

his own hearth. One little kiss to the child, whose eyes beamed with a strange light upon us; and then, taking both my hands in his, he bent down and read my face. I met his gaze unshrinkingly, eye to eye. We sounded the depths of each other's heart in that long, unwavering look. Never more could there be doubt or mistrust; never again deception or misconception, between us.

Our star had arisen, and full orb'd, rounded into perfection, shed a soft and brilliant light upon the years to come. Chime after chime, like the marriage peal of our souls, came the sound of distant bells across the snow, and roused us from our reverie.

"I thought I had lost you altogether," said Martin to me. "I believed you would come back to me, somehow, at some time; but this evening I heard that you were gone, and I was telling Lucy Fraser so, not long since. She has been pining to see you."

Now, he suffered me to take the child upon my lap, and she nestled closely to me, with a weary sigh, resting her head upon my bosom. Just then, we heard the carol singers coming up the avenue, and Martin drew the curtains over the window, before which they stationed themselves to sing the legend of the miraculous star in the East.

When the singers ended and raised their cry of "We wish you a merry Christmas, and a happy New Year!" he went out into the porch to speak to them, and I hid my face in the child's curls, and thanked God who had so changed me.

"But what is this, Martin?" I cried in terror, as I raised my head, on his return.

The child's downcast eyes were closely sealed, and her little firm hand had grown lax and nerveless. Insensible and breathless, she lay in my arms like a withering flower.

"It is only fainting," said Martin; "she has been drooping ever since you left us, Stella;

and my only hope of her recovery rests in your ministering care."

All that night, I sat with the little child resting on my bosom; revived from her death-like swoon, and sleeping calmly in my arms because she was already beginning to share in the life and joy and brightness of my heart. There was perfect silence and tranquillity enclosing us in a blissful oasis, interrupted only once by the entrance of my nurse, who had been found by Martin in a state of the utmost perplexity and alarm.

The happy Christmas morning dawned. I asked my nurse to arrange my hair in the style in which my mother used to wear hers. And when, after a long conversation with Susan, Mr. Fraser received me as his daughter with great emotion and affection, and oftener called me Maria than Stella, I was satisfied to be identified with my mother. Then, in the evening, sitting amongst them, a passion of trembling and weeping seized me, which could only be soothed by their fondest assurances. After which I sang them some old songs, with nothing in them but their simple melody; and Mr. Fraser talked freely of former years and of the times to come; and Lucy's eyes almost laughed.

Then Martin took me home along the familiar path, which I had so often traversed alone and fearless; but the excess of gladness made me timid, and at every unusual sound I crept closer to him, with a sweet sense of being protected.

One sunny day in spring, with blithe Lucy and triumphant dictatress Barbara for my bridesmaids, I accepted, humbly and joyfully, the blessed lot of being Martin Fraser's wife. And even in the scenes of the empty-headed folly of my girlhood, I thenceforth tried to be better, and to do my duty in love, gratitude, and devotion. Only, at first, Martin pretended not to believe that on that night I stole out to have a last glimpse, not of him, but of his father: I knowing nothing of the change that had transformed Mr. Fraser's sitting-room into his own study.

THE GHOST IN THE DOUBLE ROOM

WAS the next Ghost on my list. I had noted the rooms down in the order in which they were drawn, and this was the order we were to follow. I invoked the Spectre of the Double Room, with the least possible delay, because we all observed John Herschel's wife to be much affected, and we all refrained, as if by common consent, from glancing at one another. Alfred Starling, with the tact and good feeling which are never wanting in him, briskly responded to my call, and declared the Double Room to be haunted by the Ghost of the Ague.

"What is the Ghost of the Ague like?" asked every one, when there had been a laugh.

"Like?" said Alfred. "Like the Ague."

"What is the Ague like?" asked somebody.

"Don't you know?" said Alfred. "I'll tell you."

We had both, Tilly—by which affectionate diminutive I mean my adored Matilda—and your humble servant, agreed that it was not only inexpedient, but in the highest degree contrary to the duty we owed to the community at large, to wait any longer. I had a hundred arguments to bring forward against the baleful effects of long engagements; and Tilly began to quote

poetry of a morbid tendency. Our parents and guardians entertained different opinions. My uncle Bonsor wanted us to wait till the shares in the Caerlyon-upon-Usk Something or Other Company, in which undertaking I was vicariously interested, were at a premium—they have been at a hopeless discount for years. Tilly's papa and mamma called Tilly a girl and

self a boy, when we were nothing whatsoever of the kind, and only the most ardent and faithful pair of young lovers that had existed since the time of Abelard and Heloise, or Florio and Biancafiore. As, however, our parents and guardians were not made of adamant or Roman cement, we were not permitted to add another couple to the catalogue of historically unfortunate lovers. Uncle Bonsor and Mr. and Mrs. Captain Standfast (my Tilly's papa and mamma) at last relented. Much was effected towards this desirable consummation by my arguments against celibacy, contained in eight pages foolscap, and of which I made copies in triplicate for the benefit of our hard-hearted relatives. More was done by Tilly threatening to poison herself. Most, however, was accomplished by our both making up our minds to tell a piece thereof to our parents and guardians, and telling them that if they did not acquiesce in our views we would run away and get married at the very first opportunity. There was no just cause or impediment. We were young, healthy, and had plenty of money between us. Loads of money—as we thought then. As to personal appearance, Tilly was simply Lovely, and my whiskers had not been ill spoken of in the best society in Dover. So it was all arranged, and on the twenty-seventh of December, eighteen fifty dash, being the morrow of Boxing-day, Alfred Starling, gent., was to be united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Matilda, only daughter of Captain Rockleigh Standfast, R.N., of Snargatestone Villa, Dover.

I had been left an orphan at a very early age, and the guardian of my moderate property (including the shares in the Caerlyon-upon-Usk Something or Other concern), and guardian of my person, was my uncle Bonsor. He sent me to Merchant Taylors', and afterwards for a couple of years to college at Bonn, on the Rhine. He afterwards—to keep me out of mischief, I believe—paid a handsome premium for my entrance into the counting-house of Messrs. Baum, Brömm, and Boompees, German merchants, of Finsbury Circus, under whose tutelage I did as little as I liked in the corresponding department, and was much envied by my brother salaried clerks. My uncle Bonsor resided chiefly at Dover, where he was making large sums of money by government contracts, whose objects apparently consisted in boring holes in the chalk and then filling them up again. My uncle was, perhaps, the most respectable man in Europe, and was well known in the city of London as "Responsible Bonsor." He was one of those men who are confidently said to be "good for any amount." He had a waistcoat—worn winter and summer—a waistcoat that wavered in hue between a sunny buff and a stony drab, which looked so ineffably respectable that I am certain if it had been presented at the pay-counter of any bank in Lombard-street the clerks would have cashed it at once for any amount of notes or gold demanded. My uncle Bonsor entrenched himself behind this astonishing garment as behind a fortification, and fired guns of respectability at you. That

waistcoat had carried resolutions, assuaged the ire of indignant shareholders, given stability to wavering schemes, and brought in thumping subscriptions for burnt-out Caffres and destitute Fee-jees. It was a safe waistcoat, and Bonsor was a safe man. He was mixed up with a good many companies; but whenever a projector or promoter came to him with a plan, my responsible uncle would confer with his waistcoat, and within five minutes would either tell the projector or promoter to walk out of his counting-house, or put his name down for a thousand pounds. And the scheme was made that Responsible Bonsor put his name down for.

It was arranged that I was to go down to Dover on Christmas-eve, staying at my uncle's, and that we were to dine all together at Captain Standfast's on Christmas-day. Boxing-day was to be devoted to bonnets on the part of my beloved, and to the signing and sealing of certain releases, deeds, covenants, and other documents connected with law and money, on the part of self, my uncle, and my prospective papa-in-law, and on the twenty-seventh we were to be MARRIED.

Of course my connexion with Messrs. Baum, Brömm, and Boompees was brought to an amicable termination. I gave the clerks a grand treat at a hostelry in Newgate-street, and had the pleasure of receiving, at a somewhat late hour, and at least eighty-seven times, a unanimous choral assurance, not unaccompanied by hiccups, that I was a "jolly good fellow." I was unwillingly compelled to defer my departure for Dover till the 8.30 p.m. express mail on Christmas-eve, being engaged to a farewell dinner at four, at the mansion of our Mr. Max Boompees, junior and dinner-giving partner in the firm, in Finsbury Circus. A capital dinner it was, and very merry. I left the gentlemen over their wine, and had just time to pop into a cab and catch the mail train at London Bridge.

You know how quickly time passes on a railway journey when one has dined comfortably before starting. I seemed to have been telegraphed down to Dover, so rapidly were the eighty odd miles skimmed over. But it now becomes my duty to impart to you the knowledge of my Terrible Misfortune. In my youth, a little boy at a preparatory school near Ashford, I had experienced a touch of the dreadful disease of the Kentish marshes. How long this malady had lain concealed in my frame, and by what accident of time or temperature it became again evolved, I had no means of judging, but by the time the train arrived at Dover I was in the throes of acute AGUE.

It was a horrible, persistent, regular shivering and shaking, a racking palsy, a violent tremor, accompanied, I am sure, by fever, for my temples throbbed, and I experienced an almost deafening, jarring, rattling noise in the head. My blood seemed all in revolt, and surging backwards and forwards in my veins, and my unhappy body swayed from side to side with the distempered current. On the platform I staggered to and fro; and the porter,

of whose arm I caught hold to steady myself, seemed, lantern and all, by mere communicated violence, to be shaken and buffeted about as I was. I had always been an abstemious young man, and had not exceeded in the consumption of the hospitable junior partner's rare old hock; besides, for all the noise in my head, I could think and talk—albeit my teeth chattered, and my tongue wagged in my mouth with aguish convulsions. I had never known before that railway porters were a hard-hearted race, but one tall man in velveteen grinned most impertinently as I was helped into a fly, and I am certain that his companion, a short, fat fellow, with a leer in his eye, thrust his tongue into his cheek as he heaped, at my desire, great-coats and rugs over me, and bade the flyman drive to the Marine Parade, where my uncle resided. I had told every one at the station about my attack of ague.

"He's got his load," I heard the tall porter exclaim, as we drove off. Of course he meant that the flyman had got all my luggage.

It was a dreadful five minutes' ride to my uncle's. The fit was so strong on me that my head and limbs kept bumping against opposite sides of the fly, and once came in contact with the window-glass. And the noise in my head never ceased. I stumbled out, somehow, when the vehicle stopped, and, clinging to the knocker of the avuncular door, struck such a quivering peal of blows—I had previously scattered the cabman's fare on the pavement in the attempt to place the money in his hand—that Jakes, my uncle's confidential man, who opened the door, stared with astonishment.

"I'm very ill, Jakes," I stammered, when I had staggered into the hall. "I'm down with that dreadful Ague again."

"Yes, sir," answered Jakes, with something like a grin on his countenance too. "Compts of the season, sir. Hadn't you better go to bed, sir?"

Now the house was all lighted up, for there was to be a snapdragon party, and I knew that my Tilly and all the Standfasts were up-stairs with my uncle and his waistcoat, and that they were to wait for my arrival before lighting the bowl. And, ill as I was, I burned to see my darling.

"No, Jakes," I said, "I'll try and bear up. You had better bring me a little cognac, and some very hot water, into the dining-room. It will do me good, and the fit may leave me." What would you believe was the reply of this pampered domestic?

"Better not, sir," he had the hardihood to observe. "Christmas time, sir. Plenty more like you. Better go to bed, sir. Think of your head in the morning, sir."

"Fellow——" I began to retort, still violently trembling, when I saw my uncle Bonsor appear at the head of the staircase. There was a group of ladies and gentlemen in the background, and as well as I could see for shaking, there were the dear golden curls of my Tilly. But her face looked so scared and terrified.

"Alfred," said my uncle, sternly, from behind his waistcoat, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Go to bed directly, sir!"

"Uncle!" I cried, with a desperate attempt to keep myself steady, "do you think I'm——" Here I made an effort to ascend the staircase, but my foot caught either in the carpet or over one of the confounded brass rods, and, upon my word, I tumbled heels over heels into the hall. And yet, even as I lay recumbent, I shook worse than ever. I heard my uncle's responsible voice ordering the servants to carry me to bed. And I was carried too; Jakes and a long-legged foot-page conveying my shaking body to my bedroom.

The night was brief and terrible as in an access of fever, and I lay shaking and chattering in the burning bed. In the morning, my uncle sent word to say that my ague was all nonsense, and that I was to come down to breakfast.

I went down, determined on reinsurance, but holding on by the banisters and quivering in every limb. O! for the tribulations of that wretched Christmas-day. I was received with sneers, and advised to take very strong tea with a little cognac; yet soon afterwards my uncle shook hands with me, and said that it was only once a year, and that he supposed boys would be boys. Everybody wished me a merry Christmas; but I could only return the compliments of the season in a spasmodic stutter. I took a walk on the pier immediately after breakfast, but I nearly tumbled into the sea, and bumped against so many posts, that I had to be led home by a mariner in a yellow sou'-wester hat, who insisted that I should give him five shillings to drink my health. Then came a more appalling ordeal. I was to call at Snargatestone Villa to accompany my Tilly and the family to church. To my great relief, though I was shaking in every joint of my fingers and toes, nobody took any notice of my alarming complaint. I began to hope that it might be intermittent, and would pass off, but it wouldn't, and rather increased in violence. My darling girl patted me on the head, and hoped that I was "a good boy, now;" but when I began, shiveringly, to explain my attack of ague, she only laughed. We went to church, and then my ague soon brought me into disgrace again. First I created terrible scandal by knocking up against the old pauper women in the free seats, and nearly upsetting the beadle. Then I knocked the church services and hymn-books off the ledge of the pew. Then I kicked a hassock from beneath the very knees of my future mamma-in-law. Then I trod—accidentally I declare—on the toes of Mary Seaton, my Tilly's pretty cousin; whereupon she gave a little scream, and my beloved looked daggers at me; and as a climax, in the agony of that extraordinary horizontal shaking fit of mine, I burst the pew door open, and tumbled once more against the beadle, who in stern tones, and in the name of the churchwardens, desired me either to behave myself or to leave the church. I saw that it was no good contending against my complaint, so I did leave; but

as I lurched out of the edifice I seemed to see the clergyman shaking in the reading-desk, and the clerk wagging to and fro beneath him ; while the hatchments and tablets shook on the walls ; and the organ in the gallery kept bumping now against the charity boys, now against the charity girls.

It wasn't vertigo : the head swims round under that circumstance. It was clearly ague, and of the very worst description ; the body shaking from right to left, and the blood surging in the ears with fever.

At dinner-time—my agonies had never ceased, but had not attracted notice—I began literally to put my foot into it again. First, handing Mrs. Van Plank of Sandwich down to the dining-room—my uncle Bonsor escorted Tilly—I entangled myself in the bugle ornaments which that wealthy but obese woman persisted in wearing ; and we came down together with alarming results. I was undermost, shaking miserably, with Mrs. Van Plank's large person pressing on my shirt-studs. When we were assisted to rise she would not be appeased. She would not join us at dinner. She ordered her fly and returned to Sandwich, and as the carriage drove away, Captain Standfast, R.N., looking at me as savagely as though he would have liked to have me up at the gangway and give me six dozen on the instant, said,

"There goes poor Tilly's diamond bracelet. The old screw won't give it her now. I saw the case on the cushion of the fly."

Was it my fault ! could I help my lamentable ague ?

At dinner I went from bad to worse. Item : I spilt two ladlefuls of mock turtle soup over a new damask tablecloth. Item : I upset a glass of Madeira over Mary Seaton's blue moire dress. Item : in a convulsive fit of shaking, I nearly stabbed Lieutenant Lamb, of the Fifty-fourth Regiment, stationed on the Heights, with a silver fork ; and, finally, in a maniacal attempt to carve a turkey, I sent the entire body of that Christmas bird, with a garland of sausages clinging to it, full butt into the responsible waistcoat of my uncle Bonsor.

The peace was made somehow ; I'm sure I don't know in what manner, but half an hour afterwards we were all very pleasant and talkative over our dessert. When I say all, I of course except my unhappy self. There had been no solution of continuity in my shaking. Somebody, I think, proposed my health. In returning thanks, I hit the proposer a tremendous blow under the left eye with my elbow. Endeavouring to regain my equilibrium, I sent a full glass of claret into the embroidered cambric bosom of that unhappy Lieutenant Lamb. In desperation I caught hold of the tablecloth with both hands. I saw how it would be ; the perfidious polished mahogany slid away from my grasp. I turned my foot frantically round the leg of the table nearest me, and with a great crash over went dining-table, cut-glass decanters, and dessert. Lieutenant Lamb was badly hit across the bridge of the nose with a pair of silver nut-crackers,

and my uncle Bonsor's head was crowned, in quite a classic manner, with filberts and hot-house grapes.

The bleak December sun rose next morning upon ruin and catastrophe. As well as I can collect my scattered reminiscences of that dismal time, my offences against decorum were once more condoned : not in consequence of my complaint (in which my relatives and friends persisted in disbelieving), but on the ground that it was "only once a year." Lawyers came backwards and forwards to Snargatestone Villa during the forenoon. There was a great production of tin boxes, red tape, blue seals, foolscap paper, and parchment ; and my uncle Bonsor was more responsible than ever. They brought me a paper to sign at last, whispering much among themselves as they did so ; and I protest that I could see nothing but a large pool of white, joggling about in a field of green tablecloth, while on the paper an infinity of crabbed characters seemed racing up and down in a crazed and furious manner. I endeavoured to nerve myself to the task of signing, I bit my lips, I clenched my left hand, I tried to screw my wagging head on to my neck, I cramped my toes up in my boots, I held my breath ; but was it my fault, when I clutched the pen and tried to write my name, that the abominable goosequill began to dance, and skate, and leap, and plunge, and dig its nibs into the paper ; that when, in despair, I seized the inkstand, to hold it nearer to the pen, I shook its sable contents, in horrid, horned, tasseled blots, all over a grave legal document ? I finished my achievement by inflicting a large splash on my uncle's sacred waistcoat, and hitting Captain Standfast under the third rib with the pen.

"That will do," my papa-in-law cried, collaring me. "Leave the house, scoundrel !"

But I broke from his grasp, and fled to the drawing-room, knowing that my Tilly would be there with her bridesmaids and her bonnets.

"Tilly—my adored Matilda !" I cried.

"No further explanation is needed, sir," broke in my beloved, in an inexorable tone. "I have seen and heard quite enough. Alfred Starling, I would sooner wed the meanest hind that gathers samphire on yon cliff than become the bride of a profligate and drunkard. Go, sir ; repent if you can ; be ashamed if you can. Henceforth we are strangers. Slave of self-indulgence, adieu for ever !" And she swept out of the room, and I could hear her sobbing her pretty heart out in the boudoir beyond.

I was discarded and expelled for ever from Snargatestone Villa ; my uncle Bonsor repudiated me, and disinherited me from any share in his waistcoat ; I hurled myself into the next train at the station, and shook all the way back to town. At about dusk on that dreadful Boxing-day, I found myself wandering and jolting about the purlieus of Soho.

From Soho-square—the south-west side, I think—branches a shabby, dingy little court, called Bateman's-buildings. I was standing shivering at the corner of this ill-favoured place,

when I stumbled against a gentleman, who looked about seven-eighths soldier and one-eighth civilian.

He was a little, dapper, clean-limbed, young-looking old man, with a yellow face, and grey hair and whiskers. Soldiers, save in the cavalry, didn't wear moustaches then. He wore a blue uniform coat, rather white at the seams, and a silver medal with a faded ribbon on his breast. He had a bunch of parti-coloured streamers in his undress cap; he carried a bamboo-cane under his arm; on each sleeve he wore golden stripes, much tarnished; on his scarlet collar was embroidered a golden lion; and on his shoulders he had a pair of little, light, golden epaulettes, that very much resembled two sets of teeth from a dentist's glass-case, covered with bullion.

"And how are you, my hearty?" said the military gentleman, cheerily.

I answered that I was the most miserable wretch in the world; upon which the military gentleman, slapping me on the back and calling me his gallant comrade, asked me to have a pint of beer, warmed with a little spice, and a dash of Old Tom in it, for the sake of Christmas.

"You're a roving buck," observed my new friend. "*I'm* a roving buck. You never happened to have a twin-brother named Siph, did you?"

"No," I answered, moodily.

"He was as like you as two peas," continued the military gentleman, who had by this time taken my arm, and was leading me all shaking and clattering towards a mouldy little tavern, on whose door-jambs were displayed a couple of coloured cartoons, framed and glazed and much fly-blown, and displaying, the one, the presentment of an officer in sky-blue uniform much belaced with silver, and the other a bombardier with an enormous shako ramming the charge into a cannon: the whole surmounted by a placard setting forth that smart young men were required for the Honourable East India Company's infantry, cavalry, and artillery, and earnestly exhorting all smart young men, as aforesaid, to apply forthwith to Sergeant-Major Chutnee, who was always to be heard of at the bar of the "Highland Laddie," or at the office in Bateman's-buildings.

"The last time I saw him," went on the man with the yellow face and the grey whiskers, when he had tilted me into the "Highland Laddie," pinned me, shaking, against the bar-counter, and ordered a pint of sophisticated beer, "he had left our service, and was a field-marshal in the army of the King of Oude. Many's the time I've seen him with his cocked-hat and di'mond epulets riding on a white elephant, with five-and-twenty black fellows running after him to brush the flies away and draw the soda-water corks. *Such* brandy he'd have with it, and all through meeting me promiscuous in this very public."

It is useless to prolong the narrative of my conversation with the military gentleman; suffice it to say, that within an hour I had taken the fatal shilling, and enlisted in the service of

the Honourable East India Company. I was not a beggar. I possessed property, over which my uncle Bonsor had no control. I had not committed any crime; but I felt lost, ruined, and desperate, and I enlisted. For a wonder, when I was brought before a magistrate to be attested, and before a surgeon to be examined respecting my sanitary fitness for the service, my *ague* seemed entirely to have left me. I stood firm and upright in the witness-box, and under the measuring standard, and was only deterred by shame and anguish at the misconstruction put upon my conduct at Dover from negotiating for my discharge.

I had scarcely reached the East India recruiting dépôt at Brentwood, however, before the attacks of *ague* returned with redoubled severity. At first, on my stating that I had an ear for music, they began to train me for a bandsman, but I could not keep a wind instrument in my hands, and struck those that were played by my comrades from their grasp. Then, I was put into the awkward squad among the recruits, and the sergeants caned me; but I could never get beyond the preliminary drill of the goose-step, and I kept my own time, and not the squad's, even then. The dépôt surgeons wouldn't place the slightest credence in my *ague*, and the sergeant-major of my company reported that I was a skulking, "malingering" impostor. Among my comrades who despised, without pitying me, I got the nickname of "Young Shivery-Shakery." And the most wonderful thing is, that, although I could have procured remittances at any time, the thought of purchasing my discharge never entered my poor, shaking, jarring head.

How they came to send such a trembling, infirm creature as a soldier to India, I can't make out; but sent I was, by long sea, in a troop-ship, with seven or eight hundred more recruits. My military career in the East came to a very speedy and inglorious termination. We had scarcely arrived at Bombay when the battalion of the European regiment into which I was draughted was sent up-country to the banks of the Sutlej, where the Sikh war was then raging. It was the campaign of Aliwal and Sobraon, but it was very little that I saw of that glorious epoch in our military annals. In contemptuous reference to my nervous disorder, I was only permitted to form part of the baggage-guard, and one night, after perhaps ten days' march, throughout which I had shaken most awfully, an attack was made on our rear for mere purposes of plunder by a few rascally budmashes or thieves. Nothing was easier than to put these paltry scoundrels to the rout. I had been brave enough as a lad and as a young man. I declare that on the present occasion I didn't run away; but my unhappy disease got the mastery of me. I shook my musket out of my hands, my shako off my head, and my knapsack off my back, and my wretched legs shook and jolted me, as it seemed, over miles of arid country. There was some talk of shooting me afterwards, and some of flogging me; but corporal punishment did not exist in the Company's

army. They sent me to a vile place of incarceration called a "congee house," where I was fed principally on rice-water, and at last I was conveyed to Bombay, tried by court-martial, sentenced, and publicly drummed out of my regiment as a coward. Yes, I, the son of a gentleman, and the possessor of a genteel private property, had the facings cut off my uniform, and, to the sound of the "Rogues' March," was dismissed from the service of the Honourable East India Company with ignominy and disgrace.

I can scarcely tell how I reached England again; whether a berth was given me, whether I paid for it, or whether I worked my passage home. I can only remember that the ship in which I was a passenger broke her back in Algoa Bay, close to the Cape, and became a total wreck. There was not the slightest danger; we were surrounded by large and small craft, and every soul on board was saved; but I shook so terribly and incessantly while the boats were leaving the vessel, that the whole ship's company hooted and groaned at me when I was shoved over the side, and I was not allowed to go in the long-boat, but was towed alone and aft in the dingy to shore.

I took passage in another ship, which did nothing but shake all the way from the Cape to Plymouth, and at last I reached England. I wrote innumerable letters to my friends and relatives, to Tilly and to my uncle Bonsor; but the only answer I received was a few formal lines from my uncle's lawyer, telling me that my illegible scrawls had come to the hands of the persons for whom they were designed; but that no further notice could be taken of my communications. I was put into the possession of my property to the last penny, but it seems to me that I must have shaken it away either at dice or bagatelle, or ninepins or billiards. And I remember that I never made a stroke at the latter game without hitting my adversary with the cue in the chest, knocking down the marker, sending the balls scudding through the windows, disarranging the scores, and cutting holes in the cloth, for which I had to pay innumerable guineas to the proprietor of the rooms.

I remember one day going into a jeweller's shop in Regent-street to purchase a watch-key. I had only a silver one now, my gold repeater had been shaken away in some unaccountable manner. It was winter-time, and I wore an overcoat with long loose sleeves. While the shopkeeper was adjusting a key to my watch, my ague fit came upon me with demoniacal ferocity, and, to my horror and dismay, in catching hold of the counter to save myself, I tilted a trayful of diamond rings over. Some fell on the floor; but some, O horror and anguish! fell into the sleeves of my overcoat. I shook so that I seemed to have shaken diamond rings into my hands, my pockets, my very boots. By some uncontrollable impulse I attempted flight, but was seized at the very shop door, and carried, shaking, to the police-station.

I was taken before a magistrate, and com-

mitted, still shaking, in a van, to gaol. I shook for some time in a whitewashed cell, when I was brought up, shaking, to the Central Criminal Court, and placed, shaking, on my trial for an attempted robbery of fifteen hundred pounds' worth of property. The evidence was clear against me. My counsel tried to plead something about "kleptomania," but in vain. My uncle Bonsor, who had come expressly up from Dover, spoke strongly against my character. I was found guilty; yes, I, the most innocent and unfortunate young man breathing, and sentenced to seven years' transportation! I can recall the awful scene vividly to memory now. The jury in a body were shaking their heads at me. So was the judge, so was my uncle Bonsor, so were the spectators in the gallery; and I was holding on by the spikes on the ledge of the dock, shaking from right to left like ten thousand million aspen-leaves. My skull was splitting, my brain was bursting, when——

I WOKE.

I was lying in a very uncomfortable position in a first-class carriage of the Dover mail-train; everything in the carriage was shaking; the oil was surging to and fro in the lamp; my companions were swaying to and fro, and the sticks and umbrellas were rattling in the network above. The train was "at speed," and my frightful dream was simply due to the violent and unusual oscillation of the train. Then, sitting up, and rubbing my eyes, immensely relieved, but holding on by the compartments near me (so violently did the carriages shake from side to side), I began to remember what I had dreamed or heard of others' dreams before; while at sea, or while somebody was knocking loudly at the door; and of the odd connexions between unusual sound and motion on the thoughts of our innermost souls. And again with odd distinctness I remember that at one period of my disordered vision, namely, when I was attested and examined as a recruit, I had remained perfectly still and steady. This temporary freedom from ague I was fain to ascribe to the customary two or three minutes' stoppage of the train at Tunbridge Wells. But, thank Heaven, all this was but a dream!

"Enough to shake one's head off!" exclaimed the testy old lady opposite, alluding to the oscillation of the train, as the guard appeared at the window with a shout of "Do—VOR!"

"Well, mum, it have bin a shaking most unusual all the way down," replied that functionary. "Thought we should have bin off the line, more than once. Screws will be looked to to-morrow morning. 'Night, sir!"—this was to me: I knew the man well. "Merry Christmas and a happy new year! You'll be wanting a fly to Snargatestone Villa, won't you, sir? Now, por—TER!"

I did want that fly, and I had it. I paid the driver liberally, and did not scatter his money over the pavement. Mr. Jakes insisted upon my having something hot in the dining-room the moment I arrived. The weather was so "woundy

cold," he said. I joined the merry party upstairs, and was received by my Tilly with open arms, and by my uncle Bonsor with an open waistcoat. I partook in cheerful moderation of the snapdragon festivities of Christmas-eve. We all dined together on Christmas-day, and I helped the soup and carved a turkey, beautifully; and on the morrow, Boxing-day, was complimented by my uncle's lawyer on my remarkably neat caligraphy, as displayed in the signatures to the necessary legal documents. On the twenty-seventh of December, eighteen forty-six, I was married to my darling Tilly,

and was going to live happy ever afterwards, when

I WOKE AGAIN

—really did wake in bed in this Haunted House—and found that I had been very much shaken on the railway coming down, and that there was no marriage, no Tilly, no Mary Seaton, no Van Plank, no anything but myself and the Ghost of the Ague, and the two inner windows of the Double Room rattling like the ghosts of two departed watchmen who wanted spiritual assistance to carry me to the dead and gone old Watch-house.

THE GHOST IN THE PICTURE ROOM.

BELINDA, with a modest self-possession quite her own, promptly answered for this Spectre in a low, clear voice:

The lights extinguished; by the hearth I leant,
Half weary with a listless discontent.
The flickering giant shadows, gathering near,
Closed round me with a dim and silent fear;
All dull, all dark; save when the leaping flame,
Glancing, lit up The Picture's ancient frame.
Above the hearth it hung. Perhaps the night,
My foolish tremors, or the gleaming light,
Lent Power to that Portrait dark and quaint—
A Portrait such as Rembrandt loved to paint—
The likeness of a Nun. I seemed to trace
A world of sorrow in the patient face,
In the thin hands folded across her breast—
Its own and the room's shadow hid the rest.
I gazed and dreamed, and the dull embers stirred,
Till an old legend that I once had heard
Came back to me; linked to the mystic gloom
Of the dark Picture in the ghostly room.

In the far South, where clustering vines are hung;
Where first the old chivalric lays were sung;
Where earliest smiled that gracious child of France,
Angel and Knight and Fairy, called Romance,
I stood one day. The warm blue June was spread
Upon the earth; blue summer overhead,
Without a cloud to fleck its radiant glare,
Without a breath to stir its sultry air.
All still, all silent, save the sobbing rush
Of rippling waves, that lapsed in silver hush
Upon the beach; where, glittering towards the
strand,
The purple Mediterranean kissed the land.

All still, all peaceful; when a convent chime
Broke on the mid-day silence for a time,
Then trembling into quiet, seemed to cease,
In deeper silence and more utter peace.
So as I turned to gaze, where gleaming white,
Half hid by shadowy trees from passers' sight,
The convent lay, one who had dwelt for long
In that fair home of ancient tale and song,
Who knew the story of each cave and hill,
And every haunting fancy lingering still
Within the land, spake thus to me, and told
The convent's treasured legend, quaint and old:
Long years ago, a dense and flowering wood,
Still more concealed where the white convent stood,
Borne on its perfumed wings the title came:
"Our Lady of the Hawthorns" is its name.
Then did that bell, which still rings out to-day
Bid all the country rise, or eat, or pray.
Before that convent shrine, the haughty knight

Passed the lone vigil of his perilous fight;
For humbler cottage strife, or village brawl,
The abbess listened, prayed, and settled all.
Young hearts that came, weighed down by love or
wrong,
Left her kind presence comforted and strong.
Each passing pilgrim, and each beggar's right
Was food, and rest, and shelter for the night.
But, more than this, the nuns could well impart
The deepest mysteries of the healing art;
Their store of herbs and simples was renowned,
And held in wondering faith for miles around.
Thus strife, love, sorrow, good and evil fate,
Found help and blessing at the convent gate.

Of all the nuns, no heart was half so light,
No eyelids veiling glances half as bright,
No step that glided with such noiseless feet,
No face that looked so tender or so sweet,
No voice that rose in choir so pure, so clear,
No heart to all the others half so dear
(So surely touched by others' pain or woe,
Guessing the grief her young life could not know),
No soul in childlike faith so undefiled,
As Sister Angela's, the "Convent Child."
For thus they loved to call her. She had known
No home, no love, no kindred, save their own—
An orphan, to their tender nursing given,
Child, plaything, pupil, now the bride of Heaven.
And she it was who trimmed the lamp's red light
That swung before the altar, day and night.
Her hands it was, whose patient skill could trace
The finest broidery, weave the costliest lace;
But most of all, her first and dearest care,
The office she would never miss or share,
Was every day to weave fresh garlands sweet,
To place before the shrine at Mary's feet.
Nature is bounteous in that region fair,
For even winter has her blossoms there.
Thus Angela loved to count each feast the best,
By telling with what flowers the shrine was dressed.
In pomp supreme the countless Roses passed,
Battalion on battalion thronging fast,
Each with a different banner, flaming bright,
Damask, or striped, or crimson, pink, or white,
Until they bowed before the new-born queen,
And the pure virgin lily rose serene.
Though Angela always thought the Mother blest,
Must love the time of her own hawthorns best
Each evening through the year, with equal care,
She placed her flowers; then kneeling down in
prayer,