

A PAIR OF SILK STOCKINGS.

By the Author of "Mehalah."

I.



"Oh, Hez. do look how they become me!"

HE brothers Heckmondwyke were the sons of a large and well-to-do manufacturer, a stocking maker, in Yorkshire. The stockings and socks and other goods

in stockingette of Messrs. Heckmondwyke and Sons were known in the trade everywhere. Old Heckmondwyke was dead, and the firm would henceforth have to be called Heckmondwyke Brothers. Of these brothers there were but two, Philip, the elder, unmarried, and Hezekiah, the younger, married. Because Heckmondwyke the father was dead, therefore the sons wore black, and because he had died recently, the black was new, and the glazed calico backing the waistcoat of Hezekiah crackled, and was not set in formal furrows.

In consequence of the death of their father and the factory being left equally between the brothers, some consultation and arrangement between them had been necessary. There had been no hitch, no ruffle of spirit, in the administration of their father's affairs and disposal of his estate. Everything had been left to the brothers to divide equally, where division was necessary, to keep together where partnership was advisable.

The house in which old Mr. Heckmondwyke had lived was that in which he had been born. It did not adjoin the factory, it was some way from it. It was one in a crescent, Wentworth Crescent, No. 1. As he had met with annoyance from a neighbour in No. 2, Mr. Heckmondwyke had seized the occasion of the neighbour's leaving to buy that house, and for some time it remained empty, because he preferred having no neighbour

near him, that is, shoulder to shoulder. His former neighbour had three daughters who practised on the piano all the evening, and he would not run the risk of having inhabitants next door who might irritate his nerves by strumming.

Finally, when his younger son Hezekiah married, he allowed him to enter and inhabit No. 2; he calculated that many years would elapse before piano practice would be a nuisance to him again, for in the event of a daughter being born, the child would not learn the piano till it was six or seven, and then would only play on it in the mornings, when he, her grandfather, would be at the factory.

The child was born, a little girl, but was not old enough as yet to meddle with music. Penelope Lætetia was her name. She was still in the nursery at the top of the house, and her only instrument was a silver coral with bells, the present of her godfather, her uncle, Philip Heckmondwyke.

Philip had remained with his father in No. 1 Wentworth Crescent when Hezekiah moved into No. 2. When the brothers came to consider the partition of their father's property into equal halves, then it had been settled between them that Philip, as the elder, and as in possession, should remain in No. 1, and that Hezekiah, with wife and child should remain in No. 2.

"Unless, brother," said Hezekiah, "you could be persuaded to live with us. I am sure you would be more comfortable, and Bessie" (his wife) "is very much attached to you."

Philip shook his head.

"It is kind of you to offer this, Hez, but I am a confirmed old bachelor. I like to have my own way in everything, and to have everything in the house go by clockwork. With a wife this is not always possible nor desirable."

"Then you will look on my house as your home. You keep a latch key to No. 2 and run in and out as you like. There will always be a cover for you at dinner and an arm-chair by the fire."

"Thank you kindly, Hez. I accept the key, and will use it as you desire."

II.

MADAM HECKMONDWYKE, the great-grandmother of the brothers Philip and Hezekiah, had been a personage in her day—a daughter of a small country Yorkshire squire, who had married a man beneath her in station, who owned a few looms and let out work to cottagers possessing looms of their own. In former days, in the dales of the western hills were whole colonies of weavers; every cottager aspired to own a loom, saved his wages to buy or build one, and when he possessed one, took contracts from bigger men. These bigger men took the great contracts and let out the work piece-meal to the cottagers. Any one passing through a village heard the rattle of looms out of every door and window, and even on the wild moors, where a lonely hovel stood, there also sounded the busy shuttle.

It was thought a great disgrace to the family of the Holroyds when Penelope Lætitia married the manufacturer Heckmondwyke; but since that marriage the Holroyds had gone down and had disappeared, and the Heckmondwykes had gone up and gained consequence. Piece by piece had the encumbered estate of the Holroyds passed from them, and piece by piece had the fortune of the Heckmondwykes improved. Penelope Lætitia had brought with her no dower, nothing but herself, her Christian name, and her silk stockings, when she married Joseph Heckmondwyke, nevertheless her sons and grandson and great-grandsons looked back on that marriage as the making of them; they were able to give themselves some airs as not altogether new people, but a family with one root in the county soil, and therefore with a claim to position above their fellows.

Penelope Lætitia had possessed a pair of very beautiful purple silk stockings, with clocks of white at the sides, elaborate and delicate in pattern, and these stockings had somehow remained in the family after she herself had mouldered into dust. The Holroyd estates had been alienated and broken up; the Holroyd family portraits had been dispersed, but Miss Holroyd's purple stockings remained a hundred years after she had worn them, very little the worse for wear, for they had been so choice and beautiful that she had only worn them on grand occasions, and as after she married Joe Heckmondwyke no grandeur came about, she wore them no more.

The family grew to regard this pair of stockings as an heirloom, an interesting relic of the family history, a link by which it attached itself to the Holroyds.

This pair of silk stockings it was which gave direction to the special manufacture of the Heckmondwyke house. Old Joe Heckmondwyke had not been a stocking maker, the stocking looms were introduced by his grandson, Philip Holroyd Heckmondwyke, the father of Philip and Hezekiah, and his firm ran hard some of the Nottingham houses.

Penelope Lætitia, Holroyd's mother had been a Miss Lee, and the Lees prided themselves as having produced the inventor of the stocking loom.

When Penelope Lætitia was born, a Nottinghamshire Lee was invited to stand godfather to the child, and instead of presenting her with a silver mug or a coral, or a silver spoon and fork, he gave her a pair of purple stockings, a miracle of perfection, so fine was the texture and so delicate and beautiful the clocking, that the child might when grown up not forget that she descended from the Lees who invented and created the stocking loom and its industry.

Now the Heckmondwykes had come to think there was something aristocratic about the stocking loom as opposed to the plebeian common loom, and as they began to rise, they became ambitious to start a stocking manufacture in Yorkshire, and show that they also inherited something of the Lees as well as those in Nottinghamshire.

Philip Holroyd Heckmondwyke obtained the requisite looms and induced some Nottingham weavers to come to him, and the Yorkshire manufacture took root and prospered, prospered so well that not even Nottingham stockings commanded such a sale as the Yorkshire stockings of Heckmondwyke and Sons.

We have said that the brothers Heckmondwyke were Philip and Hezekiah, but that was only their first names, as Heckmondwyke is so long a surname we spared the reader their names in full, but we must now give them, the elder was Philip Holroyd, like his father, and the younger was Hezekiah Lee, and because a Lee he considered it his right to keep possession of the stockings.

Philip was equally determined to keep them. On a certain occasion they met in Hezekiah's house and came to strong words over the matter.

"You have our great grandmother's pair of silk stockings here in No. 2, I know," said Philip. "I remember your sending for them, you wanted to show them to your sister-in-law when she was with you."

"Umph."

"Really, brother, you might answer me."

"I do not want to part with the stockings."

"But," said Phil, "I do not desire to yield them up."

"Why not? They are no good to you."

"Of what possible use can they be to you?"

"They are of interest to my womankind."

"But they are heirlooms in our family, and should be in my hands, as the eldest, and head of the Heckmondwyke family."

"Nonsense. You are a bachelor."

"Well—and you have no son."

"If you had them," said Hezekiah, "no one would see them. You would keep them locked up, and they might as well be non-existent."

"I object to their being pawed by every Jack and Tom, and Jill and Jenny."

"I do not admit into my social circle Jacks and Toms, and Jills and Jennys," said Hezekiah sternly; "will you leave me?"

"I can hardly go till something is settled about those stockings."

"I do not want to part with them."

"Hezekiah," said Philip raising himself to his full height, and speaking with constrained indignation, "I insist on the surrender of those stockings."

"What would you have?" asked Hezekiah sarcastically. "Divide the stockings?"

"Nonsense, how could they be divided and be a pair?"

"Oh," sneered the younger, "with a pair of shears you could cut them across, and you take the feet and I the rest."

"Or you take one and I the other," added Philip. "No, I will consent to no such compromise. If I did, I should rightly forfeit my claim to them, like the woman before the throne of judgment of Solomon."

"I will not give them up. It is absurd of you to want them. They will descend from me to my daughter, who is a Penelope Lætitia like her great-grandmother."

"Is that your deliberate answer?"

"It is."

"Then you are fraudulent."

"You are grasping, avaricious."

"There is the latch-key. This question must be settled before we meet again—amicably."

Hezekiah rang the bell. "Show out Mr. Philip," he said to the servant.

III.

"It really is absurd," said Mrs. Heckmondwyke, "really too childish to quarrel about a pair of stockings. Let Philip have them."

"My dear Bessie," answered Hezekiah, "you look on this matter from a Scholey point of view"—Mrs. Heckmondwyke had been a Miss Scholey—"and not from that commanding platform whence we who are the descendants and representatives of the Holroyds contemplate these stockings. As a Lee I am resolved to retain them. Besides—"

"My dear Hez, why quarrel about them?"

"I do not quarrel, it is Philip who quarrels with me. He is exacting, and demands these stockings as a right."

"Perhaps he has a right to them."

"Not at all. Possession is nine points of the law. Besides, he has insulted me."

"Was either of you constituted residuary legatee by the will? If so, that should decide the matter."

"Neither was. Everything was left to us equally, except such things as we chose to divide."

"Then divide the stockings."

"We neither of us choose to do this. A pair constitutes a complete and perfect article. Neither Philip nor I would allow of this separation into individual stockings. They must go together and so constitute a pair. If neither will hear of the separation, then such an arrangement as you propose is inadmissible."

A few days after this Hezekiah received the following letter from his brother—

"It is quite impossible for the matter of the stockings to remain unsettled. I cannot sit down composedly to acquiescence in your retention of what by right of seniority belongs to me. I am loth to bring the matter into court because the public, which knows nothing about the importance and value of the articles under dispute, might choose to laugh at us for contesting the proprietorship of a something to which the vulgar mind attaches no value. Nevertheless I am determined to enforce my right by process of law. To give the matter a colour which will justify it to the public, I propose that each of us, you and myself, should con-

tribute an equal sum of money, say seven hundred and fifty pounds, towards the purchase of a set of diamonds, which we will regard as having belonged to our great grandmother, and we will contest the right to this set, which each will refuse to see divided, and he who obtains by award of the court the set of jewels, he also by mutual consent shall have the stockings."

A strange and puzzling proposition. Hezekiah saw that the world would view a contest between him and his brother for a pair of stockings in much the same light as did his own wife. The world had not that fineness of sentiment, that clinging to the past which he possessed, and so would be unable to estimate the value of the contested article aright. If he and Philip were to engage in a legal contest together, it would be as well that they should ostensibly fight over something the gross world would consider of real worth. But Hezekiah hesitated about accepting his brother's proposal. How would it be if there were to be cross-examination as to the date of acquisition of the set of jewelry? He could not on oath declare it had belonged to his great-grandmother. But then—he further considered—was it likely that such questions would be put? He and his brother would appear in court disputing with each other the possession of a set of diamonds and other valuables that both he and his brother recognized as heirlooms from that great-grandmother. The point at law would be to whom the diamonds were to be adjudged, not when they had been acquired.

He further argued that if—as was certain—the case would be given in his favour, he would acquire not only indisputable possession of the stockings, but also of a set of precious stones worth fifteen hundred pounds. It really was a chance not to be passed over. His right to the stockings was obvious. They had been sent over to his house by his father without a word as to his having to return them; and he could therefore assume, yes, assert, even swear that they had been given him by his father. Naturally, the jewels would mentally stand for stockings, and what each brother swore concerning the jewels would refer by tacit understanding to the object of real litigation.

A few days later, after dinner, Mrs. Heckmondwyke reverted to the subject of dispute.

"My dear, we have not seen Philip for some time. Why does he not drop in on us as of old? Is it because of that pair of stockings? Upon my word I will burn them, if I come across them, it is

monstrous, it is positively ridiculous, that two middle-aged men should quarrel about such a trifle."

"Bessie, you know nothing about the circumstances. You have heard of the purple stockings, but not of the diamonds."

"Diamonds, Hez!" Mrs. Heckmondwyke started in her chair as if she had been electrified.

"I will show you the necklace," said her husband. "The necklace and stockings go together. He who gets the one gets also the other. The diamonds are said to be worth fifteen hundred pounds."

"My dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Heckmondwyke when the precious stones were shown her, sparkling in the gaslight. "Do you mean to tell me that Philip demands these? An old bachelor such as he! Oh, my dear Hez, promise me you will not give way.

Oh, I hope—no unworthy attachment! Oh, Hez! as you respect your ancestress, save them from profanation! Oh, Hez, do look how they become me!"

IV.

"YES," said Hezekiah to himself, "I can with clear conscience swear that the diamonds, I mean the stockings belong to me, were given to me by my father. I recall the circumstances minutely. After dinner I was talking about them to Bessie's sister, and she expressed a wish to see them. I wrote a note to father and I remember distinctly the wording of that note, it was, 'Dear Gov., may I have those valuables of my great-grandmother?' And he sent them over, in reply to my note. May I have—I asked and he sent them, what was that but a gift?"

"Yes," said Philip to himself, "I can with clear conscience swear that the diamonds, I mean the stockings were only lent to Hezekiah by my father. I have found the note in which my brother asked for them. Father never destroyed any letters. In that note, Hezekiah wrote 'Dear Gov., may I have those valuables of my great-grandmother's? Bessie's sister Louisa is with us, and would like to see them.' Distinctly he asked only for a temporary loan. Bessie's sister Louisa was there, and desired to see them. That they should be returned when they had been shown, is implied. The case is clear as day."

Thus began the case of Heckmondwyke *versus* Heckmondwyke, a case which was not ended in a twelvemonth, no, nor in two. It was a long time

before the case could be floated, it stuck on the rollers, it would not move, and when finally it was run down and launched, it stuck in the mud, and had to wait a suitable, but tardy tide to lift it, and get it under way, and when really afloat, showed a want of balance and a tendency to keel over, and was considered by lawyers one of the most curious, confused, but profitable cases with which they had had the good fortune to be engaged.

At the back of the Crescent were gardens divided from each other by brick walls: each house in the Crescent had its garden. They were not very extensive, but they served as places where the inmates of the houses could amuse themselves with little fads, such as keeping poultry, or growing flowers, or where, if there were children, the little ones could romp with impunity.

As Penelope Lætitia grew older she was allowed to play unrestrainedly in the garden of No. 1. Sometimes she had little friends to play with her, and the small garden resounded with the sparkling, happy voices of children. On such occasions, occasionally, a face was seen rising above the wall that divided No. 1. from No. 2. The face was that of uncle Philip, it was stern.

He called out, "Hush! what a noise you children are making. Which of you is Penelope Lætitia? Oh—you. You step forward. You are making more noise than the rest. It is intolerable that out of work time I cannot stroll in my garden without being disturbed. Lætitia, I am angry. I will complain to the police."

Then the head disappeared again.

In fact Philip Heckmondwyke had ascended a ladder that he might be able to look over the wall and rebuke his niece.

When Hezekiah heard this, he also got a ladder set it against the wall, ran up it, and shouted, "Complain to the police if you like. My child shall shout and laugh as she chooses, in total disregard of her sour, crabbed and avaricious uncle Philip."

V.

PHILIP HECKMONDWYKE was fond of his little bit of garden. He had a small conservatory in it, which was heated by a pipe that passed from the kitchen boiler. In this conservatory he kept such flowers as were half hardy, primulas, azaleas, cinerarias, and he was able to force on a few bulbs

a month in advance of those out-of-doors. He did not concern himself greatly about his plants, but he liked to potter about in his glass-house at moments of leisure, and to smoke his cigars there under the cinerarias and calceolarias to disestablish the green fly.

The great treasure of the conservatory was a Maréchal Niel rose, which bore in one summer as many as one hundred and seventeen blooms.

At the end of the garden Philip had a summer-house, and there he was fond of sitting of a warm evening with a bottle of claret, reading his paper and smoking.

During the summer that followed the quarrel with his brother, he could hear, as he thus sat, the voice of the child in the adjoining garden come to him over the wall, the laugh so full of merriment, so prolonged that presently Philip's muscles relaxed and a smile came upon his grim face.

What was making the little creature laugh so? a deaf person is distressed when he sees a company explode with mirth, and he does not rest till the joke has been spouted into his ear-trumpet. Philip felt like a deaf man on such an occasion. Fun was going on and provoking laughter, but what the fun was he could not guess.

It was no ordinary joke, for the child continued to laugh for long, in shrill, convulsive peals.

It lasted so long, died away only for a minute, and then broke out with such renewed energy, that Philip's smile died away, and was replaced by an expression of concern. He recalled the story of a man who had five wives in succession and the secret of the death of his wives was that he tickled them to death. Those who passed his house at night heard laughter, and thought that the married life within was a happy one. Actually the poor woman was strapped down to a bed, and the husband played with a feather on the soles of her feet. In the morning she was dead, and not a token of violence was on her, not a trace of poison found in her, at a *post-mortem* examination.

Was it possible that some nurse was barbarously tickling Penelope Lætitia? Perhaps only inconsiderately, but likely, unless stopped, to lead to serious if not fatal results.

Philip Heckmondwyke felt as though cold water were being poured down his back, when this thought came over him. He rose from his table in the arbour, ran for a ladder, set it against the wall



that divided the gardens, ascended it, and looked over.

He saw that the little child was running about, was not being tickled, but was trying to tickle her nurse, who dodged from her, ran a little way, pretended to hide behind a laburnam-tree or syringabush, and allowed herself to be caught and tickled by the fairy-like child, a dear little thing with fair curls in a white dress with red stockings and a red sash, and cheeks almost as deep in colour as her sash.

Philip leaned both his elbows on the wall top and watched the game awhile, then he descended, went to his conservatory and picked one or two *Maréchal Niel* roses, came back panting, ran up the ladder and dexterously threw them so that they fell before the child. Then he bobbed his head below the wall, crept down the ladder, removed it, and returned to his place in the arbour.

That same day Mr. Hezekiah observed the roses—his little daughter had brought them to her mother. He observed them because, previous to the rupture between the brothers, in the time of roses, his drawing-room and dinner-table had been kept plentifully supplied with *Maréchal Niel* blooms, since the rupture he had seen none.

“Whence comes the rose?” he asked sharply.

“Penelope says it fell down before her, whilst she was playing,” answered Mrs. Heckmondwyke.

“Playing, playing, where?”

“In the garden.”

“How came it to fall before her?”

“How can I tell, Hez?”

“My dear, roses don’t drop out of heaven.”

“But Penelope is such a dear, that even angels—”

“Fudge! There are no *Maréchal Niels* in heaven.”

“How else could they have fallen.”

“Umph! the roses grow in the conservatory of No. 2.”

“But they could not have come of themselves over the wall.”

“If I thought that—but no, it is impossible—and yet, I have a mind to ask an explanation of Philip.”

A day or two later some more roses came over the wall. On this occasion the child had seen the face of her uncle rising above the wall, and had seen him throw the flowers.

When Hezekiah heard this he sent the blossoms back in a cardboard box with a letter to this effect:—

“Mr. Hezekiah Heckmondwyke objects emphatically to Mr. Philip Heckmondwyke giving roses or

anything else to his child, so long as he maintains his arrogant pretensions to the valuables of Penelope Lætitia, deceased."

To this came an answer couched in these terms:—

"Mr. Heckmondwyke is surprised at the temerity of Mr. Hezekiah Heckmondwyke addressing him, so long as he retains in his hands articles of value that properly, and as will speedily be shown, legally belong to Mr. Heckmondwyke. Mr. Heckmondwyke reserves to himself the right of throwing over his wall, any old, mildewed, faded, magot-eaten, green-fly covered, worthless plants that encumber his greenhouse or garden."

This answer made the younger brother very angry. He sent for a mason and gave orders that the wall should be raised four feet, between his garden and that of his neighbour.

"Please, sir," said the mason, "we must put a scaffold on t'other side as well as this; there must be a second bricklayer in the garden of No. 2, to work ekall to the bricklayer on this side, in the garden of No. 1."

"That cannot be," answered Mr. Hezekiah, "you must manage to build the wall entirely from my side."

"It'll leave the other side wery untidy."

"The untidier the better," said Mr. Hezekiah. So the wall was begun.

"My dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Hezekiah Heckmondwyke "whatever are you doing? You will cut off all the light from the dining-room. We got little enough sunlight there now, and if this wall be carried four feet higher, we shall get none at all."

"My dear Bessie," answered her husband; "I am sorry for the inconvenience, but it is inevitable. My brother persists in throwing his rubbish into our garden and I will not have it."

"What rubbish?"

"His old withered roses."

"My dear, he has thrown quite young buds."

"I don't care. He shall throw nothing there," answered Hezekiah. "I hope and trust the wall will darken his dining-room as it darkens ours; the hope makes me bear the inconvenience with a light heart."

VI.

THE raising of the wall provoked fresh trouble. A wall between two dwellings belongs equally to both proprietors and has to be maintained in repair by both. For one to raise the wall so as to exclude light from the other is an excess of right, and immediately a letter came to Mr. Hezekiah from

the solicitor for his brother requiring him to remove the bricks that had been placed on the wall, and reduce it to its previous height.

This Hezekiah refused to do. He asserted that he was constrained to raise the wall in self-defence, as his next door neighbour was employing his garden ground as a place for the casting of his rubbish. As he did not cease from building, Philip moved for an injunction to enforce stayment of proceeding. So the scaffold was left and the heap of mortar, and piles of bricks, in Hezekiah's garden awaiting the decision of the court. The bricklayer had, in the meantime disfigured his garden, trampled on the beds, bespattered the turf with mortar, sifted the lime on his premises and sent a cloud in at his windows, had chipped and broken the bricks, sending splinters in all directions over the grass and upon the walks, and bestrewed the beds.

"My dear," exclaimed Bessie Heckmondwyke one day, "where is Penelope Lætitia?"

"In the garden."

"Any one with her?"

"No, the nurse is laid up with a bad headache."

Mrs. Heckmondwyke went to the window and uttered a cry of horror.

"What is the matter?" asked her husband, starting forward.

"Hez! oh Hez! quick! What is to be done? The child is on the top of the wall."

That same afternoon, Philip Heckmondwyke had had been seated in his arbour, smoking. His eyes rested on the wall. The old mellow red brick, stained with lichen, and dappled with moss, rose from his garden bed to the height of ten feet. Above that was the raw scarlet of the new brick, of which several courses were laid, and in part the new addition had been completed.

"Abominable!" exclaimed Philip. "Outrageous! An eyesore! My brother must be taught a lesson, and he will have to pull down every brick that has been laid. Legally he has not a leg to stand on. What is that?"

Over the wall flew a child's ball, scarlet, blue, yellow, and green, and bounced against the steps of the summer house.

"Hah!" said Philip. "That child has done this. She must be taught a lesson. I will not throw this ball back again. She must learn to be more careful."

He took up the ball and turned it about, and put it on the table where stood his bottle of claret and glass.



Presently he thought, "Poor little creature, she will be crying because she has lost her ball. I think after all I will throw it back over the wall."

Then he came out of the arbour carrying the ball, but stood petrified with horror to see that the little girl had scrambled up one of the masons' ladders and was on the wall, standing looking down into Philip's garden for her ball.

When Philip recovered from the shock of seeing her, he called out, "Penelope, sit down, sit down. Wait till I bring you the ball. I have it. Sit down, do not be afraid."

The child obeyed, and one little purple leg hung down on Philip's side of the wall—purple the legs were, with white clocks on the stockings.

Philip ran to where was a garden ladder, and brought it to the spot, planted it against the wall, and began to ascend it, speaking encouragingly to the little girl who looked down at him and then turned her head and looked down into her father's garden, and one purple leg with white clocks on the stocking depended on that side also.

Mr. Hezekiah Heckmondwyke, as soon as he saw from the window the perilous situation of his child, ran down stairs, and without his hat flew into the garden and ascended the ladder.

"Penelope," he said, "sit quiet, do not stir. For goodness' sake do not lose your head. Shut your eyes and wait till I lay hold of you."

The child however did not seem at all afraid; she looked laughingly from her father on one side to her uncle on the other.

Simultaneously each seized her by an ankle.

"Don't be afraid! Don't stir! I have the ball," said Philip.

"Keep still, I will lift you down," said her father.

Each mounted a step, then cautiously another, then each suddenly put an arm round the child, and unexpectedly both faces met over the top of the wall in front of the child.

"Your ladder is too upright, you will be unable to carry Penelope down," said Philip, after the first recoil of surprise.

"Your ladder is too weak, it will not support the double weight," said Hezekiah, when he had recovered himself from the shock of almost knocking noses with his brother and adversary.

"I seized her first," said Philip.

"She is my child," answered Hezekiah.

"Let go, I know you will fall with her," exclaimed Philip. "You shall have our great-grandmother's valuables if you will let me carry her down on my side."

"Let go, Philip," cried the excited father. "She is my child, you shall have the diamonds and the stockings if you will release your hold."

"I will not let go," answered Philip. "She is my niece."

"I will summon you if you do not," shouted Hezekiah.

"I will give evidence against you if she is hurt," exclaimed Philip. Then with an effort he lifted himself upon the wall, and sat there holding the child.

"Now, Hezekiah," said he, "I will submit to a compromise. You descend, set the ladder at a less acute angle, fetch a second, and we will together carry Penelope down into your garden."

VII.

WHEN Penelope Lætitia had been safely conveyed to the ground in the arms of her uncle and father, then the two men stood and drew a long breath.

"That wall—" said Hezekiah.

"Exactly, that wall—" said Philip.

"That wall shall not be raised any higher," said Hezekiah.

"I shall never again look on that wall without a shudder."

"Uncle," said the child, "may I have my ball?"

"Here it is," said he, and he stooped and kissed his niece.

Hezekiah was moved.

"Yes," said Hezekiah, "I will have all the bricks removed."

"All?"

"Yes, all."

"Then," said Philip, "there will be a double space for Penelope Lætitia to run about in."

"I—I did not mean all the bricks."

"You said all. Why not? Level the whole wall."

Then Mrs. Heckmondwyke said in the pause that ensued, "I have a proposal to make. Let the valuables, diamonds and stockings be made over by both of you, father and uncle, to Penelope Lætitia. She will be the representative of the family, and she is the only one likely to wear the diamonds."

"On one condition," said Philip, "that when she marries, her husband shall take the name of Holroyd."

"And Lee," put in Hezekiah.

"It shall be a deed of gift," said Philip. "Come along, brother, to the lawyer's office. It shall be drawn out at once."

"And you shall have the latch-key again."

"I shall not require it when the wall is pulled down."

