

off as borders to the pages. An impression is then taken, upon paper, of the entire set of pages, and the printed sheet is carefully examined; faults corrected, and then the great steam-press begins its labour. Under its two revolving cylinders are grouped the plates which represent the two halves of the forthcoming number of H. W. The two halves correspond to the two sides of our weekly sheet. Upon a peak covered with snowy paper that commands the upper surface of one cylinder there is a youth. He dexterously fits the paper, sheet by sheet, upon the lips of the devouring engine. As it heaves and works, the paper is drawn rapidly into a black abyss. It is rolled over the mass of metal characters, which is perpetually fertilised with printer's ink by mystic rollers. One cylinder passes the sheet printed upon one side, to another. Over that it leaps, and from under that it is delivered perfect, and placed quietly upon a table, ready to the fingers of a little boy, who helps it in its easy birth. The press works, one among many that appear to be engaged in voluntary labour side by side. Men and boys are reaping the advantage of their industry. Our youth upon the peak administers white sheets of paper to the busy monster labouring on our behalf. As fast as they are put into its mouth, like great square lozenges, they are all sucked away at the rate of nine hundred an hour. At the same rate, completely printed copies of H. W. are laid upon the table of the second boy and piled by him into a cube. The dimensions of the cube are constantly kept under by other boys who carry parts of it away. But our H. W. is not even yet ready to appear before the public.

Who does not entertain a proper horror of damp sheets? The sheets of H. W. are sent out of the great hall of steam-presses into a drying room. There they are hung up and aired. The sheets of H. W. are in the next place mangled. They endure a whole day under a powerful hydraulic press. The sheets of H. W. are neatly folded by the tidy hands of women.

The copies of each number which has in this way run the gauntlet down so long a lane of labour, are, at last, brought by boys upon their heads, upon their shoulders, upon their backs, upon their breasts, over their arms, and under them, to Sixteen, Wellington Street North, in the Strand. From that place, on a given day, and punctually after a given hour, they are issued to a race of individuals who carry them away in bags, in pouches, in pockets; in hands, on heads, shoulders, backs; in cabs, in carts, and in trucks to the warehouses and shops of the metropolis to be sold to the public. From the warehouses they travel in detachments to the railway stations, and from railway stations many travel to the ships. So each number at last finds its owner out, who by some article he sees in it is perhaps prompted

to become a sensible Voluntary Correspondent, and send up to H. W. a little bag—or a large sack—of grist. So the mill goes.

## GABRIEL'S MARRIAGE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER THE FIRST.

ONE night, during the period of the first French Revolution, the family of François Sarzeau, a fisherman of Brittany, were all waking and watching at an unusually late hour in their cottage on the peninsula of Quiberon. François had gone out in his boat that evening, as usual, to fish. Shortly after his departure, the wind had risen, the clouds had gathered; and the storm, which had been threatening at intervals throughout the whole day, burst forth furiously about nine o'clock. It was now eleven; and the raging of the wind over the barren, heathy peninsula still seemed to increase with each fresh blast that tore its way out upon the open sea; the crashing of the waves on the beach was awful to hear; the dreary blackness of the sky terrible to behold. The longer they listened to the storm, the oftener they looked out at it, the fainter grew the hopes which the fisherman's family still strove to cherish for the safety of François Sarzeau and of his younger son who had gone with him in the boat.

There was something impressive in the simplicity of the scene that was now passing within the cottage. On one side of the great rugged black fire-place crouched two little girls; the younger half asleep, with her head in her sister's lap. These were the daughters of the fisherman; and opposite to them sat their eldest brother, Gabriel. His right arm had been badly wounded in a recent encounter at the national game of the *Soule*, a sport resembling our English football; but played on both sides in such savage earnest by the people of Brittany as to end always in bloodshed, often in mutilation, sometimes even in loss of life. On the same bench with Gabriel sat his betrothed wife—a girl of eighteen—clothed in the plain, almost monastic black and white costume of her native district. She was the daughter of a small farmer living at some little distance from the coast. Between the groups formed on either side of the fire-place, the vacant space was occupied by the foot of a truckle bed. In this bed lay a very old man, the father of François Sarzeau. His haggard face was covered with deep wrinkles; his long white hair flowed over the coarse lump of sacking which served him for a pillow, and his light grey eyes wandered incessantly, with a strange expression of terror and suspicion, from person to person, and from object to object, in all parts of the room. Every time when the wind and sea whistled and roared at their loudest, he muttered to himself and tossed his hands fretfully on his wretched coverlid. On these occasions, his eyes always fixed themselves intently on a little delf image of

the Virgin placed in a niche over the fireplace. Whenever they saw him look in this direction Gabriel and the young girl shuddered and crossed themselves; and even the child who still kept awake imitated their example. There was one bond of feeling at least between the old man and his grandchildren, which connected his age and their youth unnaturally and closely together. This feeling was reverence for the superstitions which had been handed down to them by their ancestors from centuries and centuries back, as far even as the age of the Druids. The spirit-warnings of disaster and death which the old man heard in the wailing of the wind, in the crashing of the waves, in the dreary monotonous rattling of the casement, the young man and his affianced wife and the little child who cowered by the fire-side, heard too. All differences in sex, in temperament, in years, superstition was strong enough to strike down to its own dread level, in the fisherman's cottage, on that stormy night.

Besides the benches by the fire-side and the bed, the only piece of furniture in the room was a coarse wooden table, with a loaf of black bread, a knife, and a pitcher of cider placed on it. Old nets, coils of rope, tattered sails, hung about the walls and over the wooden partition which separated the room into two compartments. Wisps of straw and ears of barley dropped down through the rotten rafters and gaping boards that made the floor of the granary above.

These different objects and the persons in the cottage, who composed the only surviving members of the fisherman's family, were strangely and wildly lit up by the blaze of the fire and by the still brighter glare of a resin torch stuck into a block of wood in the chimney corner. The red and yellow light played full on the weird face of the old man as he lay opposite to it, and glanced fitfully on the figures of Rose, Gabriel, and the two children; the great gloomy shadows rose and fell, and grew and lessened in bulk about the walls like visions of darkness, animated by a supernatural spectre-life, while the dense obscurity outside spreading before the curtainless window, seemed as a wall of solid darkness that had closed in forever around the fisherman's house. The night-scene within the cottage was almost as wild and as dreary to look upon as the night-scene without.

For a long time the different persons in the room sat together without speaking, even without looking at each other. At last, the girl turned and whispered something into Gabriel's ear.

"Rose, what were you saying to Gabriel?" asked the child opposite, seizing the first opportunity of breaking the desolate silence—doubly desolate at her age—which was preserved by all around her.

"I was telling him," answered Rose simply, "that it was time to change the bandages on his arm; and I also said to him, what I have

often said before, that he must never play at that terrible game of the *Soule* again."

The old man had been looking intently at Rose and his grandchild as they spoke. His harsh, hollow voice mingled with the last soft tones of the young girl, repeating over and over again the same terrible words: "Drowned! drowned! Son and grandson, both drowned! both drowned!"

"Hush! Grandfather," said Gabriel, "we must not lose all hope for them yet. God and the Blessed Virgin protect them!" He looked at the little delf image, and crossed himself; the others imitated him except the old man. He still tossed his hands over the coverlid, and still repeated "Drowned! drowned!"

"Oh that accursed *Soule*!" groaned the young man. "But for this wound I should have been with my father. The poor boy's life might at least have been saved; for we should then have left him here."

"Silence!" exclaimed the harsh voice from the bed. "The wail of dying men rises louder than the loud sea; the devil's psalm-singing roars higher than the roaring wind! Be silent, and listen! François drowned! Pierre drowned! Hark! Hark!"

A terrific blast of wind burst over the house as he spoke, shaking it to its centre, overpowering all other sounds, even to the deafening crash of the waves. The slumbering child awoke, and uttered a scream of fear. Rose, who had been kneeling before her lover binding the fresh bandages on his wounded arm, paused in her occupation, trembling from head to foot. Gabriel looked towards the window: his experience told him what must be the hurricane fury of that blast of wind out at sea, and he sighed bitterly as he murmured to himself "God help them both—man's help will be as nothing to them now!"

"Gabriel!" cried the voice from the bed in altered tones—very faint and trembling.

He did not hear, or did not attend to the old man. He was trying to soothe and encourage the trembling girl at his feet. "Don't be frightened, love," he said, kissing her very gently and tenderly on the forehead. "You are as safe here as anywhere. Was I not right in saying that it would be madness to attempt taking you back to the farm-house this evening? You can sleep in that room, Rose, when you are tired—you can sleep with the two girls."

"Gabriel! brother Gabriel!" cried one of the children. "O! look at grandfather!"

Gabriel ran to the bedside. The old man had raised himself into a sitting position; his eyes were dilated, his whole face was rigid with terror, his hands were stretched out convulsively towards his grandson. "The White Women!" he screamed. "The White Women; the grave-diggers of the drowned are out on the sea!" The children, with cries of terror, flung themselves into Rose's arms; even Gabriel uttered an exclamation

of horror, and started back from the bedside. Still the old man reiterated, "The White Women! The White Women! Open the door, Gabriel! look out westward, where the ebb tide has left the sand dry. You'll see them bright as lightning in the darkness, mighty as the angels in stature, sweeping like the wind over the sea, in their long white garments, with their white hair trailing far behind them! Open the door, Gabriel! You'll see them stop and hover over the place where your father and your brother have been drowned; you'll see them come on till they reach the sand; you'll see them dig in it with their naked feet, and beckon awfully to the raging sea to give up its dead. Open the door, Gabriel—or though it should be the death of me, I will get up and open it myself!"

Gabriel's face whitened even to his lips, but he made a sign that he would obey. It required the exertion of his whole strength to keep the door open against the wind, while he looked out.

"Do you see them, grandson Gabriel? Speak the truth, and tell me if you see them," cried the old man.

"I see nothing but darkness—pitch darkness," answered Gabriel, letting the door close again.

"Ah! woe! woe!" groaned his grandfather, sinking back exhausted on the pillow. "Darkness to *you*; but bright as lightning to the eyes that are allowed to see them. Drowned! drowned! Pray for their souls, Gabriel—I see the White Women even where I lie, and dare not pray for them. Son and grandson drowned! both drowned!"

The young man went back to Rose and the children. "Grandfather is very ill to-night," he whispered, "you had better all go into the bedroom, and leave me alone to watch by him."

They rose as he spoke, crossed themselves before the image of the Virgin, kissed him one by one, and without uttering a word, softly entered the little room on the other side of the partition. Gabriel looked at his grandfather, and saw that he lay quiet now, with his eyes closed as if he were already dropping asleep. The young man then heaped some fresh logs on the fire, and sat down by it to watch till morning. Very dreary was the moaning of the night-storm; but it was not more dreary than the thoughts which now occupied him in his solitude—thoughts darkened and distorted by the terrible superstitions of his country and his race. Ever since the period of his mother's death he had been oppressed by the conviction that some curse hung over the family. At first they had been prosperous, they had got money, a little legacy had been left them. But this good fortune had availed only for a time; disaster on disaster strangely and suddenly succeeded. Losses, misfortunes, poverty, want itself had overwhelmed them; his father's temper

had become so soured, that the oldest friends of François Sarzeau declared he was changed beyond recognition. And now, all this past misfortune—the steady, withering, household blight of many years—had ended in the last worst misery of all—in death. The fate of his father and his brother admitted no longer of a doubt—he knew it, as he listened to the storm, as he reflected on his grandfather's words, as he called to mind his own experience of the perils of the sea. And this double bereavement had fallen on him just as the time was approaching for his marriage with Rose; just when misfortune was most ominous of evil, just when it was hardest to bear! Forebodings which he dared not realise began now to mingle with the bitterness of his grief, whenever his thoughts wandered from the present to the future; and as he sat by the lonely fireside, murmuring from time to time the Church prayer for the repose of the dead, he almost involuntarily mingled with it another prayer, expressed only in his own simple words, for the safety of the living—for the young girl whose love was his sole earthly treasure; for the motherless children who must now look for protection to him alone.

He had sat by the hearth a long, long time, absorbed in his thoughts, not once looking round towards the bed, when he was startled by hearing the sound of his grandfather's voice once more. "Gabriel," whispered the old man, trembling and shrinking as he spoke. "Gabriel, do you hear a dripping of water—now slow, now quick again—on the floor at the foot of my bed?"

"I hear nothing, grandfather, but the crackling of the fire and the roaring of the storm outside."

"Drip, drip, drip! Faster and faster; plainer and plainer. Take the torch, Gabriel; look down on the floor—look with all your eyes. Is the place wet there? Is it God's rain that is dropping through the roof?"

Gabriel took the torch with trembling fingers, and knelt down on the floor to examine it closely. He started back from the place, as he saw that it was quite dry—the torch dropped upon the hearth—he fell on his knees before the statue of the Virgin and hid his face.

"Is the floor wet? Answer me, I command you!—Is the floor wet?"—asked the old man quickly and breathlessly. Gabriel rose, went back to the bedside, and whispered to him that no drop of rain had fallen inside the cottage. As he spoke the words, he saw a change pass over his grandfather's face—the sharp features seemed to wither up on a sudden; the eager expression to grow vacant and death-like in an instant. The voice too altered; it was harsh and querulous no more; its tones became strangely soft, slow, and solemn, when the old man spoke again.

"I hear it still," he said, "drip! drip!"

faster and plainer than ever. That ghostly dropping of water is the last and the surest of the fatal signs which have told of your father's and your brother's deaths to-night, and I know from the place where I hear it—the foot of the bed I lie on—that it is a warning to me of my own approaching end. I am called where my son and my grandson have gone before me: my weary time in this world is over at last. Don't let Rose and the children come in here, if they should awake—they are too young to look at death."

Gabriel's blood curdled, when he heard these words—when he touched his grandfather's hand, and felt the chill that it struck to his own—when he listened to the raging wind, and knew that all help was miles and miles away from the cottage. Still, in spite of the storm, the darkness, and the distance, he thought not for a moment of neglecting the duty that had been taught him from his childhood—the duty of summoning the Priest to the bedside of the dying. "I must call Rose," he said, "to watch by you while I am away."

"Stop!" cried the old man, "stop, Gabriel, I implore, I command you not to leave me!"

"The priest, grandfather—your confession—"

"It must be made to you. In this darkness and this hurricane no man can keep the path across the heath. Gabriel! I am dying—I should be dead before you got back, Gabriel! for the love of the Blessed Virgin, stop here with me till I die—my time is short—I have a terrible secret that I must tell to somebody before I draw my last breath! Your ear to my mouth! quick! quick!"

As he spoke the last words, a slight noise was audible on the other side of the partition, the door half opened; and Rose appeared at it, looking affrightedly into the room. The vigilant eyes of the old man—suspicious even in death—caught sight of her directly. "Go back," he exclaimed faintly, before she could utter a word, "go back—push her back, Gabriel, and nail down the latch in the door, if she won't shut it of herself!"

"Dear Rose! go in again," implored Gabriel. "Go in and keep the children from disturbing us. You will only make him worse—you can be of no use here!"

She obeyed without speaking, and shut the door again. While the old man clutched him by the arm, and repeated, "Quick! quick!—your ear close to my mouth," Gabriel heard her say to the children (who were both awake), "Let us pray for grandfather." And as he knelt down by the bedside, there stole on his ear the sweet, childish tones of his little sisters and the soft, subdued voice of the young girl who was teaching them the prayer, mingling divinely with the solemn wailing of wind and sea; rising in a still and awful purity over the hoarse, gasping whispers of the dying man.

"I took an oath not to tell it, Gabriel—

lean down closer! I'm weak, and they mustn't hear a word in that room—I took an oath not to tell it; but death is a warrant to all men for breaking such an oath as that. Listen; don't lose a word I'm saying! Don't look away into the room: the stain of blood-guilt has defiled it for ever!—Hush! Hush! Hush! Let me speak. Now your father's dead, I can't carry the horrid secret with me into the grave. Just remember, Gabriel—try if you can't remember the time before I was bed-ridden—ten years ago and more—it was about six weeks, you know, before your mother's death; you can remember it by that. You and all the children were in that room with your mother; you were all asleep, I think; it was night, not very late—only nine o'clock. Your father and I were standing at the door, looking out at the heath in the moonlight. He was so poor at that time, he had been obliged to sell his own boat, and none of the neighbours would take him out fishing with them—your father wasn't liked by any of the neighbours. Well; we saw a stranger coming towards us; a very young man, with a knapsack on his back. He looked like a gentleman, though he was but poorly dressed. He came up, and told us he was dead tired, and didn't think he could reach the town that night, and asked if we would give him shelter till morning. And your father said yes, if he would make no noise, because the wife was ill and the children were asleep. So he said all he wanted was to go to sleep himself before the fire. We had nothing to give him, but black bread. He had better food with him than that, and undid his knapsack to get at it—and—and—Gabriel! I'm sinking—drink! something to drink—I'm parched with thirst!"

Silent and deadly pale, Gabriel poured some of the cider from the pitcher on the table into a drinking cup, and gave it to the old man. Slight as the stimulant was, its effect on him was almost instantaneous. His dull eyes brightened a little, and he went on in the same whispering tones as before.

"He pulled the food out of his knapsack rather in a hurry, so that some of the other small things in it fell on the floor. Among these was a pocket-book, which your father picked up and gave him back; and he put it in his coat pocket—there was a tear in one of the sides of the book, and through the hole some bank-notes bulged out. I saw them, and so did your father (don't move away, Gabriel; keep close, there's nothing in me to shrink from). Well, he shared his food, like an honest fellow, with us; and then put his hand in his pocket, and gave me four or five livres, and then lay down before the fire to go to sleep. As he shut his eyes, your father looked at me in a way I didn't like. He'd been behaving very bitterly and desperately towards us for some time past; being soured about poverty, and your mother's illness, and the constant crying out

of you children for more to eat. So when he told me to go and buy some wood, some bread, and some wine with the money I had got, I didn't like, somehow, to leave him alone with the stranger; and so made excuses, saying (which was true) that it was too late to buy things in the village that night. But he told me in a rage to go and do as he bid me, and knock the people up if the shop was shut. So I went out, being dreadfully afraid of your father—as indeed we all were at that time—but I couldn't make up my mind to go far from the house: I was afraid of something happening, though I didn't dare to think what. I don't know how it was; but I stole back in about ten minutes on tip-toe, to the cottage; and looked in at the window; and saw—O! God forgive him! O, God forgive me!—I saw—I—more to drink, Gabriel! I can't speak again—more to drink!”

The voices in the next room had ceased; but in the minute of silence which now ensued, Gabriel heard his sisters kissing Rose, and wishing her good night. They were all three trying to go to sleep again.

“Gabriel, pray yourself, and teach your children after you to pray, that your father may find forgiveness where he is now gone. I saw him, as plainly as I now see you, kneeling with his knife in one hand over the sleeping man. He was taking the little book with the notes in it out of the stranger's pocket. He got the book into his possession, and held it quite still in his hand over an instant, thinking. I believe—oh, no! no!—I'm sure, he was repenting; I'm sure he was going to put the book back; but just at that moment the stranger moved, and raised one of his arms, as if he was waking up. Then, the temptation of the devil grew too strong for your father—I saw him lift the hand with the knife in it—but saw nothing more. I couldn't look in at the window—I couldn't move away—I couldn't cry out; I stood with my back turned towards the house, shivering all over, though it was a warm summer-time, and hearing no cries, no noises at all, from the room behind me. I was too frightened to know how long it was before the opening of the cottage door made me turn round; but when I did, I saw your father standing before me in the yellow moonlight, carrying in his arms the bleeding body of the poor lad who had shared his food with us, and slept on our hearth. Hush! hush! Don't groan and sob in that way! Stifle it with the bed-clothes. Hush! you'll wake them in the next room!”

“Gabriel—Gabriel!” exclaimed a voice from behind the partition. “What has happened? Gabriel! let me come out and be with you?”

“No! no!” cried the old man, collecting the last remains of his strength in the attempt to speak above the wind, which was just then howling at the loudest. “Stay where you

are—don't speak—don't come out, I command you! Gabriel,” (his voice dropped to a faint whisper) “raise me up in bed—you must hear the whole of it, now—raise me: I'm choking so that I can hardly speak. Keep close and listen—I can't say much more. Where was I?—Ah, your father! He threatened to kill me if I didn't swear to keep it secret; and in terror of my life I swore. He made me help him to carry the body—we took it all across the heath—oh! horrible, horrible, under the bright moon—(lift me higher, Gabriel). You know the great stones yonder, set up by the heathens; you know the hollow place under the stones they call ‘The Merchant's Table’—we had plenty of room to lay him in that, and hide him so; and then we ran back to the cottage. I never dared go near the place afterwards; no, nor your father either! (Higher, Gabriel! I'm choking again). We burnt the pocket-book and the knapsack—never knew his name—we kept the money to spend. (You're not lifting me! you're not listening close enough!) Your father said it was a legacy, when you and your mother asked about the money. (You hurt me, you shake me to pieces, Gabriel, when you sob like that.) It brought a curse on us, the money; the curse has drowned your father and your brother; the curse is killing me; but I've confessed—tell the priest I confessed before I died. Stop her; stop Rose! I hear her getting up. Take his bones away from The Merchant's Table, and bury them for the love of God!—and tell the priest—(lift me higher: lift me till I'm on my knees)—if your father was alive, he'd murder me—but tell the priest—because of my guilty soul—to pray—and remember The Merchant's Table—to bury, and to pray—to pray always for—”

As long as Rose heard faintly the whispering of the old man—though no word that he said reached her ear—she shrank from opening the door in the partition. But, when the whispering sounds—which terrified her she knew not how or why—first faltered, then ceased altogether; when she heard the sobs that followed them; and when her heart told her who was weeping in the next room—then, she began to be influenced by a new feeling which was stronger than the strongest fear, and she opened the door without hesitating—almost without trembling.

The coverlid was drawn up over the old man; Gabriel was kneeling by the bedside, with his face hidden. When she spoke to him, he neither answered nor looked at her. After a while, the sobs that shook him ceased; but still he never moved—except once when she touched him, and then he shuddered—shuddered under *her* hand! She called in his little sisters, and they spoke to him, and still he uttered no word in reply. They wept. One by one, often and often, they entreated him with loving words; but the stupor of grief which held him speechless

and motionless was beyond the power of human tears, stronger even than the strength of human love.

It was near daybreak, and the storm was lulling—but still no changes occurred at the bedside. Once or twice, as Rose knelt near Gabriel, still vainly endeavouring to arouse him to a sense of her presence, she thought she heard the old man breathing feebly, and stretched out her hand towards the coverlid; but she could not summon courage to touch him or to look at him. This was the first time she had ever been present at a deathbed; the stillness in the room, the stupor of despair that had seized on Gabriel, so horrified her, that she was almost as helpless as the two children by her side. It was not till the dawn looked in at the cottage window—so coldly, so drearily, and yet so reassuringly—that she began to recover her self-possession at all. Then she knew that her best resource would be to summon assistance immediately from the nearest house. While she was trying to persuade the two children to remain alone in the cottage with Gabriel, during her temporary absence, she was startled by the sound of footsteps outside the door. It opened; and a man appeared on the threshold, standing still there for a moment in the dim uncertain light. She looked closer—looked intently at him. It was François Sarzeau himself!

He was dripping with wet; but his face—always pale and inflexible—seemed to be but little altered in expression by the perils through which he must have passed during the night. Young Pierre lay almost insensible in his arms. In the astonishment and fright of the first moment, Rose screamed as she recognised him.

"There! there! there!" he said, peevishly, advancing straight to the hearth with his burden, "don't make a noise. You never expected to see us alive again, I dare say. We gave ourselves up as lost, and only escaped after all by a miracle." He laid the boy down where he could get the full warmth of the fire; and then, turning round, took a wicker-covered bottle from his pocket, and said, "If it hadn't been for the brandy!" He stopped suddenly—started—put down the bottle on the bench near him—and advanced quickly to the bedside.

Rose looked after him as he went; and saw Gabriel, who had risen when the door was opened, moving back from the bed as François approached. The young man's face seemed to have been suddenly struck to stone—its blank ghastly whiteness was awful to look at. He moved slowly backward and backward till he came to the cottage wall—then stood quite still, staring on his father with wild vacant eyes, moving his hands to and fro before him, muttering; but never pronouncing one audible word.

François did not appear to notice his son; he had the coverlid of the bed in his hand.

"Anything the matter here?" he asked, as he drew it down.

Still Gabriel could not speak. Rose saw it, and answered for him. "Gabriel is afraid that his poor grandfather is dead," she whispered nervously.

"Dead!" There was no sorrow in the tone, as he echoed the word. "Was he very bad in the night before his death happened? Did he wander in his mind? He has been rather light-headed lately."

"He was very restless, and spoke of the ghostly warnings that we all know of: he said he saw and heard many things which told him from the other world that you and Pierre—Gabriel!" she screamed, suddenly interrupting herself. "Look at him! Look at his face! Your grandfather is not dead!"

At that moment, François was raising his father's head to look closely at him. A faint spasm had indeed passed over the deathly face; the lips quivered, the jaw dropped. François shuddered as he looked, and moved away hastily from the bed. At the same instant Gabriel started from the wall; his expression altered, his pale cheeks flushed suddenly, as he snatched up the wicker-cased bottle, and poured all the little brandy that was left in it down his grandfather's throat. The effect was nearly instantaneous; the sinking vital forces rallied desperately. The old man's eyes opened again, wandered round the room, then fixed themselves intently on François, as he stood near the fire. Trying and terrible as his position was at that moment, Gabriel still retained self-possession enough to whisper a few words in Rose's ear. "Go back again into the bedroom, and take the children with you," he said. "We may have something to speak about which you had better not hear."

"Son Gabriel, your grandfather is trembling all over," said François. "If he is dying at all, he is dying of cold: help me to lift him, bed and all, to the hearth."

"No, no! don't let him touch me!" gasped the old man. "Don't let him look at me in that way! Don't let him come near me, Gabriel! Is it his ghost? or is it himself?"

As Gabriel answered, he heard a knocking at the door. His father opened it; and disclosed to view some people from the neighbouring fishing village, who had come—more out of curiosity than sympathy—to inquire whether François and the boy, Pierre, had survived the night. Without asking any one to enter, the fisherman surlily and shortly answered the various questions addressed to him, standing in his own doorway. While he was thus engaged, Gabriel heard his grandfather muttering vacantly to himself—"Last night—how about last night, grandson? What was I talking about last night? Did I say your father was drowned? Very foolish to say he was drowned, and then see him come back alive again! But it wasn't that—I'm so weak in my head, I can't remember!

What was it, Gabriel? Something too horrible to speak of? Is that what you're whispering and trembling about? I said nothing horrible. A crime? Bloodshed? I know nothing of any crime or bloodshed here—I must have been frightened out of my wits to talk in that way! The Merchant's Table? Only a big heap of old stones! What with the storm, and thinking I was going to die, and being afraid about your father, I must have been light-headed. Don't give another thought to that nonsense, Gabriel! I'm better now. We shall all live to laugh at poor grandfather for talking nonsense about crime and bloodshed in his sleep. Ah! poor old man—last night—light-headed—fancies and nonsense of an old man—why don't you laugh at it? I'm laughing—so light-headed—so light—!”

He stopped suddenly. A low cry, partly of terror and partly of pain, escaped him; the look of pining anxiety and imbecile cunning which had distorted his face while he had been speaking, faded from it for ever. He shivered a little—breathed heavily once or twice—then became quite still. Had he died with a falsehood on his lips?

Gabriel looked round, and saw that the cottage-door was closed, and that his father was standing against it. How long he had occupied that position, how many of the old man's last words he had heard, it was impossible to conjecture, but there was a lowering suspicion in his harsh face as he now looked away from the corpse to his son, which made Gabriel shudder; and the first question that he asked, on once more approaching the bedside, was expressed in tones which, quiet as they were, had a fearful meaning in them. “What did your grandfather talk about, last night?” he asked.

Gabriel did not answer. All that he had heard, all that he had seen, all the misery and horror that might yet be to come, had stunned his mind. The unspeakable dangers of his present position were too tremendous to be realised. He could only feel them vaguely as yet in the weary torpor that oppressed his heart: while in every other direction the use of his faculties, physical and mental, seemed to have suddenly and totally abandoned him.

“Is your tongue wounded, son Gabriel, as well as your arm?” his father went on, with a bitter laugh. “I come back to you, saved by a miracle; and you never speak to me. Would you rather I had died than the old man there? He can't hear you now—why shouldn't you tell me what nonsense he was talking last night?—You won't? I say, you shall!” (He crossed the room and put his back to the door.) “Before either of us leave this place, you shall confess it! You know that my duty to the Church bids me go at once, and tell the priest of your grandfather's death. If I leave that duty unfulfilled, remember it is through your fault! *You keep*

me here—for here I stop till I am obeyed. Do you hear that, idiot? Speak! Speak instantly, or you shall repent it to the day of your death! I ask again—what did your grandfather say to you when he was wandering in his mind, last night?”

“He spoke of a crime, committed by another, and guiltily kept secret by him,” answered Gabriel slowly and sternly. “And this morning he denied his own words with his last living breath. But last night, if he spoke the truth—”

“The truth!” echoed François. “What truth?” He stopped, his eyes fell, then turned towards the corpse. For a few minutes he stood steadily contemplating it; breathing quickly, and drawing his hand several times across his forehead. Then he faced his son once more. In that short interval he had become in outward appearance a changed man: expression, voice, and manner, all were altered. “Heaven forgive me!” he said, “but I could almost laugh at myself, at this solemn moment, for having spoken and acted just now so much like a fool! Denied his words, did he? Poor old man! they say sense often comes back to light-headed people just before death; and he is a proof of it. The fact is, Gabriel, my own wits must have been a little shaken—and no wonder:—by what I went through last night and what I have come home to this morning. As if you, or anybody, could ever really give serious credit to the wandering speeches of a dying old man! (Where is Rose? Why did you send her away?) I don't wonder at your still looking a little startled, and feeling low in your mind, and all that—for you've had a trying night of it; trying in every way. He must have been a good deal shaken in his wits, last night, between fears about himself, and fears about me. (To think of my being angry with you, Gabriel, for being a little alarmed—very naturally—by an old man's queer fancies!) Come out, Rose—come out of the bed room whenever you are tired of it: you must learn sooner or later to look at death calmly. Shake hands, Gabriel; and let us make it up, and say no more about what has passed. You won't? Still angry with me for what I said to you just now?—Ah! you'll think better about it, by the time I return. Come out, Rose, we've no secrets here.”

“Where are you going to?” asked Gabriel, as he saw his father hastily open the door.

“To tell the priest that one of his congregation is dead, and to have the death registered,” answered François. “These are *my* duties, and must be performed before I take any rest.”

He went out hurriedly, as he said these words. Gabriel almost trembled at himself, when he found that he breathed more freely, that he felt less horribly oppressed both in mind and body, the moment his father's back was turned. Fearful as thought was now, it

was still a change for the better even to be capable of thinking at all. Was the behaviour of his father compatible with innocence? Could the old man's confused denial of his own words in the morning and in the presence of his son, be set for one instant against the circumstantial confession that he had made during the night, alone with his grandson? These were the terrible questions which Gabriel now asked himself; and which he shrank involuntarily from answering. And yet, that doubt, the solution of which would one way or the other irrevocably affect the whole future of his life, must sooner or later be solved at any hazard! There was but one way of setting it at rest—to go instantly, while his father was absent, and examine the hollow place under "The Merchant's Table." If his grandfather's confession had really been made while he was in possession of his senses, this place (which Gabriel knew to be covered in from wind and weather) had never been visited since the commission of the crime by the perpetrator, or by his unwilling accomplice: though time had destroyed all besides, the hair and the bones of the victim would still be left to bear witness to the truth—if truth had indeed been spoken. As this conviction grew on him, the young man's cheek paled; and he stopped irresolute, half way between the hearth and the door. Then he looked down doubtfully at the corpse on the bed; and then there came upon him, suddenly, a revulsion of feeling. A wild feverish impatience to know the worst without another instant of delay possessed him. Only telling Rose that he should be back soon, and that she must watch by the dead in his absence, he left the cottage at once, without waiting to hear her reply, even without looking back as he closed the door behind him.

There were two tracks to The Merchant's Table. One, the longer of the two, by the coast cliffs; the other across the heath. But this latter path was also, for some little distance, the path which led to the village and the church. He was afraid of attracting his father's attention here, so he took the direction of the coast. At one spot, the track trended inland, winding round some of the many Druid monuments scattered over the country. This place was on high ground, and commanded a view, at no great distance, of the path leading to the village, just where it branched off from the heathy ridge which ran in the direction of The Merchant's Table. Here Gabriel descried the figure of a man standing with his back towards the coast. This figure was too far off to be identified with absolute certainty; but it looked like, and might well be, François Sarzeau. Whoever he was, the man was evidently uncertain which way he should proceed. When he moved forward it was first to advance several paces towards The Merchant's Table—then he went back again towards the distant cottages and the church. Twice he hesitated

thus; the second time pausing long before he appeared finally to take the way that led to the village. Leaving the post of observation among the stones, at which he had instinctively halted for some minutes past, Gabriel now proceeded in his own path. Could this man really be his father? And if it were so, why did François Sarzeau only determine to go to the village where his business lay, after having twice vainly attempted to persevere in taking the exactly opposite direction of The Merchant's Table? Did he really desire to go there? Had he heard the name mentioned, when the old man referred to it in his dying words? And had he failed to summon courage enough to make all safe by removing—? This last question was too horrible to be pursued: Gabriel stifled it affrightedly in his own heart, as he went on.

He reached the great Druid monument, without meeting a living soul on his way. The sun was rising, and the mighty storm-clouds of the night were parting asunder wildly over the whole eastward horizon. The waves still leapt and foamed gloriously; but the gale had sunk to a keen, fresh breeze. As Gabriel looked up, and saw how brightly the promise of a lovely day was written in the heavens, he trembled as he thought of the search which he was now about to make. The sight of the fair fresh sunrise jarred horribly with the suspicions of committed murder that were rankling foully in his heart. But he knew that his errand must be performed, and he nerved himself to go through with it; for he dared not return to the cottage until the mystery had been cleared up at once and for ever.

The Merchant's Table was formed by two huge stones resting horizontally on three others. In the troubled times of more than half a century ago, regular tourists were unknown among the Druid monuments of Brittany; and the entrance to the hollow place under the stones—since often visited by strangers—was at this time nearly choked up by brambles and weeds. Gabriel's first look at this tangled nook of briars, convinced him that the place had not been entered—perhaps for years—by any living being. Without allowing himself to hesitate (for he felt that the slightest delay might be fatal to his resolution) he passed as gently as possible through the brambles, and knelt down at the low, dusky, irregular entrance of the hollow place under the stones.

His heart throbbed violently, his breath almost failed him; but he forced himself to crawl a few feet into the cavity, and then groped with his hand on the ground about him. He touched something! Something which it made his flesh creep to handle; something which he would fain have dropped, but which he grasped tight in spite of himself. He drew back into the outer air and sunshine. Was it a human bone? No! he had been the dupe of his own morbid terror



—he had only taken up a fragment of dried wood!

Feeling shame at such self-deception as this, he was about to throw the wood from him before he re-entered the place, when another idea occurred to him. Though it was dimly lighted through one or two chinks in the stones, the far part of the interior of the cavity was still too dusky to admit of perfect examination by the eye, even on a bright sunshiny morning. Observing this, he took out the tinder box and matches, which—like the other inhabitants of the district—he always carried about with him for the purpose of lighting his pipe, determining to use the piece of wood as a torch which might illuminate the darkest corner of the place when he next entered it. Fortunately, the wood had remained so long and had been preserved so dry in its sheltered position, that it caught fire almost as easily as a piece of paper. The moment it was fairly aflame Gabriel went into the cavity—penetrating at once, this time, to its farthest extremity.

He remained among the stones long enough for the wood to burn down nearly to his hand. When he came out, and flung the burning fragment from him, his face was flushed deeply, his eyes sparkled. He leapt carelessly on to the heath, over the bushes through which he had threaded his way so warily but a few minutes before, exclaiming, "I may marry Rose with a clear conscience now—ay, I am the son of as honest a man as there is in Brittany!" He had closely examined the cavity in every corner, and not the slightest sign that any dead body had ever been laid there was visible in the hollow place under The Merchant's Table.

#### DIRGE.

A FALLEN angel here doth rest:  
Deal gently with her, Memory! lest  
In after years thou com'st to know  
God was more merciful than thou!

She cannot feel the timid peeping  
Of loving flowers—the small moss creeping  
Over her grave—the quiet weeping  
Of saltless dews;  
She hears not—she that lies there sleeping,  
Who'er accuse!

She hears not how the wild winds crave  
An entrance to her sheltered grave;  
Nor heeds how they bewail and moan,  
That one door closed to them alone;

She nothing recks the cold rains' beating,  
The swathed turf-sod's icy sheeting,  
Nor hears nor answers she the greeting,  
Of such cold friends!  
Nor more, of summer suns unweeting,  
To them attends.

Alas! no season now has power  
To charm her for one little hour!  
Each change and chance that men oppress  
Pass o'er her now impressionless.

She cannot note the gradual merging  
Of Night in Day; the Days' quick urging  
To longer Weeks; the Weeks' converging  
In Months—Months, Years!  
On Time's wide sea for ever surging  
Till Heaven nears.

The light is parted from her eye,  
The moisture on her lips is dry;  
No smile can part them now; no glow  
Ever again those cheeks can know.

Harsh world! oh, then, be not thou slow'r  
The ugly Past to bury o'er!  
Time yet may have some sweets in store  
For our poor sister;  
Life cast her off; that self-same hour  
Death took, and kissed her!

#### SEVENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO.

THE American loyalist of seventy-eight years ago, setting out from London in search of a temporary abiding-place or home among the country towns of England had not supposed to himself an easy task. But he was bent on going through with his enterprise. Reduced from affluence to the practice of a strict economy, he yet imagined that not a few of the social enjoyments of London, without their extravagant cost, might be obtainable in one of our large provincial cities. He thought thus to sweeten that bread of exile which Dante tells us must be always bitter bread; and cheerfully enough, therefore, at four o'clock on a July morning of 1776, took his seat in the early and fast coach for Salisbury, which, after performing the gallant feat of eighty-three miles in fifteen hours, deposited him at the Red Lion in the ancient city at seven o'clock on that July evening.

Dear to every American loyalist in those days had been the old country, and its Church and State; and Mr. Curwen was no exception to the rule. But it is a piece of truth, as well as a line of poetry, that distance lends enchantment to the view; and it happened, on the occasion of this journey to Salisbury, that the ex-Admiralty Judge of New England got so near a view of two very remarkable types or examples of the Church and State of Old England as then existing, that their enchantment passed clean out of them, then and there. He strolled into the fine old cathedral the morning after his arrival, and heard the dean, with five or six surpliced followers and eight singing boys, mumbling the service to a congregation of "eight as miserable looking wretches as ever entered the doors of a hospital." Yet wretched as this audience was, it had been *hired to attend*; and on closer examination of the condition of the cathedral itself, was found not at all out of harmony with it. The walls seemed mouldering, the ceiling rotting with centuries of decay, the seats and woodwork everywhere tumbling down. Mr. Curwen bethought him of the English Church militant of old; compared