difficulty in taking their own word for it.

"And where are you going?" said Mr Tibbetts.

"To Taylor's house, to which you will please take me."

"Why, I am almost ashamed to face the man," said he.

"That is a feeling I never felt," said I.

"I mean for the man," said he.

"Ah, that is another question; that feeling I have often felt, and a very painful one it is."

And so, under our necessity, we went to the house of our honest man, which we were not long in finding ; neither were we long in discovering the goods. Laying my hand upon them, as they were yet warm as it were from the fevered hand of guilt—

"These were taken from Mr Tibbetts' shop within this half-hour," said I.

The man, while betraying astonishment, did not quite lose his confidence.

"No man can say that," he replied ; "these are the goods I bought from Mr Tibbetts. He went up-stairs for them, and there being no one in the shop but my-

self, who could take it upon him to say that I stole them?"

"You don't deny it," said I; "you only assert that no one could see you."

"Yes, I deny I stole them," said he; "and, therefore, I conclude that, as there was not a single soul in the shop, you must have got your information second-hand, and that second-hand is a liar."

"How can you be certain," said I, "that no one saw you?"

"Because I have eyes," said he. "I repeat, there was no one who could by any possibility see my movements, all honest as they were, in that shop. Did you, Mr Tibbetts?"

"No, I was up-stairs."

"Then I repeat, and will stand to it for ever, that no one upon this earth saw me steal these trimmings."

"Upon *this earth*," said I, looking him in the face in that kind of way in which those eyes of mine, of which I am a little proud, have often enabled me to see things under the skin, and which, I am free to say, were never turned by another pair; "but there might have been one *above* who saw you."

The statement struck him, but he recovered quickly.

"Are these your goods, Mr Tibbetts?"

"Yes," said he; "I looked my drawer," (a circumstance I have forgotten to mention,) "and found as much as these amissing."

"And, therefore," rejoined Taylor, "you fix on me, though no one saw me steal them?"

"The one *above* excepted," said I; "and by this authority I ask you to step up with me to the Police-office."

The evidence was too much for guilt, and he came away, I taking the trimmings along with me. He was duly lodged in safe quarters, to think on the value of what he had stolen, and compare it with the worth to him of a character.

"Now, Mr Tibbetts, will this account for your losses?"

"Not at all, unless the boy has been done in the same way."

"Then I will test him, but not from above again. In the first place I can't get up, he being there; and in the second place I suspect some outside sympathisers; so I will take another position. But I will better reserve this till to-morrow morning."

"Yes," said Mr Tibbetts; "your only chance is when I am out, between nine and ten. It is now nearly ten, and he will be expecting me."

Next morning, accordingly, I was at my post at nine opposite the shop; nor did I require to wait long. I soon observed a sleazy, hawking-looking dog walking backwards and forwards, and occasionally looking in at the window.

That is a resetter, said I to myself; for I have a knowledge of the tribe, always cowardly and side-looking, never with the firm defiant eye of a confirmed thief.

Thus watching my man, I saw him slip suddenly into

the passage of the common stair to the south of the shop. What next? Almost what I expected,—the lad came to the door, looked north and south, and round and round, then, going to the common stair, peered in. Ah, everywhere, thought I, but right opposite, where I am. So it is always, when people wish to do something wrong; they look about for danger, which they don't wish to find, and therefore they never look in the proper direction. If they did, they would seldom do the evil thing, for, though the danger is not *patent*, it may always be seen, if the wish were away and the eye left to the guidance of honesty and wisdom. Although I was not known to him, he might have looked into the drawer whence he was to abstract what he abstracted, and then consider that his master could not but miss his goods. That was his proper direction, but he looked out in place of within. In a minute after, he came to the door again, with a bundle behind him, looked about again,—what trouble vice puts itself to under the aspect of prudence!—and darted into the entry. A clever-enough trick, as he thought, but then I had a motive for dashing in as strong as his, and I obeyed it. Hastening over the street, I was in upon them just as the lad had handed the bundle to the resetter.

“What is this?” said I, laying hold of it.

“Some clothes of the boy,” said the man, “which I have got for my wife to wash for him.”

“And your wife washes span new hat-trimmings?” said I, pulling out an end.

The usual dashed and blank looks of those who are caught red-hand.

I took them both direct to the office, where Taylor was before them, though the parties were in no way connected. As for the man, I felt nothing. I had sympathy for the boy, who in all likelihood was led into this breach of trust by the older culprit. The law makes allowance for the authority exercised by a husband over a wife, whereby she is often freed, while the real truth is that the authority is often reversed; but there is no allowance for that cunning persuasion exercised by full-grown men over mere striplings—a very deadly thing, and I am satisfied very common. The father and mother of a thief, who have trained him from youth upwards to the habit, get clear because they didn't do the deed, and the wretched pupil is made the scape-goat of their sins. I have seen hundreds of boys and girls convicted and sentenced who had, considering their years and education, no more moral guilt on their heads than the unfortunate cat bore while under the hand of the monkey. So in this case the lad and the man got sixty days each; but it was just a wonder that the latter was punished at all, for if he had not been caught in the act, he might not have been discovered without a difficulty not applicable to the thief himself. The ten days apportioned to Taylor scarcely repaid his crime. But Mr Tibbetts' evils were all cured in twenty-four hours. I never heard more of his being exposed to robberies of trimmings or any thing else.

The Letter.

IT would be a lucky thing for thieves and robbers, when they are suspected, that people should make no inquiries after them; but, just as if they became of greater importance by guilt, their friends seem often inclined to feel greater interest in them—a tendency which has often resulted very favourably to me. In June 1847, Josiah Milstead, a clerk in a pawn-office at Woolwich, absconded with a sum of £60, a quantity of valuable jewelry, and many articles of wearing apparel. Information was sent to various towns, among the rest to Edinburgh. We had of course the ordinary description of the person of Milstead, to which I gave my best study; but there was not such a peculiarity in his face and appearance, as to form a good representation in my mind, so as that I could seize him, if I met him promiscuously. I required in a case of this kind to be wary, lest I should pounce upon some gentleman, and bring trouble upon myself, as well as injure the *prestige* of the force for prudence and perspicuity.

I have seldom found that a runaway does not leave some trace of where he is to be found with some person,

who is dear to him either through relationship or love ; or, if his flight has been sudden, he will find some means of telling that person where he is. It is from such considerations that we are so often led to the vestibule of the Post-office, where we smell for other odours than that of the musk which so often perfumes that place, as a kind of memory left by love-letters to those who send them away so hopefully. I was accordingly on my post there, and soon observed a young man of genteel appearance and placid, if not melancholy countenance, who seemed to me to come dangerously within the description of my man. He called at the counter, and, finding no letter, came out to the vestibule ; and, as a matter of course — though at present it would, I was aware, do me no good, for he would get no letter addressed to him in his own name—I ascertained from the clerk, that he had asked for a letter to a certain address, which I now forget. I instantly again got to the vestibule, where I found him hanging about with a melancholy look upon his face, suggesting to me that he was a waif, and did not know what to make of himself ; but I had other motives for loving him, for every time I looked at him, I was the more certain he was the object on whom my heart ought to have been fixed, and was fixed. Yet I did not feel myself authorised to embrace him ; not that I was a bashful lover, but a prudent one, who would make sure against a rejection, with perhaps an insult.

While thus keeping my eye on him with the view of

seeing him home,—an attention I have bestowed on many who never thanked me for it,—I observed among the crowd one or two pickpockets; and, what was more strange, these light-fingered gentry seemed to be as fond of my swain as I was myself—a circumstance altogether singular, as in general they have very good reasons for bestowing their favours on those to whom I shew the greatest indifference. Watching them with even more interest than I generally feel, I saw one of them jerk a pocket-handkerchief out of one of his outer pockets, and at the same instant a letter fell out upon the ground. I instantly seized the pickpocket; but just as instantly, my interesting gentleman of the melancholy face picked up the letter, and, making a bolt, was off. The whole affair occupied only an instant. I found that I had committed a slight mistake. If I had cared less about the pickpocket than the letter, I would likely have had my man; but at least I had got something—the handkerchief; and, what was more, I got my suspicions of my man confirmed to a certainty, because, if that letter had not been sufficient to betray him, he never would have made off, and left the silk handkerchief behind him.

Having taken the pickpocket to the office, I began to think of the singularity of this occurrence—what if this handkerchief, so wonderfully thrown before me as it were, should turn out to be a part of the stolen property? That could soon be ascertained, but then in the meantime I might lose my man. I must, therefore, try to fall in with him again, trusting to the rule that lovers

meet, by some kind of chance, oftener than other people ; but just while intending to take one of my contemplative walks, I learned at the office a piece of information which altered my scheme. A letter had come from Woolwich, stating that Milstead had a sweetheart there, who had been indiscreet enough to let out that she corresponded with him under a name which he had found means to convey to her. That name was enclosed, and what was my astonishment to find that it was the very one given me by the clerk at the Post-office ? And here, too, was the rare example of two lovers after the same man, and yet one of them not only not jealous, but absolutely grateful to and loving the rival !

I had now got hold of the clue, with which I had as yet been merely toying. I must keep a watch at the Post-office, for I was satisfied, from his not having got a letter when he called that forenoon, he had one to get. He was clearly enough acquainted with the arrival of the mails, and I had only to be at my post next day at the same hour to get him into my embrace. I had, however, a little difficulty in my way, for it was clear enough that he had some premonition, from my apprehension of the boy, that I might be again about the Post-office ; and he might send some other person for the letter. I required, therefore, to keep out of the way, and my plan was not to go into the clerks' room at first, but to edge about in the vestibule, till I saw him come up. I therefore took my stand in such a

position that I could see him without being myself seen. I was aided in this by some collection of people.

Nor had I occupied my post long, till I saw him come in—more melancholy-looking than before; but then, was he not far away from his sweetheart in Woolwich? and the lover who was near him was one whom he not only did not know, but could not gratify by a return of his affections. He was now wary too,—at least he looked about him as if he feared the presence of him who had seized the thief,—and yet if he had had nothing to fear on his own account, he should have been glad to see him who had recovered the handkerchief; and here in the vestibule, and before going into the counter, there occurred a trifling circumstance that afforded me some amusement. I saw him take out another handkerchief wherewith he blew his nose, as if he had said to himself, as he sounded his horn, “I can blow my nose yet in spite of pickpockets;” and, what appeared to me to be curious, that handkerchief was of the same piece, being exactly the same pattern as the one he lost yesterday. Yes, and how minute suspicion becomes! It is not often that young men of his appearance buy *webs* of handkerchiefs; and I concluded, upon such whimsical evidence, that both handkerchiefs had been cut from the pawned piece. This notion amused me at least.

He then went in to the counter. I followed close up, and stood behind some people who were getting their letters or handing them over to be marked. He asked

for the old address. It was that given by the Woolwich authorities. He got his letter, and I now expected that he would have walked away far enough from the Post-office. No ; he was too keen to get into his widowed heart the words of love. He went out to the vestibule, and, looking about without seeing me, he opened the epistle and began to read. Being myself a suitor for his hand, and something more, I thought I had a right to see what was in my Woolwich rival's letter ; so, as he was scanning it with all the attention of a lover, I quietly stood behind him, and, looking over his shoulder, began to read too,—“ My dearest love.” What a strange thing that love is ! how independent of the moralities ! Here it had flown on the wings of the wind three hundred miles to enfold (ay, and unfold) a thief, and cheer him in his solitude. But he soon observed that some one was standing behind him reading secrets.

“ How dare you ? ” he cried, as he turned round ; but my appearance stopped the rest of his sentence ; for was I not the very man who had apprehended the boy, and might him ?

“ I can even dare more than that,” I replied : “ I can even ask your name and business.”

He hesitated, and, as I thought, shook.

“ But, in the first place,” I continued, “ give me that letter,” taking it out of his hands. “ This is *not* your name,” looking to the back of it.

No answer.

“ Is not your real name Milstead ? ”

"No ; that is my name on the back of the letter. And why should it not be ? I have this moment got it from the clerk."

"I know that, for I saw you get it."

"Then why doubt my word, and the name written there ?"

"Because it is my trade to doubt, ay, and disbelieve, what I hear from certain people. I happen to know that your real name is Milstead ; and if you have any desire to know whether my information comes from Wooler or Woolwich, you must go with me to the Police-office."

My melancholy friend now understood his position. A deadly paleness dashed his melancholy with increased solicitude ; and, as I looked at him, I could not help feeling for one who, from the very arms of love, was transferred into the iron bonds of the law.

He submitted to his fate with a resignation that does not often belong to lovers, and walked with me to the office, where he was put to the question :—

"Where are you putting up here, Mr Milstead ?"

"I deny that that is my name."

"Well, well, then, Mr ——." The name on the letter ; it is not in my book.

"Nowhere. I am living in Glasgow, and come here only to receive my letters."

"Then, your luggage will be there ?"

"Yes ; anything I have."

"At what lodging-house there ?"

"A hotel on the quay."

"Name?"

"Don't remember."

"Well," said I, "you and I will go to Glasgow together, and you will shew me where you are putting up."

"I have no objections," he replied, with more confidence than I expected.

About an hour afterwards, my man and I were on the express train, going at the rate of forty miles an hour.

On arriving at the Broomielaw,—where he had said his hotel was,—he shewed me the house, and there I ordered some refreshment for both of us. After which I went—leaving him in charge of a Glasgow officer I had picked up on the way—to the landlady of the hotel.

"What is the name of the young man I brought here just now?"

"Mr ——." The name on the letter again.

"Do you know anything about him?" I asked.

"Nothing. He came here some days ago, intending to set sail for America, and I understood he was waiting for a ship that is to sail to-morrow from Greenock."

"Has he any luggage?"

"A good deal," she replied; "but you know it is his, and I have no power over it."

"I am an Edinburgh officer," said I; "and I fancy that will be warrant enough for you."

"An officer! and is that gentle-looking, sorrowful young man a criminal?"

"That's what I want to know," said I; "and perhaps the luggage may help us."

"Well, I will take you to his bed-room; but stop," she continued, rather hesitatingly, "I have some money of his."

"How much?"

"Fifty sovereigns," said she.

"I will take that from you in the meantime," said I, "and then you will shew me the luggage."

She went and got the money, counted it over to me, and I deposited it in my purse.

We then went into a bed-room, where she shewed me his portmanteaus and trunks; a goodly stock for a voyage to America. I proceeded to take a partial survey, previous to a more perfect one when we arrived. My eye sought a certain pattern of a handkerchief, but I was for the present at least disappointed. I had now nothing to do but get my man and his baggage to the metropolis, and, accordingly, we again embarked.

While about half-way between Glasgow and Edinburgh, I noticed that my man was even more serious than ever. There was something passing in his mind; and every now and then he looked at me as if he had something very important to say to me. At length he whispered in my ear,—

"Mr M'Levy," for he had got my name from the Glasgow officer, "the only evidence upon which they can convict me in London is the articles and money you have got, I understand, from the landlady of the hotel."

"And enough, too," said I.

"Enough, and too much," he sighed ; and after a few minutes' silence he continued, "I have been thinking, that if you are a man of any heart——"

"And conscience," I added, having a notion of what was coming.

"That if you were just to keep the money and the articles to yourself, and say nothing about it, I will say nothing."

"What more?"

"Why, then you might deliver me up to the London authorities, and I will not care much, because if they have nothing I have taken to bring against me, they cannot convict me."

"Very good," replied I; "but then I just fear that SOME ONE may convict me. Because you are acquainted with the devil, perhaps you think there is no God. No, no, my young friend, that's not my way of doing business. You forget I am a messenger of Justice, and you would bribe her."

He hung down his head on his breast, nor lifted it again during all the time of our journey.

On our arrival, I got him locked up; and perhaps my sorrow for my Jacques was a good deal modified by the recollection of his wish to tamper with my honesty, which had heretofore stood proof against all the temptations of glittering watches and diamond rings. The whole of my intercourse with this young man had been curious; but, I confess, there was one incident I was more con-

cerned with than all the rest. Was it possible that I could find out, from his luggage, anything to satisfy me in regard to the mysterious handkerchief? I could have no peace till I should have gone over the whole; and this I did, but was again disappointed. I had next recourse to the young man himself, and, taking the article with me,

"You remember," said I, "the loss of your handkerchief at the Post-office?"

"Yes," said he; "a thief picked my pocket, and the letter fell out. I snatched up the letter."

"Which I have got," said I.

"Yes, but it did not tell you much."

"No, I confess it did not, because it is directed to your assumed address; but the handkerchief, it is that I wish to speak to."

"Well, what of that? I am in for it at any rate, and I don't care now what I say to you, if you will not use it against me."

"There is so much against you," said I, "that anything you may add will make no difference."

Some sighing again, which rather went to my heart, in spite of my recollection of the attempt to bribe me.

"Well, here is the handkerchief," said I; "and I wish you to tell me, only to gratify my own curiosity, whether that formed a part of the articles you carried off from the pawn-office?"

"Yes," said he, taking it into his hand; "it's one of

a piece ; and I had another of the same in my pocket when I was apprehended."

"Well," said I, "this is an extraordinary circumstance, and might teach you that there are higher powers than detective-officers. Upon that handkerchief, which was taken from you by the boy, I could have got you convicted, though I had not discovered another item of evidence against you."

"Most wonderful !" he ejaculated.

"Yes," said I ; "but this is only one example out of many I have witnessed of such strange interpositions in my favour, that I have been often inclined to get on my knees in the street in reverent awe of that Eye which sees all, and of that Hand which can point Justice to her object, while all the time we are thinking that we ourselves are the only agents."

The London officers came and took Milstead up for trial. I was present, and I need not say that the case was hollow against him, without my bit of miraculous discovery. Neither did I take any notice of the bribe, for I did not want to bear hardly against him. But the case was viewed as a serious breach of trust,—far worse, in one view, than robbery with force,—insomuch that an end of confidence between master and servant is an end to business—that very thing on which the greatness of Britain depends. He was sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Decision.

I NEED hardly say how very much is due to decision in the business of detection. A single minute will often peril the object of your inquiry, and then, it does not often happen—at least I have not found it—that the patience that is required in ferreting is joined to the power of dashing at an emergency. A very singular case, where I had an opportunity of testing myself in this way, comes to my recollection.

On the 4th of January 1858, as a man, whose name has by mischance been omitted from my book, was going along the head of the Cowgate, he was instantaneously set upon by three young men, thrown down, and robbed of his watch. A man of the name of M'Ginnes who came up at the moment to lift up the stunned victim, met the robbers as they made off. It was dark, and he had a difficulty in catching marks so as to be able to identify them. All that he could say when he came to the office was only general, so that it would have been impossible to proceed with any certainty on his description. In addition to this disadvantage, it happened that any information that I could get from him

was got at the door of the office, where I met him as he hurried in. I was just on the eve of setting out on a hunting expedition, accompanied by my assistant Reilly, with a draper who had got taken from his shop a quantity of goods, and whose case was urgent. However, I got so much from M'Ginnes,—enough to point my mind towards three young men—David Dunnet, Robert Brodie, and Archibald Miller, the last of whom I knew to be a returned convict.

Of course, it was impossible that the man could give me any general marks of all the three, nor did he, but it was going far to point out the gang that I got something indicative of one ; for when once a gang is formed they fall into a fatal regularity of almost always acting together, so that if you get a clue to one you may consider it a clue to them all. So general have I known this habit among thieves, that I have not found it happen often that while the copartnership lasts they betake themselves to individual adventures. The reason of this is perhaps evident enough. Thieves and robbers have their lines of acting, much like players, and when they determine to go in partnership they agree as to the kind of speculations they will engage in. The particuilar line of the three I have mentioned was robbery of the person ; and, knowing this, I was the more easily led to the conclusion that they were the parties implicated in this affair. Yet, withal, I must confess that I possessed nothing like a conviction ; and, indeed, so much was I taken up with the draper's business that I sent M'Ginnes

into the office to report regularly, when the lieutenant on duty would, of course, set the proper detective on the scent.

In the circumstances, the affair was soon out of my mind, occupied as I was with the poor draper, who sighed for his goods, and no doubt thought that I was the man to repair his loss. A reputation thus gets a man into toils, but I hope I never regretted this consequence, so long as I could give my poor services to anxious, and often miserable victims. How often have I walked through Edinburgh in the middle of the night, and far on in the morning,—when all were asleep but those who turn night into day,—accompanied by some silent man or woman, groaning inwardly over a loss sufficient to break their fortunes and affect them for life—threading dark, noisome wynds, entering dens where nothing was heard but cursing, and nothing seen but deeds without shame, endeavouring in the midst of all this sea to find the sighed-for property, or detect the cruel robber. Wearied to the uttermost, I have often despaired, at the very moment when I was to pounce upon what I sought, redeem my spirits, and render happy my fellows.

In the present case I had a task of the same kind. We went through a great part of the Old Town, up-stairs and down-stairs; through long dark lobbies, and into all kinds of habitations, but the draper was not that night, at least, to be made happy. We had entirely failed, and were all knocked up by disappointment and fatigue. If

the robbery in the Cowgate had scarcely taken hold of me when we set out, all interest in it had passed away, if not all recollection. Some hope had taken us over to the far end of the Pleasance, and we were returning by that street. It was now between twelve and one,—a dark morning, as it had been a dark night,—every sound hushed, and all thought, it may be said, stilled within us. In short, we were fit only for our beds, to which we were hastening as fast as our weary limbs would carry us. I think we had got as far as the foot of Adam Street, when up came three young fellows so rapidly that they were within a yard of us before they saw us or we them.

“Seize them,” I cried.

And instantly we sprang upon them. I seized Miller and Dunnet each with a hand, while Reilly engaged Brodie. Straightway a fierce struggle ensued, during which I cried, “Search Brodie.”

And no sooner was the cry uttered than Brodie threw something away from him to a considerable distance. The sound of the article charmed the ear of the draper, and instantly running to the spot, he picked up a silver watch—the very watch that had been taken from the man in the Cowgate three hours before. In the meantime the struggle continued, and no man can form an idea of the energy of robbers when caught suddenly after an exploit. Their blood is up before, and the terror of apprehension gives them a power which is just that of self-preservation.

At length, and receiving some aid from our valiant draper, who lost the sense of his loss in a kind of revenge against the class from which he had suffered, we succeeded in quelling them, whereto we were probably aided, too, by passengers who stopped to witness the *mêlée*. We landed them all safely, and they got their reward. Brodie, who had the watch, was sentenced to seven years' transportation; Miller, the returned convict, got two years' imprisonment; against Dunnet, not proven, for there was no proper identification. I have said that Miller was a returned convict. I am not sure but that the old notion that punishment tends to reformation hangs yet about many minds. For God's sake, let us get quit of that. I have had through my hands so many convicted persons, that the moment I have known they were loose, I have watched them almost instinctively for a new offence. The simple truth is, that punishment hardens. It is forgotten by the hopeful people that it is clay they have to work upon, not gold, and, therefore, while they are passing the material through the fire, they are making bricks, not golden crowns of righteousness. Enough, too, has been made of the evident enough fact that they must continue their old *courses* because there is no asylum for them. You may build as many asylums as you please, but the law of these strange nurslings of society's own maternity cannot be changed in this way. I say nothing of God's grace,—that is above my comprehension,—but, except for that, we need entertain no hope of the repentance and

amendment of regular thieves and robbers. They have perhaps their use. They can be made examples of to others, but seldom or ever good examples to themselves. That they will always exist is, I fear, fated ; but modern experience tells us that they may be diminished by simply drawing them, when very young, within the circle of civilisation, in place of the old way of keeping them out of it.

Niebie, Niebie, Nick-nack.

I NEED hardly say that the mere value of a stolen article has little to do with the amount of the guilt. The rapacity that strains after a big booty will condescend to a very small one. And, certainly, in so far as regards the discovery, while a valuable thing creates more interest, and therefore multiplies the means of detection, there may be as much of a curious peculiarity in the *trace* of the small robbery as in the large one.

In April 1845, we got intelligence that a uniform coat, belonging to a porter in a Life Assurance Company in Edinburgh, had been stolen from the lobby by one of the "prowlers," or thieves that go about studying doors and windows, ready to enter on the instant and take advantage of any laxity of care that presents itself. The boldness and sharpness of these worshippers of Chance are extraordinary. I have known instances where members of a family have met them on the inside stairs, and even in rooms, and they have generally an answer that serves them for the moment, till they get off. Then there is the well-known trick, to send the servant in with a message, and when she comes tripping along with

the answer she finds the lobby cleaned out. No open door is safe in Edinburgh for a moment ; and even intermediate doors that are shut are often opened by the prowler. In the present case, a glass-door formed no impediment. The coat was snatched off the pin, and the red-necked official was deprived of his dress badge.

The article with its red neck was what we call kenspeckle, and it was further distinguished by having upon it buttons, cast on purpose, with the name of the Assurance Company upon them ; so that it was not one of those things I could look for in a pawn-shop or a broker's. It would get first into the hands of a tailor, to be shorn of its peculiarities, and transformed into a shape that would enable the thief to get it disposed of ; but then no ordinary tailor would have anything to do with it ; and, therefore, it appeared to me that it would cast up in the hands of some low snip, who devotes himself to such transformations. There is a difficulty about all such things, but here it was increased by the exclusion of the ordinary places of deposit.

This small affair of the red-necked coat tickled me a little. I took a fancy to finding it, for we have our pet subjects, and I believe I would rather have discovered this coat than have been the means of finding a hundred stolen pounds. After all, however, my anxiety owed something to a conviction at that time of being "done" by the prowlers. They were as thick as wasps about other than paper-hives, and every day was bringing in charges of lobby thefts which defied us. Now here was

an opportunity that might not present itself again,—a kind of regimental dress, which spoke its character everywhere, and was so likely to leave recollections on those who might have seen it. Nay, I got dreamy about it. It was doubtless in the hands of a tailor, father of a prowler; and if I should thread through every close in the Old Town, dive into every den, interrogate every snip connected with thieves, I would have it. Then, how fanciful I turned; I dreamt as I walked about I would see the buttons adorning the jacket of some one, whether honest or dishonest, most probably a thief; and I believe I did examine buttons whenever I saw them on a suspected coat. But for a time these fancies were not made facts. I don't know how many snipperies I visited, how many pieces of *red cabbage* I took up and examined, how many *bachelor's buttons* I inspected, all in vain. I had just one hope left, and that pointed to North Gray's Close, where one Alison lived, who had a son one of the prowlers. The recollection of him came last; and if this effort failed I might bid adieu to my coat.

I think I was on the Mound when the thought of Alison came into my head, and I lost no time in directing my steps towards North Gray's Close. I had got to about the Bank of Scotland, and looking up Bank Street, whom do I see but my young friend Alison himself, standing speaking with one of his brethren? They were engaged, too, in some magical-like movement of the hands, Alison turning his closed fists about each other as the children do in the game—

“Nievie, nievie, nick-nack,
Which hand will ye tak’?
The right or the wrang?
I’ll beguile you if I can.”

“You’ll not beguile me,” I said, as the old rhyme came into my head.

And slipping forward, I came upon the two without being noticed, and just as they were nick-nacking in great glee.

“There is the ‘nieve,’” said I, seizing Alison’s hand; “and there is the ‘nick,’” snatching a button from it; “and there is the ‘nack,’” as I took him by the shoulder. “Where got you this, my lad?”

“Oh,” replied he, sneeringly, “a button frae an auld sodger’s coat.”

“What regiment?” I inquired, scarcely able to restrain a laugh in the exultation of having got my button.

“Life Guards Blue,” replied my confident lad, who was quite jolly in the conviction that I could make nothing of a button.

“The Life Assurance Company?” said I, carrying on the joke; “not far wrong,—and blue with red facings, eh?”

His laugh went away down about the nether lip, and there hung; and so stunned was he that he could not speak; but they’re all subject to revivals.

“Won’t do, you see,” said I.

“Done by a button, by G—,” swore the graceless young fellow. “I got it frae Williams, and he got it frae——”

"No one," said I. "You got it off the coat you stole from a lobby in George Street ; and if you forget about it, I may bring it to your recollection by informing you it had a red neck.

And now this clever young artist attempted to play me off with a dodge. Putting his hand into his pocket,

"There's twa dizzen o' buttons for you," said he, with a leer ; "maybe I hae stown a' the hail twenty-four coats they belanged to ?"

A bold and dangerous trick. But he thought he had a chance by thus putting me off my scent of the one coat ; whereas in the other view he had none.

"Well, we shall see about these buttons, too," said I, "when we get to the office."

"Do ye no ken we play at buttons, man ?" said he, again on a new turn, as I was walking him up.

"Yes, and at coats too," said I ; "but the right hand's nicked this turn, anyhow."

Having got him safely lodged, I hurried away to another quarter, where I was afraid I would be anticipated by Williams, the other button-player, who had run off when I laid hold of Alison. Proceeding to North Gray's Close, I went straight in upon the father, old Alison, who was sitting *à la snip* on his board, very busy, no doubt, as I thought, making "stolen coats look amaist as weel as new." He looked up as I entered. I knew him, but he didn't know me, though doubtless he had heard of me.

"I want some red clippings," said I, "for a purpose. Have you any ?"

"I'm no sure but I hae," replied he. "Are they for catching mackerel?" he added, with an attempt at humour, for the Alisons were apparently a funny family, if I could judge from the button-player.

"No," said I, laying hold of a red neck lying in a bundle of *cabbage*; "they're for catching sharks; and by this," holding up the bright article, "I intend to take two."

"Ay!" said he, as he sent his eye through me like a Whitechapel sharp-blunt, and no doubt made a wrong stitch, which he tried to undo as he caught my eye.

"This is the red neck of an official coat," said I; "and I'm anxious to get the body of it."

"It's a cursed lee!" cried Mrs Alison, who was sitting by the fire; "it's a piece o' my mither's auld red plaid."

"Why," said I, "I thought these old red plaids were made of a kind of cloth they call camlet; but this is of fine West of England broadcloth."

"Braidclaith here, or braidclaith there," replied she, "that's a piece o' my mither's auld plaid."

At that moment a sharp voice, which I knew to be that of Williams, sounded from the door—

"Jack and the buttons are up the spout!"

And I heard the step as he made off, having, no doubt, made this announcement in ignorance of my being within, and with a wish to put the father and mother upon their guard.

"What can the daft laddie mean?" said the mother, looking stupid, but alarmed.

"He means," said I, "that your son John has been apprehended for having in his possession the buttons belonging to the coat of which this is the neck. Now, you see, the buttons are of no use without the coat, and the coat and the neck should go together; and therefore I will thank you to tell me where the coat is."

"And wha the devil ever heard o' a man catching a coat by the colour o' the buttons?" replied the wife. "A coat may hae ae kind o' buttons the day, and anither the morn. Ye may as weel try to catch a dog by the colour o' a single hair. Ay, man, though ye were M'Levy himsel', you couldna do that."

"But M'Levy tells you, just here at this moment," said I, "that he will do that. Bring me the coat, and I will match it with the buttons, as well as with the red neck."

"Weel, if you're M'Levy," replied she, "we're in the gleg's claws. But gleg or no gleg, ye'll no do that, for the coat's no here, and never was here, and Johnny has just got the buttons someway we ken naething about."

"Just as you've got the neck," said I, "in a way you know nothing about. Come, I have no time for this palavering. Out with the coat, or *the ticket*."

"The ticket! what ticket?" cried the wife.

"What ticket?" echoed John from the board.

"The pawn-ticket for the coat."

"What coat?" again rejoined the pertinacious dame.

"Ay, ye may weel say, What coat?" added John,

looking up from his work, which he had still kept at all the time.

And so they went on bamboozling me till my patience became exhausted ; besides, I felt so much pride in the strange discovery of the button that I could not bear to be nicked in return by a cunning snip and his wife. I must have the body of this coat, whatever might be the fortune of the many others which had figured with the other buttons got from Jack. So I began my search without saying a word to my two sharp ones ; but notwithstanding all my diligence, I could not find anything like a fragment of it among the many pieces and clippings that were there, as the last traces, no doubt, of the twenty-four so wittily alluded to by the son. I was nearly at my wit's end ; although I had alluded to the pawn-ticket, it was rather as a chance-thrust ; for, after all, the made-up coat with its new buttons might have been sold to some of the old-clothes-men, and I had no mark on it whereby I could discover it. But I was not yet done.

"I must ask a favour of you, Mrs Alison," said I.

"I houp," replied the wife, "it will be to get leave and liberty to make an apology to decent industrious people for suspecting them o' theft, and searching their house."

"Why," said I, "it is just that you will search your pocket,"—the uniform depository of these little bits of paper,—“and try to find for me the pawn-ticket.”

"The pawn-ticket?" again cried she.

"What pawn-ticket?" rejoined the snip.

"I have told you already," said I; "and if you don't comply on the instant I will search you myself."

"Weel," cried she, as she began to see how the affair was going, "suppose I had a pawn-ticket in my pocket, what about it? Isn't the pawn-shop the poor body's bank? and am I to be ca'ed a thief because I pledge something to keep me and my bairns frae starving? Here," said she, drawing out a ticket; "and what can ye mak o' that? It's just for a coat; and there's plenty o' coats in the world."

"Have you any more?" said I, putting my hand into her pocket, and pulling out an old hussey, more like a tobacco-pouch than anything else.

And there, to be sure, was a number of these same little enigmas, which I had no doubt had some secret connexion not only with my much beloved coat, but also those of the twenty-four kinds of buttons.

"Ah," said I, as I examined them, "the pawn-shop is indeed the poor man's bank, and your family must have been often starving, and as often bursting, by these pledges and reliefs."

I thought I had brought them to reason, but no.

"Just tell me," said I, "which of all these little bits of paper is the token of my coat."

"What coat?" again from the wife.

"What coat?" again from the snip.

"Why," said I, "to satisfy your curiosity about this wonderful coat with the red neck, and the buttons with

the Assurance Company's name on them, of which you know nothing, and about which you are so curious, I will accompany you to the Police-office. You can wait there till I bring the coat to you, and you will have plenty of time to examine it."

"Were you the muckle black deil himsel'," skirled the woman, "I'll no move an inch. This is my castle, pair as it is."

"And this board is my throne," cried Snip, grandly, "and nac man will make me budge an eighth."

"Do you see this?" said I, dangling my handcuffs. "Would you like me to lead your majesty and your queen, as a public show, along the High Street of Edinburgh?"

I have often had occasion to notice the wonderful effect of the dangling of these hand-binders. It is quite magical, especially where the hands are *not clean*. They are a terror to that instinctive love of liberty which seems in man to have its temple in the arms—by which man defends himself from enemies, embraces his friends, and makes the bread of his life. You may gag his mouth—even a woman's mouth—or bind the legs, with comparative indifference on the part of the victim; but the moment you threaten the hands, the spirit is kindled, and all possible resistance may be expected to be offered, and would be, but for another charm, that of authority. There is the love of freedom and the instinct of obedience to the powers that be, so that the human creature is at once a king and a slave.

My monarch of the board and his queen were now to act the slave. They were as quiet as the Brentford dignitary after his fall ; and, having got themselves dressed, without ever having cried out, " What coat ? " they were taken up as res setters, and lodged where there was no throne to sit upon.

My charmed button had done much ; but it did more. In a very short time I got from the pawn-shop my coat, which had been very nicely remodelled by old Alison, but not so changed as to be beyond identification ; and were I to say what the twenty-four buttons produced, I might be accused of exaggeration. I can at least say that that button of the Assurance Company insured many a lobby against the risk of prowlers for a long time, and that, too, without the company getting a penny of premium ; but what was more, that same button was the means of procuring for old Alison and his wife, as res setters, and young Jack, as the prowler and thief, sixty days of Bridewell, without the luxury of playing " nievie nick-nack " with his brother prowlers.

I may remark that the public are often under the belief that when a system of depredation has been carried on for a time, there are many hands employed at the work. It more often happens that they have all a centre in one or perhaps two individuals. I stopped the shutter-punching mania, as well as that of the bag-snatching, by one capture in each case.

The Jostle.

SOME time towards the end of the year 1857, I happened to be coming round from Windmill Street to Chapel Street,—musing, of course, as usual; for it must be recollected that we are great students, though having vastly little to do with books,—except sometimes a directory or railway guide. I had got up to Chapel Street a small way, when suddenly a man, bouncing out of a shop occupied by one Flynn, came with a sudden broadside on my left shoulder. No doubt it was an accident; the man was in a hurry, and one don't mind these things much; but in my case there is this peculiarity, that having always been rather soft in my communication of force, I don't like to be impinged upon rudely, so I looked sharply round to see my bouncing gentleman, and just met his face as he turned round for an instant to see what effect his jostle had produced. I didn't know the fellow, but neither did I like his look, which was between the jimmy genteel and the healthy mechanical,—brushed down, and yet frowsy; hat shiny, yet with a *clour* or two, as if it had met with accidents on the road; buttons on his coat too new to match the

threadbare streaks here and there; not yet out at elbows, but coming. Yet all this was little or nothing. There are plenty of such kind of people, who do not qualify themselves for my attention,—a kind of ne'er-do-weels for themselves and ne'er-do-ills for others,—more unfortunate than criminal,—bogles to their friends, and canny towards others. Yet I was struck by this man, principally in consequence of his style of face. Even if I had had no genius in that way, I could not have forgotten it. The principal feature was not like any nose I had ever encountered. It was a straight, sharp line till towards the end, where it bulged out to such an extent at both sides that it looked like a club, and seemed to bespeak pulling as something suited to it and deserved by it. But if this organ was a temptation, there was something above it, in a pair of eyebrows, as well as the squinting lights that shone through them, which seemed to threaten vengeance to the hand that should be so tempted,—just as if that said expression above declared that it had the special care of what so temptingly lay below. Moreover, a scowl at me, who was really the aggrieved party, riveted the impression of features which stood in no need at all of any such auxiliary to make them stick to any mind—far less mine, so ominously retentive of peculiar faces.

I need not say that that face accompanied me, as that of one who was formed of a kind of clay suited to my handling. I could not account for the circumstance that such a person had been resident in Edinburgh for

a time, without having thrown out signals to me that he was well worth my acquaintanceship; and the circumstance was the more extraordinary, that the house he came from when he jostled me—to get me, as it would seem, to look at him—was a resort of cardsharps, perfectly well known to me. Be all that as it may, it is certain at least that the image of that face occupied my mind so exclusively—not only that day and night, but several others—that I fear some other profiles were deprived of that attention from me they deserved; but I was not accountable for this: if God has thought proper to paint “thief,” “robber,” or “murderer” on certain brows, it isn’t for nothing; nay, it is for something—that the like of me should read the marks, and try to save the good and virtuous from the workings of the spirit which these terrible words are intended to indicate. But if it was certain that I was haunted by that nose so club-like, and those eyes which, being drawn out of the straight course, had got into a twist, from which they could not be untwisted by the eternal regularities of the good and the true,—so calculated as these are to simplify and strengthen vision,—so also was it certain that I entertained no doubt he would fall into my hands, but when, wherefore or how, was of course a mystery. Nay, I was even so presumptuous as to take the jostle, and the consequent shock to my nervous system—not very susceptible that—as a presage of my being to be called upon to protect the rights of society against a man so clearly *Cainified* to my hand.

Other affairs carried my attentions away in various other directions, but the complexity of these avocations was just no more than a pretty wide meshed net over the surface of a picture, and which scarcely interrupts the view of the piece; and among these calls upon me, a case in Aberdeen, far enough away from Chapel Street, was peculiar and exacting. I am speaking to a period only a few years ago—1857—and the time of the year October. A Mr Lundie, pawnbroker in Glasgow, with a branch doing extensive business in Aberdeen, got his premises in the latter town broken into one night. The affair was not only bold and desperate, but the number of gold and silver watches and valuable jewels of many kinds, was such that the whole of old Aberdeen was on fire. Groups of people stood at the door of the pawn-shop discoursing of the ingenuity of the housebreakers, others were examining the traces of the successful manoeuvre, not only during the next day, but for several days; and, perhaps, there had not been so successful and extensive a depredation in that comparatively quiet town for many years.

Meanwhile the police had their nerves strung up to the mark. The town and suburbs were scoured; and at length two seemingly gentlemen, who were so very ill at speaking the Doric of that district, that pure cockneyism shone through, and declared them to all intents and purposes foreigners, were taken up. What were these southern artists doing so far north? what attraction was there in Aberdeen brose over the roast beef of

Old England? in the northern equinoctials over the southern? Vain questions, for there was no satisfactory answer; but then what right had the Aberdeen police to seize on these curious travellers, merely because a curious case of burglary had taken place in a town not over-pure in other respects—see the Register of Births—besides honesty? Why, no right at all, except that which belongs to a vague suspicion roused by bits of incongruities in dress, appearance, habits, and so forth, not very easily accounted for. So these English gentlemen having broken into the strong box of these suspicions, and, like conjurors, shewn to the astonished police that there was actually nothing under the hat where the pigeon was, got off,—the police acting a little upon the dodge as well as from necessity; for the dismissal, it was thought, would send the adepts to where the valuable booty was planked, with which they would go no doubt south, and be thereby nabbed perhaps by no less a personage than myself.

This trick among us sometimes works very well; and in this case it did not work ill. Information was sent to us in Edinburgh, that the gentlemen would likely pay our Modern Athens a visit, and after a time return to Aberdeen to unplank the plank. We not only got the names,—Thomas Williams and William Thomson,—but also a very graphic account of their persons. Now you will say that my stories have got joints added to them by my fancy; for what were the chances against me of one of these men being my jostler

of the club organ ? Not so formidable as you imagine. The secret with me has always been to be about the right place at the right time. What took me up by Chapel Street, but just that I knew that Flynn's house was to me an interesting one ? and then thieves are wonderfully narrowed in their haunts. If my jack of clubs was to be anywhere, he would be among the cardsharpers at Flynn's, and a cardsharper does not consider it beneath him to shuffle gold watches in place of bits of pasteboard, if he can play the game with nothing in his pocket for stakes. It don't signify : the account from Aberdeen was a pen-and-ink sun-picture of my jack of clubs, so well drawn that I recognised him in a moment ; nay, for aught I know, he was at that moment when he jostled the wayfarer M'Levy, and scowled back upon him, on his way to the pawn-shop in Aberdeen, where Thomson was before him, making espials and arrangements, in their prudent way.

It was natural that I should wish, by way of revenge, to smile upon that face which had scowled upon me ; but, although I considered it very probable that the Aberdeen police were right in supposing that the gentlemen had come to Edinburgh to wait until the plank was ripe for lifting, and do a little by-play at Flynn's in the meantime, it was not for me to shew my face there, to flutter the wings that were to carry them to my dove-cot with the straws in their bills. No ; I behaved merely to set a watch, which I did without any effect ; and then came another communication from Aberdeen,

—and how the police there got the information I never learned,—that on Friday the 2d of October the burglars had started from Edinburgh for the north, with the intention to remove the booty. So my club had proved a trump over my ace of hearts, and my next object was to watch them when they came south, which they would very soon do. Though, strangely enough, the northern gentlemen of the second sight had come to know what seemed to me almost impossible to be known, they were ignorant of that which seemed likely they would know, that the enemy had again taken a direction towards my beat.

Thieves and robbers *observe* Sunday ;—the blessed day drives them into their dens, where

“Sabbath shines no Sabbath-day to *thieves* ;”—

that is, as a holy day on which God is to be worshipped, and sins repented of, but as an unholy day so far as their desecration can go. The very sternness of soul which makes them the breakers of God's law is aggravated and irritated by the sound of the Sabbath bell and the crowded tread of worshippers ; for how otherwise can we account for that day being chosen for their hellish jubilees—ay, for the very advantage they take of houses left empty that the house of God may be full ? What then ?—the advantage they think, in their madness, they derive from the observation of the day of peace and rest, we turn round, till the head of the scorpion bites its tail in the midst of the fire of retribution. Yes, we must observe their observation ;

and so on the next Sunday I expected something which might turn the tables upon them. No more watching of Mr Flynn's door, where I had been jostled, and where it was now my turn to jostle, but not seowl. I took with me, in the evening, four assistants,—for I knew that meet whom I might they would not, on the Lord's day, be solitary beings, immured in separate rooms, communing with their spirits in retirement, but congregated in elusters, triumphing over their wickedness, under the sympathetic power of the *esprit de corps*. Arriving at Flynn's, I told my men to stand back and be ready for a rush,—perhaps a fight ; for my "club" would not turn out a sapling among willows, bleating as the zephyrs blew. I knocked, and the door was opened by Flynn himself, but immediately shut again,—upon my baton interposed close by the lintel. I pushed in, and three of my men followed, with scarcely any noise, the fourth being for the outer escapes.

"Now," said I, as I wheeled and took hold of the key and turned it gently in the smooth lock, "let hush be the word. If you, Flynn, raise a syllable higher than a loud breath, you are *up* on the instant."

The man was mute—he could not help himself ; and even the wife found a rein to her tongue, somewhere about the back nerves, which are amenable to fear. They remained in the front shop along with the men, who stood guard at the door. I knew the form of the house, and my knowledge of that guided my movements. There was a kind of kitchen adjoining the shop ; the

communicating door was shut—a good-enough omen. Beyond that there was a room, usually the scene of holiday cardsharpping, and off that a dark closet, where I promised myself some light, neither from window, gas, nor candle. I have got light through the points of my fingers before now. So making no noise, I approached the door to the kitchen, opened it upon the instant, and there saw two men busy at a Sunday dinner which would not have shamed the feast church-goers fairly think they are entitled to on the day of rest, after two good sermons—things which I have heard said are appetising, though for what reason I know not. Yes; there was, in his proper person, my master of clubs,—even he who at the door of that shop had been so unpolite as to jostle me, a simple loungee in the streets, and not even so much as looking at him,—and Thomson too; in short, the two English thieves who had taken an affection to the Aberdeen watches and jewels.

“Don’t disturb yourselves, gentlemen,” I said. “Eat away; that’s a good roast joint, so well loved in England, and it may be a good long time before you see another.”

The sound of the knives and forks ceased on the instant. They started to run.

“Be seated,” said I; “there are three valets at the door, ready to wait upon you. So go on with your dinner, for after your run from the north you must be hungry.”

I saw Williams’s eyes fixed on me with that twist

so like the beak of the crossbill, when applying its nippers to a chesnut. I could not tell whether he saw in me the man whom he had encountered so rudely before at Flynn's door; perhaps he did; and if so, could it be supposed that he possessed a mind from God so strangely formed that it could not by any means work out a rough problem of natural religion, which is often accomplished by blind fear? I can't tell; these things are a foot or ten thousand miles beyond the cast of my plumb; but I can at least say, that as I looked at him, and remembered the extraordinary circumstance of our meeting, I was impressed by a feeling which, if I had not been on my watch, would have turned the black of my eye up under the lid to seek light in darkness.

"Just remain," I said again; "I will be with you instantly, and if you cry, your flunkies at the door will attend to you. There can be no bolting, you know, in spite of bolts. I have taken care of that. So, steady."

Irony is one's only weapon where mildness is mocked and sternness resisted. Williams's scowl got darker, but not more dangerous, as his hand grasped the knife which he held in his hand; but I knew it would be only the knife that would suffer.

"There is the hot joint," said I, as I watched him; "that's the mark for the knife."

And leaving them in that fix,—with the roast before them, which they could not eat, however hungry, and the valets behind them, whom they could not call, except to give them hotter plates than suited fingers fonder of

cold gold,—I opened the door leading to the back-room, and there found nine cardsharpers, seated round a table, so busy trying to cut each other as well as the cards, that they had not heard any part of the melodrama in the kitchen or front shop. So much the better ; yet, as the window was being looked after outside, I had not much to fear. By several of these I was known.

“All busy on the Lord’s-day,” I saluted this graceless crew of the darkest and most determined vagabonds on the face of the earth.

And the growl was terrible,—just as if a kennel had seen Reynard’s nose smelling a bit of their dead horse within the ring. I knew the growl would, like the wind, be contented in this case with its own sound ; yet I may remark, that thimblers and cardsharpers are a class of men far more dangerous to the *person* than are the shop-lifters and pickers,—the latter have at least a little of that boldness of character which is not so often found associated with cruelty as you find the dark cunning of the former.

Now, not a single word or sound but that rumbling growl. Nor was it for me to dally with such men by rubbing irony against the sharp file of their wrath. I had another object in view just then. They were safe, and so far I was satisfied. The door leading to the dark closet I have mentioned was a little ajar. I had no light, and did not wish to call for one at that juncture. I had found my way in very dark places before ; and, as I have hinted with some weak egotism,

my fingers are pointed with phosphorus like lucifer matches. I groped my way,—the more easy that I had groped there before, but not to any good purpose ; nor indeed, to say the truth, was I very hopeful even now, considering, as I did, that these men were, as the slang goes, so *up*, that I could not come down upon them in that easy way,—I mean I could scarcely suppose that that closet would be selected as a planking hole. At the same time, I was aware that the jaunting members of the fraternity (for that the entire inmates in both rooms formed one corps I had no doubt) had newly returned home for a late dinner, and a hungry man likes to satisfy his appetite before he takes out the soiled shirts to be given to wash. So I groped my way, feeling about and about. There were carpet bags hung on pegs round and round. I grasped them hard, not for soft goods, and I know the grip of a watch as well as any man. Nothing there in any of these bags to gratify my touch, yet all the while there was a flustering and whispering among the sharpers, inspiring enough to have given me hope. Was I to be discomfited, and, after all my somewhat confident irony, to be laughed at by these scoundrels in the way they can so well do, giving me a chorus to my song of triumph, like a satirical note at the bottom of a page making a mockery of the text. It was like it ; and no one can tell what it is for a detective to be “ done ” by his children careering on the top of a “ fault ” in his scent.

I stood for a moment in the middle of the closet, con-

sidering what I should do, whether to carry the hopeless bags out to the light, or get a candle in, when just as I had resolved on the latter alternative, and had brought my right leg round to turn my body to the door, my foot encountered a bag lying on the floor pretty close to the wall,—and oh, that touch of the toe, so much more fortunate than my finger-points! Nothing but a watch could have resisted so neatly that touch; nay, I could have sworn I had broken a glass, for there followed the impulse just such a pretty tinkle as one might expect from a musical glass—musical to me in my down-cast hopes—touched in rather a rough way. My hand was on the object in an instant. I took it up, gripped it, and gripped it again, as doctors do for a knot that should not be among the soft parts; and there I could feel, one after another, thirty or forty of these round resistances, all as well marked in their rotundity as little Altringhams, with *shaws* too, no doubt.

I had got what I wanted, and presently came out.

“Does this bag belong to any of you gentlemen?” I inquired.

No one spoke.

“Will nobody claim it?” I insisted, opening the intermediate door, and taking in the two of the roast-joint interlude within the verge of my appeal.

Why are mankind accused of selfishness, and a love especially for such fine things as watches and rings, when we find such an occurrence as I now witnessed can happen among those whose rapacity is said to be

born of their very "mother wit?" Every one of these men denied after another that he had any connexion with or claim to this pawnbroker's shop in a bag; and with such evidence of self-denial as I thus often encounter, it may well be wondered at that I should not have long ere now given up my unfavourable opinion of mankind.

"Well," said I, "if the bag don't belong to you, I am certain that you belong to the bag; and, as the bag must go with me, and as I don't think that what belongs naturally or artificially to a thing ought to be cut off from it, you will all of you go with the bag to the Police-office."

Terrible commotion, threats, growlings, scuffling, denials, interjections, "disjunctive conjunctions."

"It won't do," said I; "get your hats."

And they soon came to their senses. When the time comes, no one can give in more handsomely than an outlaw, so as to become an inlaw, just until he can break out, again to break in, somewhere else than into a police-office or court of justice.

In the course of half-an-hour these eleven gentlemen, with Flynn and his wife, were safely at their "home." The bag was opened. Let me transfer from my book the numbers:—23 silver watches; 17 gold watches, many of them superb; 170 gold rings, several very rich and of great value; 50 gold chains, many of them massive and weighty. It is scarcely possible to imagine

a detective's feelings on pulling out of a mysterious bag the very things he wants. Even the robber, when his fingers are all of a quiver in the rapid clutch of a diamond necklace, feels no greater delight than we do when we retract that watch from the same fingers now closed with a nervous grasp; or, what is nearly the same thing, draw it out of his bag. Ah, but not the same thing in other respects here. The jewelry was no doubt identified as that of the Aberdeen pawn-shop; and, though I assumed that these thirteen belonged to the bag in some way, unfortunately it was only an assumption. And, accordingly, the Aberdeen authorities felt this difficulty.

Nor did it tend to diminish it, that, when we landed at the railway station, we encountered an extraordinary scene. Somehow it had got wind there that the robbers were expected. I have remarked that the robbery had made a great sensation in the quiet town of old Aberdeen. Well, no sooner had we arrived with our charge, than we were met by a perfect scene of triumph. Old Aberdeen seemed to have poured forth all her children that night to witness those adroit fellows who had so deceived the sharp ones of "the Doric order" there. } Never was such a scene. Why, it might have seemed that the town was so virtuous that a robbery was as great a wonder there as it would be, or would have been, in that strange country I have heard some speak of,—called Arcadia, I think,—where there are not, and

never has been, any necessity for detectives at all. (I think I shall pass the last of my days there, if I knew where to find it.) The whole street, from the station to the Police-office, was crammed with people, all prepared to give us a great reception ; and so surely it was, for a louder shout I never heard than that which rose and resounded as we passed along with our thirteen prisoners, neatly handcuffed. But, alas ! even we have enemies other than our children. Our fathers, the judges and great officers, sometimes think us fast youths. Those "guv'nors" are so exacting and fastidious, they don't go into our humours. They asked proof of the possession of the said bag of gold, and legally no one was responsible for it but Flynn and his wife, who, though the custodiers thereof, denied that they had any knowledge of it ; and then they were no more amenable to justice than the innkeeper is who is found to have in some bed-room of his premises a golden waif or drift-cast, brought there by whom he knows not.

Those men, of whom I had taken so much care, were accordingly taken from us, and let off, to plunder the lieges, and I was left with the sole consolation of having recovered some £300 or £400—all for a pawnbroker, who ought to have taken better care of his pawns. A conviction of my "club" would have repaid him for the jostle he gave me. I am in his debt to this hour, though I have no doubt he could not be got anywhere now in this hemisphere to give me a proper discharge.

This case is, therefore, more a confession on my part than a detection. I don't like it much,—it goes against the hair, and brings sparks of anger, not altogether consistent with my incombustible nature. The club nose, however, remains ; and who knows what may happen before I go to Arcadia ?

The Hay-seeds.

I HAVE heard it said that the clue of a man's destiny lies at the foot of his cradle. I don't pretend to understand this saying very well, but I know there is a clue that leads somewhere; and that although there may appear to be a break in it now and then, I have noticed the junction, where there seemed, to common eyes, to be no connexion whatever. I have already given a good many cases where the peculiar traces that bind a law-breaker to his crime were so minute, that it seemed impossible to discover them; and if they had not been discovered, the destiny of the man could not have been said to be connected with the act, so that God's ways could not have been justified to man. But they were discovered, and hence our faith was confirmed. Of this kind of cases, no one ever struck me as being more curious than that I am about to narrate, though the thing stolen was not, any more than in some other cases, of very great pecuniary value.

Some years ago, two or three young thieves were seen lurking about a house in Brandon Street, on a Saturday night. Their attention was directed to a front-door,

which no doubt they wished to be open. One was seen to go up and examine the checklock, and then come away and commune with his friends. Then there was a jingling of keys, as if they had been turning out their stock of skeletons to know which would fit. At length they succeeded: the old customer tried his hand again, the door was opened, and by and by the two who were on the watch outside got handed to them three top-coats, with which they made off, while the chief thief quietly shut the door and walked off. All this play was noticed by one who could neither run after them nor identify them; and when notice came to the office, we had absolutely nothing to go upon.

Next morning (Sunday) Mr Wilson called the officers and gave them their commission. "It is not the value of the coats," he said, "that makes me anxious about this case, but the certainty I feel that if we don't get hold of the thieves, our books will be filled with cases of the same kind. Now let us see who shall be the first to bring in the gentlemen and the coats. I need not say," looking to me, "who I expect to be the man." I had confidence enough, and although there was no clue, I believe I smiled at the compliment, just as if I had said, "Well, Lieutenant, they shall be with you in a very short time." The truth is, that the theft was no sooner intimated, than my mind went away about Stockbridge, where I knew a covey of these wild-birds had alighted, and were picking up their food in the streets near by; and my mind took this direction

as a consequence of my experience that thefts by combination are generally traceable to a partnership which is as active while it lasts as it is short-lived. Nor are there many of these partnerships existing at a time,—sometimes only one, doing an amount of business, generally in the same line, which induces the good people to think the town is filled with robbers.

I and my coadjutors went together, going, by my leading, along Fettes Row, and intending to make some forenoon calls at Stockbridge. We had emerged by the side of St Stephen's Church, and just as we were on the eve of turning down by the front of it, I happened to cast my eye up Pitt Street, when my attention was arrested by two young men standing speaking to each other at the entry to the house and shop of a tailor in that street. One of the lads had his coat off, and I believe it was the white shirt-sleeves that first caught my eye.

"A little in the wildgoose-chase way," thought I, as I neared them,—“going to catch feathers from a plucked bird.”

Notwithstanding, I proceeded, and just as I got within their eye-shot,—my own was discharged farther down,—one of the two made off up Pitt Street, but not before I discovered he was no other than one of my suspected at Stockbridge. The coatless one slunk in, and, leaving him safe enough, I made off after the fugitive. I traced him to the turn of Heriot Row, and saw him running west at full speed. It was Sabbath morning,

and it was not for a decent person like me to be pursuing thieves on the Lord's day, though I was sure they were not running to church. So I turned my steps back to the tailor's shop, where my white-sleeved gentleman was now likely completing his toilet, to appear as gay as possible in presence of his Sunday-out housemaid, who would be ready for him as usual, about the time when her mistress would be thinking her devout Jenny would be walking churchward, to the sound of the Sabbath-bells.

On getting down-stairs, I knocked at a door, and straightway there appeared before me my coatless customer, still uncoated and holding in his hand a big knife. The apparition startled me a little, but did not drive away my wits. I must get the knife out of his hand. He looked fierce, but that was no reason why I should not look the very opposite.

"Put on your coat," said I, "and come out and speak to me,"—a process he could not very well have gone through with the gully in his hand.

Obedience to a soft request is natural, and my man, laying down the knife, with which, after all, he had perhaps been cutting his breakfast loaf, donned his coat, and came out to me, leaving the knife behind.

"Who was the lad you were speaking to a little ago at the door?" inquired I.

"I was speaking to nobody," replied he, with a very determined air,—a denial which resolved me at once. How much more I have often drawn out of a denial,

where the denied fact was clear, than I ever did out of an affirmation, though clenched with an oath !

"Now," said I, in pursuance of a resolution which may appear unauthorised, if not foolhardy, but which I took my risk of,—for with me it has always been "no risk, no reward,"—"you take your hat, while I keep hold of you," remembering the knife, "and then I will take you where you may get some help to your memory."

And having kept hold of him till he was covered, I took him up the outside stair and committed him to one of my brethren, who quietly led him up to the office.

Having despatched this worthy, I kept watch at the door until the officer returned, then betook myself to examine the nest from which I had taken my bird. At the foot of the stair I met an old man, the master of the youth, and, as I afterwards learned, his uncle. Though he had not formerly appeared, he had heard enough to satisfy him of what had been doing, and was clearly prepared for me.

"Though you have not often customers on Sunday morning," said I, "I have a commission for three topcoats, and want them upon the instant."

"I sell nothing on the Lord's day," replied my devout gentleman ; "neither do I work on that day."

"But you are not forbidden to answer a plain question on that day," I rejoined ; "and I ask you if you have about you three topcoats ; and as you don't traffic to-day, I shall take them from you for nothing, to relieve your conscience."

"I have nothing of the kind," sulkily; "do you take me for a thief?"

"Not just yet," said I; "but wait there a little, and perhaps I may do you that favour when I come upstairs."

And without waiting for an answer, I shot down a very tempting inner stair, leading to an underground kitchen at the bottom, and below the back of which, where there was a recess, I found the very things I was in search of. In all which proceedings, though there was a dash of haphazard, there were not wanting probabilities, which were at least sufficient to move me, and in the following of which I was thus rewarded.

"I will take you for a thief now," said I, as I came up the stair with the three coats over my arm. "Though you could not sell clothes on the Lord's day to a man, you could sell yourself to the devil by telling me a lie. These are the coats."

"Oh, they will be my nephew's, John Anderson," he cried.

"No matter, they have been found in your house, and you go with me."

And the devout little old man was so far cured of his devotion, that he neither preached nor prayed, probably because he had not a willing audience, and hypocrisy loses its cant before justice. He went quietly to where his nephew was; and now it was necessary to catch the other birds, who I suspected were those who brought the prey home. There was no difficulty about

them ; William Ferguson I had seen in the morning talking to Anderson ; we got him on the same night at the house of his father. But there was another spoken to by John Anderson, as having been actively engaged in the robbery,—the brother of William Ferguson, called John. I had always such a desire to see my friends together, that it vexed me when any one was absent from a meeting, where the sympathy was generally so complete, that no one contradicted another, but all were bound together in the bonds of friendship, rendered tighter by a cause of common interest. If I had got none of the others, I would probably have been less solicitous about John ; but John I must get, or my peace was not of that kind which consists in duty done. There was a difficulty about this John. I had never seen him, neither had any of my detective brethren ; and that he had made a desperate bolt, there could be no doubt, having in all likelihood heard of the capture of Anderson in the fore-part of the day. Another officer considered he had got a string in the direction of Leith, because he had heard at the house of the father that they had friends in that quarter. I did not try to turn his nose, sseeing he was holding it out so snuffingly in that direction, and accordingly allowed him to run on, with the only fear that the organ would stick in the earth, before he got to the burrow, so keen was he in testing the ground traces ; so away he went.

As for myself, I had another notion. I have often found that Edinburgh thieves, when disturbed in their

sweet security, make, like the deer, for the water,—not to swim, and distribute their peculiar odour in the fluid, but as a means to get away. And Fife is often the destination. Somehow they think policemen don't cross waters,—loving rather to search on dry land, after the manner of the bloodhounds, which are always at fault in lochs and streams. At any rate on this occasion, it came into my head that my friend John would make for Newhaven early in the following morning, to catch the steamer that then plied from that pier to Burntisland. So on Monday I got up before daybreak, or rather in the perfect darkness of the prior night not yet modified, and having dressed myself, I took my dreary way to the old fishing village. The day was beginning to break when I arrived at the pier, where I took my seat on the edge of one of the hauled-up boats. The fishermen had been down to the Isle of May, and having arrived with five or six cargoes of fish during the night, were all ready, in their thick pea-jackets, long boots, and red nightcaps, for the fish-fair which is held on the pier almost every morning during the fishing season. The regular fishwomen were beginning to come down from the village, with their peculiar dress,—the loads of petticoats, of their favourite colours, yellow or red-striped, with the indispensable pea-coat, and close mutch enclosed in a napkin. Then there came the crowds of the Edinburgh fish-hawkers, almost all young Irish hizzies, resonant of oaths, and each with the hurly, without which she could do nothing in her wandering trade.

By and by, the crowd, and noise, and hubbub increased to those of a regular fair; nor, amidst all the picturesqueness of the scene, was the indispensable fun wanting,—of such a piebald kind, too, with no similitude in the traits of the Irish jokes and the regular fishwives' Scotch humour,—yet with gradations of caste pervading the masses, the stately Newhaven dames appearing like grandees among the tattered callets of the High Street, and the demure and mute fishermen overtopping all, and only condescending to smile at times as some witty exclamation burst upon their ears. And there was I, sitting in the midst of this at six o'clock in the morning, looking for a young man I had never seen; and had only got described to me by an accomplice, who might have given me a lying portrait. What hope could I have of his being there, or of recognising him if he came? Not much; and yet enough, for the crowd being almost all women, I could devote my attention easily to a newcomer. The boat to Fife could be seen coming over the Firth on her way to Granton Pier, whence she would come to Newhaven, thence to start on her passage across. I was meanwhile busy enjoying the scene before me, not a little amused by the remarks of some of my High Street children, who knew me well enough, if more than one had not been through my hands. It was now their turn for revenge—

“Och, woman, the thieves are so scarce in Edinburgh, he'll be to catch haddies this morning!”

“Ay, he'll to be handcuff the John Dories with a string.”

"And maybe tak' them up to Haddie's" (Haddo's) Hole, woman."

All which, and much more, I bore with good temper, the more by token I saw a young man coming sauntering down through the crowd, whose appearance claimed my special attention. He was very like the description given me by Anderson; yet my marks were so dubious, I could draw no very satisfactory conclusion. He paid no attention to the scene about him, and was clearly bent for the other side of the Firth, but he had no bundle, and had all the appearance of being on the "tramp,"—not, however, as a tradesman on the search for work, but rather carrying to me the well-known aspect of one of our Edinburgh scamps, seedy, haggard enough, and clearly out-o'-sorts. He passed me as he went down, but the light of the morning was yet so hazy, that I required a nearer view. I rose from my seat, and followed him down the pier, getting as close to him as I could, with a view to a better comparison of his face with the image I had formed of him from Anderson's account. While thus examining him, I observed on his coat some hay-seeds. "That lad," thought I, "has had hay for his sheets;" and I then recollected that, in the gray dawn, I had observed a large hay-stalk on the right side of the road coming down from Edinburgh. Slight as the suggestion was, I felt myself certain that he had been sleeping in that hay-stack all night; and no one will betake himself to a bed of that kind without some motive of concealment or

refuge. At least if he was not my John, he ought to have been ; and every look, after the view of the seeds, seemed to send a back energy down through my arm, imparting something like a crave in the fingers to lay hold of him ; but then I was among a crew of fish-women, who would have proved troublesome to me, from recollections of kindness received from me, either by themselves or some of their friends ; and I required to have recourse to tact. So, going up to him carelessly,—

“Raw morning, my man.”

“Ay,” with some confidence, almost enough to shake the hay-seeds out of my mind.

“You ’ll be for Fife, I fancy ?”

“Right,” replied he ; “when will the boat be here ?”

“You ’ll see her near Granton, yonder ; she ’ll be here in a quarter of an hour. We have time for a dram to keep the sea-air out of our empty stomachs.”

And what eye that has been closed on a bed of hay in a raw night would not leap at the cheerful word “dram ?” And so did his. Cold and breakfastless, he jumped at the offer.

“Come up to Wilson’s,” said I, “and I ’ll stand your glass besides my own.”

And thus I managed him, for he had no notion but that I was an intended fellow-passenger. In two minutes after I had him seated in Wilson’s, with the gill of whisky before us.

“Come, my lad,” said I,—for truly I had some pity

for him, so cold and heartless he looked,—“you will be the better for this.”

And giving him his dram, and taking my own, of which I stood in some need as well—

“Are you from Edinburgh?”

But here he faltered for the first time, even with the reviving whisky scarcely down his throat.

“No; Cramond,” said he, irresolutely.

And yet, if I was not mistaken, he came down the pier by the Fishermen’s Square. I was now getting confidence, and he was not losing it. So I beat up my advantage, for I had no authority yet to take out my leather strap.

“It is strange how friends meet,” said I, cheerfully. “I did not think that Jack Ferguson would have forgot an old fellow-workman.”

“Well, I don’t remember you,” said he, without a protest against my soft impeachment.

It is said that omission is not commission; a proverb not altogether true, I suspect, for here was just as good an admission that his name was John Ferguson as I could have wished in the very ardour of a search.

“And how is Bill, your brother?” said I, without telling him that I had lodged the said Bill in safe quarters on the previous night.

“Oh, well enough,” he replied; and yet just with a trace of repentance that he had said it.

“Yes,” said I, now perfectly sure of my man; “he is well enough, for he’s in prison waiting for you, as his

accomplice in a robbery of three coats, in Brandon Street, on Saturday night."

The words were not out when he started up, as if a cannon had been fired close by his ear, and made for the door.

"Come," said I, laying hold of him; "you can make nothing by flight in this thoroughfare; you may as well be easy. Here's a drop of whisky in the stoup yet. Take it kindly, and then I will fit you with these," taking out my cuffs.

And such is the accommodating spirit of these fellows,—so intimate with reverses, and mixing sin and sorrow with indulgence and indifference,—that Jack sat quietly down, and taking up the stoup, poured out the remaining half-glass, took it off, and then took on his curb.

"Well now, Jack," said I, for I was curious on a point, "didn't you sleep all night in the haystack up yonder, on this side of Bellfield?"

"Yes, I did," he replied; "how do you know that?"

"Why, by these hay-seeds on your jacket," said I. "Don't you see that if you had had these upon you last night before going to bed, and had taken off and put on your coat, as honest men do, these seeds would have been shaken off? and then, don't you further see, it was very unlikely you could have got these seeds upon you this morning, when newly out of bed? So, Jack," I continued, "it was really by seeing these very small particles upon you that I was led to the thought—for I was not

sure about you—that you were skulking for some cause, and, therefore, very likely, one of my friends.”

“Good God! is it possible?” he cried; as if he had been on the instant made aware of something he had not thought of before.

“Yes,” said I, “it is possible and real. It is not I who am **THE THIEF-CATCHER** ;” and as I pronounced the words I pointed my finger to the roof, and looked in the same direction, with a solemnity I really at the moment felt.

Nor was the effect less apparent upon the face of the struck youth. A tremor seemed to shake his heart, and I thought I observed a moisture in his eye, which had so often and so long no doubt been red and dry with the effects of his outlawed and dissipated life.

“Yes,” he said, “there is another thief-catcher higher than you, and I feel His hand upon me with a firmer grip than that of these cuffs. I will, if God spare me, be a different man. I will confess the robbery. Yes, I will convict myself and Anderson, ay and my brother, if they and my father should murder me for it; and if you don’t find me changed, my name is not Jack Ferguson.”

“We may get you made a witness, and free you,” said I.

“I don’t want,” he replied, resolutely; “I would rather be punished along with them, and, if I can get into their cells, I will try to get them to change their course of life.”

This was almost the only case of penitence in a con-

firmed thief I ever witnessed. In the same mood, I took him up to the office. It was afterwards arranged somehow that the devout little old man, the resetter, should be accepted as a witness, probably for the reason that he was less guilty than the others, though, in my opinion, he was the worst of the whole gang, let alone his hypocrisy, which only aggravated his resetttership—a far greater crime than theft or robbery. They were tried by the Sheriff, and got, respectively, eight, six, and four months. Whether Jack wrought out his penitential fit, I never ascertained. He got out of my beat, and I sincerely hope into another, traversed by a better angel than a detective.

THE END









