

"Thank you! I'm obliged to you," said the farrier, with a snort of scorn. "If folks are fools, it's no business o' mine, I don't want to make out the truth about ghos'es: I know 'em a'ready. But I'm not against a bet, everything fair and open. Let any man bet me ten pound as I shall see Cliff's Holiday and I'll go and stand by myself. I want no company. I'll believe what the devil's belief do it as I'd fill this pipe."

"Ah, but who's to watch you, Dowlas, and see you do that? That's no fair bet," said the butcher.

"No fair bet?" replied Mr. Dowlas angrily. "I should like to hear any man stand up and say I want to bet unfair. Come now, Master Lundy, I should like to hear you say it."

"Very like you would," said the butcher. "But it's no business o' mine. You're none o' my bargains, and I aren't a-going to try and 'bate your price. If anybody'll bid for you at your own vallying, let him. I'm for peace and quietness, I am."

"Yes, that's what every yapping cur is, when you hold a stick up at him," said the farrier. "But I'm afraid o' neither ghost nor ghost, and I'm ready to lay a fair bet. I aren't a turning cur."

"Ay, but there's this in it, Dowlas," said the landlord, speaking in a tone of much candor and tolerance. "There's folks, in my opinion, they can't see ghos'es, not if they stood as plain as a pikestaff before 'em. And there's reason i' that. For the woman my wife now, can't smell, not if she'd the strongest o' chives under her nose. I never see'd a ghost myself; but then I say it to myself, 'Very like I haven't got the smell for 'em.' I'm not putting a ghost for a smell, or else contrairiways. And so, for holding with both sides; for, as I say, the truth lies between 'em. And if Dowlas was to go and stand, and say he'd never seen a wink o' Cliff's Holiday all the night through, I'd believe him; and if anybody said as Cliff's Holiday was certain sure of all that, I'd back *him* too. For the smell's what I go by."

The landlord's analogical argument was not well received by the farrier, a man intensely opposed to compromise.

"Tut, tut," he said, setting down his glass with refreshed irritation; "what's the smell got to do with it? Did ever a ghost give a man a black eye? That's what I should like to know. I don't want ghos'es want me to believe in 'em, let 'em leave off skulking i' the dark and i' lone places; let 'em come where there's company and candles."

"As if ghos'es 'ud want to be believed in by anybody so ignorant!" said Mr. Macey, in deep disgust at the farrier's crass¹ incompetence to apprehend the conditions of ghostly phenomena.

CHAPTER VII.

YET the next moment there seemed to be some evidence that ghosts had a more condescending disposition than Mr. Macey attributed to them; for the pale, thin figure of Silas Marner was suddenly seen standing in the warm light, uttering a word, but looking round at the company with his strange unearthly eyes. The long pipes gave a simultaneous movement, like the antennæ of startled insects, and every man present, not excepting even the skeptical farrier, had an impression that he saw, not Silas Marner in the flesh, but an apparition; for the manner by which Silas had entered was hidden by the high-screened wainscots, and no one had noticed his approach. Mr. Macey, sitting so long way off the ghost, might be supposed to have felt an egotistical triumph, which would tend to neutralize his share in the general alarm. Had he not always said that when Silas Marner was in that strange trance of his, his soul went loose from his body? Here was the demonstration; nevertheless, on the whole, he would have been as well contented without it. For a few moments there was a dead silence, Marner's want of breath and agitation not allowing him to speak. The landlord, under the habitual sense that he was bound to keep his house

¹ Gross.

open to all company, and confident in the protection of his broken neutrality, at last took on himself the task of adjuring the ghost.

"Master Marner," he said in a conciliatory tone, "what's lacking to you? What's your business here?"

"Robbed!" said Silas gaspingly. "I've been robbed! I was with the constable—and the Justice—and Squire Cass—and the Crackenthorp."

"Lay hold on him, Jem Rodney," said the landlord, the ghost subsiding; "he's off his head, I doubt. He's been through."

Jem Rodney was the outermost man, and sat conveniently near Marner's standing place; but he declined to give his services.

"Come and lay hold on him yourself, Mr. Snell, if you've got the mind," said Jem rather sullenly. "He's been robbed, and I'm ordered too, for what I know," he added in a muttering tone.

"Jem Rodney!" said Silas, turning and fixing his strange eyes on the suspected man.

"Ay, Master Marner, what do ye want wi' me?" said Jem, trembling a little, and seizing his drinking can as a defensive weapon.

"If it was you stole my money," said Silas, clasping his hands entreatingly, and raising his voice to a cry, "give it me back, and I won't meddle with you. I won't set the constable on you. Give it me back, and I'll let you—I'll let you have a guinea."

"Me stole your money!" said Jem angrily. "I'll pitch your can at your eye if you talk o' my stealing your money."

"Come, come, Master Marner," said the landlord, now rising resolutely, and seizing Marner by the shoulder, "if you've got any information to lay, speak it out sensible, and show as you're in your right mind, if you expect anybody to listen to you. You're as wet as a drowned rat. Sit down and dry yourself, and speak straight forrard." *✓ 6-6-67*

"Ah, to be sure, man," said the farrier, who began to feel that he had not been quite on a par with himself and the occasion.

Let's have no more staring and screaming, else we'll have you trapped for a madman. That was why I didn't speak at the first; thinks I, the man's run mad."

"Ay, ay, make him sit down," said several voices at once, well pleased that the reality of ghosts remained still an open question.

The landlord forced Marner to take off his coat, and then to sit down on a chair aloof from every one else, in the center of the circle, and in the direct rays of the fire. The weaver, too feeble to have any distinct purpose beyond that of getting help to recover his money, submitted unresistingly. The transient fears of the company were now forgotten in their strong curiosity, and all faces were turned towards Silas, when the landlord, having seated himself again, said:

"Now then, Master Marner, what's this you've got to say, as you've been robbed? Speak out."

"He'd better not say again as it was me robbed him," cried Jem Rodney hastily. "What could I ha' done with his money? He could as easy steal the parson's surplice, and wear it."

"Hold your tongue, Jem, and let's hear what he's got to say," said the landlord. "Now then, Master Marner."

Silas now told his story under frequent questioning, as the mysterious character of the robbery became evident.

This strangely novel situation of opening his trouble to his wretched neighbors, of sitting in the warmth of a hearth not his own, and feeling the presence of faces and voices which were his nearest promise of help, had doubtless its influence on Marner, in spite of his passionate preoccupation with his loss. Our consciousness rarely registers the beginning of a growth within us any more than without us; there have been many circulations of the sap before we detect the smallest sign of the bud.

The slight suspicion with which his hearers at first listened to him gradually melted away before the convincing simplicity of his distress. It was impossible for the neighbors to doubt that Marner was telling the truth, not because they were capable of judging at once from the nature of his statements to the ab-

sence of any motive for making them falsely, but because "Ay, ay, they're gone where it's hot enough to melt 'em, I Mr. Macey observed, "Folks as had the devil to back 'em wubt," said Mr. Macey.

not likely to be so mushed" as poor Silas was. Rather, from "Tchuh!" said the farrier. And then he asked, with a cross-strange fact that the robber had left no traces, and had happened in the air, "How much money might there be in the bags, to know the nick of time, utterly incalculable by mortal ageaster Marner?"

when Silas would go away from home without locking his door "Two hundred and seventy-two pounds, twelve and sixpence, the more probable conclusion seemed to be that his disreputat night when I counted it," said Silas, seating himself again, intimacy in that quarter, if it ever existed, had been broken th a groan.

and that, in consequence, this ill turn had been done to Mar "Pooh! why, they'd be none so heavy to carry. Some tramp's by somebody it was quite in vain to set the constable after. Wen in, that's all; and as for the no footmarks, and the bricks this preternatural felon should be obliged to wait till the dd the sand being all right—why, your eyes are pretty much was left unlocked, was a question which did not present itself a insect's, Master Marner; they're obliged to look so close,

"It isn't Jem Rodney as has done this work, Master Marner can't see much at a time. It's my opinion as, if I'd been said the landlord. "You mustn't be a-casting your eye at pu, or you'd been me—for it comes to the same thing—you Jem. There may be a bit of a reckoning against Jem for ouldn't have thought you'd found everything as you left it. matter of a hare or so, if anybody was bound to keep their et what I vote is, as two of the sensiblest o' the company staring open, and niver to wink, but Jem's been a-sitting hould go with you to Master Kench, the constable's—he's ill i' drinking his can, like the decentest man i' the parish, since betd, I know that much—and get him to appoint one of us his you left your house, Master Marner, by your own account." ppity; for that's the law, and I don't think anybody 'ull take

"Ay, ay," said Mr. Macey; "let's have no accusing o' theon him to contradick me there. It isn't much of a walk to nicent. That isn't the law. There must be folks to swear agench's; and then if it's me as is deppity, I'll go back with you, a man before he can be ta'en up. Let's have no accusing o' aster Marner, and examine your primises; and if anybody's innicent, Master Marner."

Memory was not so utterly torpid in Silas that it could noy it out like a man." at any fault to find with that, I'll thank him to stand up and

wakened by these words. With a movement of compunctionBy this pregnant speech the farrier had reëstablished his self-new and strange to him as everything else within the last hourmplacency, and waited with confidence to hear himself named started from his chair and went close up to Jem, looking at lone of the superlatively sensible men.

as if he wanted to assure himself of the expression in his face "Let us see how the night is, though," said the landlord, who

"I was wrong," he said, "yes, yes—I ought to have thougo considered himself personally concerned in this proposition.

There's nothing to witness against you, Jem. Only you'd bWhy, it rains heavy still," he said, returning from the door.

into my house oftener than anybody else, and so you came i "Well, I'm not the man to be afraid o' the rain," said the far-my head. I don't accuse you—I won't accuse anybody.—onr. "For it'll look bad when Justice Malam hears as respecta-he added, lifting up his hands to his head, and turning away ve men like us had a information laid before 'em and took no bewildered misery, "I try—I try to think where my money eps."

be." The landlord agreed with this view, and after taking the sense

when questioned closely as to their grounds for this opinion, what Master Marner had to gain by such false pretenses, only shook their heads as before, and observed that there was knowing what some folks counted gain; moreover, that everybody had a right to their own opinions, grounds or no grounds and that the weaver, as everybody knew, was partly crazy. Macey, though he joined in the defense of Marner against suspicions of deceit, also pooh-poohed¹ the tinder box; indeed repudiated it as a rather impious suggestion, tending to impute that everything must be done by human hands, and that there was no power which could make away with the guineas without moving the bricks. Nevertheless, he turned round rather sharply

on Mr. Tookey when the zealous deputy, feeling that this a view of the case peculiarly suited to a parish clerk, carried still farther, and doubted whether it was right to inquire into robbery at all when the circumstances were so mysterious.

"As if," concluded Mr. Tookey, "as if there was nothing what could be made out by justices and constables."

"Now, don't you be for overshooting the mark, Tookey," Mr. Macey, nodding his head aside admonishingly. "The what you're allays at; if I throw a stone and hit, you think summat better than hitting, and you try to throw a stone beyose, mayhap, saw 'em in his ears, though I can't take upon me What I said was against the tinder box; I said nothing

justices and constables, for they're o' King George's making, it 'ud be ill becoming a man in a parish office to fly out agamember the peddler's earrings; for, on the spread of inquiry King George."

While these discussions were going on amongst the outside the Rainbow, a higher consultation was being on within, under the presidency of Mr. Crackenthorp, the had just occurred to Mr. Snell, the landlord—he being, a self had had the honorable distinction of finding, certain rec-

¹ Ridiculed.

tions of a peddler who had called to drink at the house about month before, and had actually stated that he carried a tinder only shook their heads as before, and observed that there was x about with him to light his pipe. Here, surely, was a clew to be followed out. And as memory, when duly impregnated with ascertained facts, is sometimes surprisingly fertile, Mr. Snell gradually recovered a vivid impression of the effect produced on Macey, though he joined in the defense of Marner against the peddler's countenance and conversation. He had a look with his eye" which fell unpleasantly on Mr. Snell's sensitive organism. To be sure, he didn't say anything particular—that except that about the tinder box—but it isn't what a man says, it's the way he says it. Moreover, he had a swarthy formingness of complexion, which boded little honesty.

"Did he wear earrings?" Mr. Crackenthorp wished to know, having some acquaintance with foreign customs.

"Well—stay—let me see," said Mr. Snell, like a docile clairvoyante,¹ who would really not make a mistake if she could help

After stretching the corners of his mouth and contracting his eyes, as if he were trying to see the earrings, he appeared to

He've up the effort, and said, "Well, he'd got earrings in his box sell, so it's nat'ral to suppose he might wear 'em. But he thelled at every house, a'most, in the village; there's somebody beyose, mayhap, saw 'em in his ears, though I can't take upon me

Mr. Snell was correct in his surmise that somebody else would remember the peddler's earrings; for, on the spread of inquiry among the villagers, it was stated with gathering emphasis, that

the peddler wore earrings in his ears, and an impression was created that a great deal depended on the eliciting of this fact. Of course, every one who heard the question, not having any distinct image of the peddler without earrings, immediately had an image of him with ear-rings, larger or smaller, as the case might be; and the image was connected with the tinder box, which, as deputy constable, he had

¹ The feminine form of "clairvoyant," one who has the power of second sight, or of discerning objects not visible to the senses.

presently taken for a vivid recollection, so that the glazier's a well-intentioned woman, not given to lying, and whose was among the cleanest in the village, was ready to do as sure as ever she meant to take the sacrament the very Christmas that was ever coming, that she had seen big ears in the shape of the young moon, in the peddler's two ears; Jinny Oates, the cobbler's daughter, being a more imaginative person, stated not only that she had seen them too, but that had made her blood creep, as it did at that very moment there she stood.

Also, by way of throwing further light on this clew of the tinder box, a collection was made of all the articles purchased from the peddler at various houses, and carried to the Rainbow to be exhibited there. In fact, there was a general feeling in the village that for the clearing up of this robbery there must be a great deal done at the Rainbow, and that no man need offer his wife an excuse for going there while it was the scene of so many public duties.

Some disappointment was felt, and perhaps a little indignation also, when it became known that Silas Marner, on being mentioned by the Squire and the parson, had retained no other recollection of the peddler than that he had called at his door, and had not entered his house, having turned away at once. Silas, holding the door ajar, had said that he wanted nothing. This had been Silas's testimony, though he clutched strongly at the idea of the peddler's being the culprit, if only because he gave him a definite image of a whereabouts for his gold, after it had been taken away from its hiding place; he could see it in the peddler's box. But it was observed with some irritation in the village, that anybody but a "blind creature" like Marner would have seen the man prowling about, for how came he to leave his tinder box in the ditch close by if he hadn't been lingering there? Doubtless he had made his observations when he saw Marner at the door. Anybody might know—and he might look at him—that the weaver was a half crazy miser. It was

under the peddler hadn't murdered him; men of that sort, with big ears in their ears, had been known for murderers often and often; there had been one tried at the Assizes,¹ not so long ago, and what there were people living who remembered it.

Godfrey Cass, indeed, entering the Rainbow during one of Mr. Snell's frequently repeated recitals of his testimony, had related it lightly, stating that he himself had bought a penknife from the peddler, and thought him a merry, grinning fellow enough; but when he was all nonsense, he said, about the man's evil looks. But this was spoken of in the village as the random talk of youth, "as if there was only Mr. Snell who had seen something odd about the peddler!" On the contrary, there were at least half a dozen who were ready to go before Justice Malam, and give in much more striking testimony than any the landlord could furnish. It was to be hoped Mr. Godfrey would not go to Tarley and throw cold water on what Mr. Snell said there, and so prevent the Justice from drawing up a warrant. He was suspected of intending this, when, after midday, he was seen setting off on horseback in the direction of Tarley.

But by this time Godfrey's interest in the robbery had faded before his growing anxiety about Dunstan and Wildfire, and he was going, not to Tarley, but to Batherley, unable to rest in uncertainty about them any longer. The possibility that Dunstan had played him the ugly trick of riding away with Wildfire, to return at the end of a month, when he had gambled away or otherwise squandered the price of the horse, was a fear that weighed itself upon him more, even, than the thought of an accidental injury; and now that the dance at Mrs. Osgood's was over, he was irritated with himself that he had trusted his horse to Dunstan. Instead of trying to still his fears, he encouraged them, with that superstitious impression which clings to us all, that if we expect evil very strongly it is the less likely to come; and when he heard a horse approaching at a trot, and saw a hat glancing above a hedge beyond an angle of the lane, he felt as if

¹ Assizes; the county court.

his conjuration had succeeded. But no sooner did the horse come within sight, than his heart sank again. It was not Will fire; and in a few moments more he discerned that the rider was not Dunstan, but Bryce, who pulled up to speak, with a face that implied something disagreeable.

"Well, Mr. Godfrey, that's a lucky brother of yours, the Master Dunsey, isn't he?"

"What do you mean?" said Godfrey hastily.

"Why, hasn't he been home yet?" said Bryce.

"Home? No. What has happened? Be quick. What has been done with my horse?"

"Ah, I thought it was yours, though he pretended you had parted with it to him."

"Has he thrown him down and broken his knees?" said Godfrey, flushed with exasperation.

"Worse than that," said Bryce. "You see I'd made a bargain with him to buy the horse for a hundred and twenty, — a swinging price, but I always liked the horse. And what does he do but go and stake him; fly at a hedge with stakes in it, atop of a bank with a ditch before it. The horse had been dead a pretty good while when he was found. So he hasn't been home since, has he?"

"Home? No," said Godfrey, "and he'd better keep away. Confound me for a fool! I might have known this would be the end of it."

"Well, to tell you the truth," said Bryce, "after I'd bargained for the horse, it did come into my head that he might be riding and selling the horse without your knowledge, for I didn't believe it was his own. I knew Master Dunsey was up to his tricks sometimes. But where can he be gone? He's never been seen at Batherley. He couldn't have been hurt, for he must have walked off."

"Hurt?" said Godfrey bitterly. "He'll never be hurt; he's made to hurt other people."

"And so you *did* give him leave to sell the horse, eh?" said Bryce.

"Yes; I wanted to part with the horse—he was always a little too hard in the mouth for me," said Godfrey, his pride making him wince under the idea that Bryce guessed the sale to be a matter of necessity. "I was going to see after him; I thought some mischief had happened. I'll go back now," he added, turning the horse's head, and wishing he could get rid of Bryce, for he felt that the long-dreaded crisis in his life was close upon him. "You're coming on to Raveloe, aren't you?"

"Well, no, not now," said Bryce. "I *was* coming round there, for I had to go to Flitton, and I thought I might as well take you in my way, and just let you know all I knew myself about the horse. I suppose Master Dunsey didn't like to show himself till the ill news had blown over a bit. He's perhaps gone to pay a visit at the Three Crowns, by Whitbridge; I know he's fond of the house."

"Perhaps he is," said Godfrey rather absently. Then rousing himself, he said, with an effort at carelessness, "We shall hear of him soon enough, I'll be bound."

"Well, here's my turning," said Bryce, not surprised to perceive that Godfrey was rather "down;" "so I'll bid you good day, and wish I may bring you better news another time."

Godfrey rode along slowly, representing to himself the scene of confession to his father from which he felt that there was now no longer any escape. The revelation about the money must be made the very next morning; and if he withheld the rest, Dunstan would be sure to come back shortly, and, finding that he must bear the brunt of his father's anger, would tell the whole story out of spite, even though he had nothing to gain by it. There was one step, perhaps, by which he might still win Dunstan's silence and put off the evil day: he might tell his father that he had himself spent the money paid to him by Fowler; and as he had never been guilty of such an offense before, the affair would blow over after a little storming. But Godfrey could not bend himself to this. He felt that in letting Dunstan have the money he had already been guilty of a breach of trust hardly less culpa-

ble than that of spending the money directly for his own beho- and yet there was a distinction between the two acts which him feel that the one was so much more blackening than other as to be intolerable to him.

"I don't pretend to be a good fellow," he said to himself "but I'm not a scoundrel—at least, I'll stop short somewhere. I'll bear the consequences of what I *have* done, sooner than make believe I've done what I never would have done. I never have spent the money for my own pleasure; I was tured into it."

Through the remainder of this day Godfrey, with only sional fluctuations, kept his will bent in the direction of a plete avowal to his father, and he withheld the story of Wildfloss till the next morning, that it might serve him as an introduction to heavier matter. The old Squire was accustomed to son's frequent absence from home, and thought neither Dunstan nor Wildfire's nonappearance a matter calling for remark. Godfrey said to himself again and again that if he let slip this opportunity of confession, he might never have another; the argument might be made even in a more odious way than by Dunstan's malignity: *she* might come as she had threatened to do. And then he tried to make the scene easier to himself by rehearsing of his weakness in letting Dunstan have the money to the fact that Dunstan had a hold on him which he had been unable to shake off, and how he would work up his father to expect something very bad before he told him the fact. The old Squire was an implacable man; he made resolutions in violent anger, but was not to be moved from them after his anger had subsided, as fiery volcanic matters cool and harden into rock. Like most violent and implacable men, he allowed evils to grow under his eye of his own heedlessness till they pressed upon him with overpowering force, and then he turned round with fierce severity and became unrelentingly hard. This was his system with his dependants; he allowed them to get into arrears, neglect their fence-

reduce their stock, sell their straw, and otherwise go the wrong way,—and then, when he became short of money in consequence of this indulgence, he took the hardest measures and would listen to no appeal. Godfrey knew all this, and felt it with the greater force because he had constantly suffered annoyance from witnessing his father's sudden fits of unrelentingness, for which his own habitual irresolution deprived him of all sympathy. (He was not critical on the faulty indulgence which preceded these fits; *that* seemed to him natural enough.) Still there was just the chance, Godfrey thought, that his father's pride might see this marriage in a light that would induce him to hush it up, rather than turn his son out and make the family the talk of the country for ten miles round. This was the view of the case that Godfrey managed to keep before him pretty closely till midnight, and he went to sleep thinking that he had done with inward debating. But when he awoke in the still morning darkness he found it impossible to re-awaken his evening thoughts; it was as if they had been tired out and were not to be roused to further work. Instead of argument for confession, he could now feel the presence of nothing but its evil consequences. The old dread of disgrace came back; the old shrinking from the thought of raising a hopeless barrier between himself and Nancy; the old disposition to rely on the chances which might be favorable to him, and save him from betrayal. Why, after all, should he cut off the hope of them by his own act? He had seen the matter in a wrong light yesterday. He had been in a rage with Dunstan, and had thought of nothing but a thorough break-up of their mutual understanding; but what it would be really wisest for him to do was to try and soften his father's anger against Dunsey, and keep things as near as possible in their old condition. If Dunsey did not come back for a few days (and Godfrey did not know but that the scascal had enough money in his pocket to enable him to keep away still longer) everything might blow over.

CHAPTER IX.

GODFREY rose and took his own breakfast earlier than usual, but lingered in the wainscoted parlor till his young brothers had finished their meal and gone out, awaiting their father, who always went out and had a walk with his managing man before breakfast. Every one breakfasted at a different hour in the Red House, and the Squire was always the latest, giving a long chance to a rather feeble morning appetite before he tried it. The table had been spread with substantial eatables nearly two hours before he presented himself,—a tall, stout man, sixty, with a face in which the knit brow and rather hard glance seemed contradicted by the slack and feeble mouth. His person showed marks of habitual neglect, his dress was slovenly; and yet there was something in the presence of the old Squire distinguishable from that of the ordinary farmers in the parish, who were perhaps every whit as refined as he, but, having slouched their way through life with a consciousness of being in the vicinity of their "betters," wanted that self-possession and authoritative voice and carriage which belonged to a man who thought of superiors as remote existences, with whom he had personally little more to do than with America or the stars. The Squire had been used to parish homage all his life, used to the presupposition that his family, his tankards, and everything that was his, were the oldest and best; and as he never associated with any gentry higher than himself, his opinion was not disturbed by comparison.

He glanced at his son as he entered the room, and said, "What, sir! haven't *you* had your breakfast yet?" but there was no pleasant morning greeting between them; not because of an unfriendliness, but because the sweet flower of courtesy is not the growth of such homes as the Red House.

"Yes, sir," said Godfrey, "I've had my breakfast, but I was waiting to speak to you."

"Ah! well," said the Squire, throwing himself indifferently into his chair, and speaking in a ponderous, coughing fashion, which was felt in Raveloe to be a sort of privilege of his rank, while he cut a piece of beef, and held it up before the deerhound that had come in with him. "Ring the bell for my ale, will you? You youngsters' business is your own pleasure, mostly. There's no hurry about it for anybody but yourselves."

The Squire's life was quite as idle as his sons', but it was a fiction kept up by himself and his contemporaries in Raveloe that youth was exclusively the period of folly, and that their aged wisdom was constantly in a state of endurance mitigated by sarcasm. Godfrey waited, before he spoke again, until the ale had been brought and the door closed,—an interval during which Fleet, the deerhound, had consumed enough bits of beef to make a poor man's holiday dinner.

"There's been a cursed piece of ill luck with Wildfire," he began; "happened the day before yesterday."

"What! broke his knees?" said the Squire, after taking a draught of ale. "I thought you knew how to ride better than that, sir. I never threw a horse down in my life. If I had, I might ha' whistled for another, for *my* father wasn't quite so ready to unstring as some other fathers I know of. But they must turn over a new leaf, *they* must. What with mortgages and arrears, I'm as short o' cash as a roadside pauper. And that fool Kimble says the newspaper's talking about peace. Why, the country wouldn't have a leg to stand on. Prices 'ud run down like a jack, and I should never get my arrears, not if I sold all the fellows up.¹ And there's that damned Fowler, I won't put up with him any longer; I've told Winthrop to go to Cox this very day. The lying scoundrel told me he'd be sure to pay me a hundred last month. He takes advantage because he's on that outlying farm, and thinks I shall forget him."

The Squire had delivered this speech in a coughing and interrupted manner, but with no pause long enough for Godfrey to

¹ Out.

make it a pretext for taking up the word again. He felt that his father meant to ward off any request for money on the ground of the misfortune with Wildfire, and that the emphasis he had thus been led to lay on his shortness of cash and his arrears was likely to produce an attitude of mind the most unfavorable to his own disclosure. But he must go on, now he had begun.

"It's worse than breaking the horse's knees—he's been staked and killed," he said, as soon as his father was silent, and he began to cut his meat. "But I wasn't thinking of asking you to buy me another horse; I was only thinking I'd lost the means of paying you with the price of Wildfire, as I'd meant to do. Dunsey took him to the hunt to sell him for me the other day, and after he'd made a bargain for a hundred and twenty with Bryce, he went after the hounds, and took some fool's leap for other that did for the horse at once. If it hadn't been for that I should have paid you a hundred pounds this morning."

The Squire had laid down his knife and fork, and was staring at his son in amazement, not being sufficiently quick of brain to form a probable guess as to what could have caused so strange an inversion of the paternal and filial relations as this proposition of his son to pay him a hundred pounds.

"The truth is, sir—I'm very sorry—I was quite to blame," said Godfrey. "Fowler did pay that hundred pounds. I paid it to me when I was over there one day last month; and Dunsey bothered me for the money, and I let him have it, because I hoped I should be able to pay it you before this."

The Squire was purple with anger before his son had done speaking, and found utterance difficult. "You let Dunsey have it, sir? And how long have you been so thick with Dunsey that you must *collogue*¹ with him to embezzle my money? Are you turning out a scamp? I tell you I won't have it. I'll turn the whole pack of you out of the house together, and marry again. I'd have you to remember, sir, my property's got no entail²

¹ Plot mischief.

² An estate was said to have an entail on it when it was held on condition

; since my grandfather's time the Casses can do as they like with their land. Remember that, sir. Let Dunsey have the money! Why should you let Dunsey have the money? There's some lie at the bottom of it."

"There's no lie, sir," said Godfrey. "I wouldn't have spent the money myself, but Dunsey bothered me, and I was a fool, and let him have it. But I meant to pay it, whether he did or not. That's the whole story. I never meant to embezzle money, and I'm not the man to do it. You never knew me do a dishonest trick, sir."

"Where's Dunsey, then? What do you stand talking there for? Go and fetch Dunsey, as I tell you, and let him give account of what he wanted the money for, and what he's done with it. He shall repent it. I'll turn him out. I said I would, and I'll do it. He sha'n't brave me. Go and fetch him."

"Dunsey isn't come back, sir."

"What! did he break his own neck, then?" said the Squire, with some disgust at the idea that, in that case, he could not fulfill his threat.

"No, he wasn't hurt, I believe, for the horse was found dead, and Dunsey must have walked off. I dare say we shall see him again by and by. I don't know where he is."

"And what must you be letting him have my money for? Answer me that," said the Squire, attacking Godfrey again, since Dunsey was not within reach.

"Well, sir, I don't know," said Godfrey hesitatingly. That was a feeble evasion, but Godfrey was not fond of lying, and, not being sufficiently aware that no sort of duplicity can long flourish without the help of vocal falsehoods, he was quite unprepared with invented motives.

"You don't know? I tell you what it is, sir. You've been up to some trick, and you've been bribing him not to tell," said the Squire, with a sudden acuteness which startled Godfrey, who had not been aware of the fact which prevented its owner from disposing of it either by sale or by bequest. He was obliged to go to the legal heir, usually the eldest son.

felt his heart beat violently at the nearness of his father's gumeter's daughter as anybody. I suppose if I'd said you nay The sudden alarm pushed him on to take the next step; a you'd ha' kept on with it; but, for want o' contradiction, you've slight impulse suffices for that on a downward road. changed your mind. You're a shilly-shally¹ fellow; you take

"Why, sir," he said, trying to speak with careless ease, "it after your poor mother. She never had a will of her own; a a little affair between me and Dunsey; it's no matter to any woman has no call for one, if she's got a proper man for a hus- else. It's hardly worth while to pry into young men's foolerband. But *your* wife had need have one, for you hardly know It wouldn't have made any difference to you, sir, if I'd not by your own mind enough to make both your legs walk one way. the bad luck to lose Wildfire. I should have paid you The lass hasn't said downright she won't have you, has she?" money."

"Fooleries! Pshaw! it's time you'd done with fooleries. A don't think she will." I'd have you know, sir, you *must* ha' done with 'em," said "Think! why haven't you the courage to ask her? Do you Squire, frowning and casting an angry glance at his son. "Ytick to it, you want to have *her*—that's the thing?" goings-on are not what I shall find money for any long "There's no other woman I want to marry," said Godfrey There's my grandfather had his stables full o' horses, and keptvasively. good house, too, and in worse times, by what I can make o' "Well, then, let me make the offer for you, that's all, if you and so might I, if I hadn't four good for nothing fellows to haaven't the pluck to do it yourself. Lammeter isn't likely to be on me like horse-leeches. I've been too good a father to path for his daughter to marry into *my* family, I should think. all, that's what it is. But I shall pull up, sir." And as for the pretty lass, she wouldn't have her cousin; and

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"It'll be all the worse for you, you know; you'd need try marryng."

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¹ Hesitating. A corruption of "Will I, shall I?"

"I shall do what I choose," said the Squire, "and I shall you know I'm master; else you may turn out, and find an estate to drop into somewhere else. Go out and tell Winthrop not to go to Cox's, but wait for me. And tell 'em to get my horse saddled. And stop: look out and get that hack o' Dunsey's so and hand me the money, will you? He'll keep no more hack at my expense. And if you know where he's sneaking—I do say you do—you may tell him to spare himself the journey coming back home. Let him turn ostler, and keep himself. He sha'n't hang on me any more."

"I don't know where he is, sir; and if I did, it isn't my place to tell him to keep away," said Godfrey, moving towards the door.

"Confound it, sir, don't stay arguing, but go and order my horse," said the Squire, taking up a pipe.

Godfrey left the room, hardly knowing whether he were more relieved by the sense that the interview was ended without having made any change in his position, or more uneasy that he had entangled himself still further in prevarication and deceit. What he had passed about his proposing to Nancy had raised a new alarm, lest by some after-dinner words of his father's to Mr. Lammeter he should be thrown into the embarrassment of being obliged absolutely to decline her when she seemed to be within his reach. He fled to his usual refuge,—that of hoping for some unforeseen turn of fortune, some favorable chance which would save him from unpleasant consequences, perhaps even justify his insincerity by manifesting its prudence; and in this point trusting to some throw of Fortune's dice, Godfrey can hardly be called specially old-fashioned. Favorable Chance, I fancy, is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in. Let even a polished man of these days get into a position he is ashamed to avow, and his mind will be bent on all the possible issues that may deliver him from the calculable results of that position. Let him live outside his means, or shirk the resolute, honest work that brings wages, and

he will presently find himself dreaming of a possible benefactor, a possible simpleton who may be cajoled into using his interest, a possible state of mind in some possible person not yet forthcoming. Let him neglect the responsibilities of his office, and he will inevitably anchor himself on the chance that the thing left undone may turn out not to be of the supposed importance. Let him betray his friend's confidence, and he will adore that same cunning complexity called Chance, which gives him the hope that his friend will never know. Let him forsake a decent craft that he may pursue the gentilities of a profession to which nature never called him, and his religion will intallibly be the worship of blessed Chance, which he will believe in as the mighty creator of success. The evil principle deprecated in that religion is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind.

CHAPTER X.

JUSTICE MALAM was naturally regarded in Tarley and Raveloe as a man of capacious mind, seeing that he could draw much wider conclusions without evidence than could be expected of his neighbors who were not on the Commission of the Peace. Such a man was not likely to neglect the clew of the tinder box, and an inquiry was set on foot concerning a peddler, name unknown, with curly black hair and a foreign complexion, carrying a box of cutlery and jewelry, and wearing large rings in his ears. But either because inquiry was too slow footed to overtake him, or because the description applied to so many peddlers that inquiry did not know how to choose among them, weeks passed away, and there was no other result concerning the robbery than a gradual cessation of the excitement it had caused in Raveloe. Dunstan Cass's absence was hardly a subject of remark. He had once before had a quarrel with his father, and had gone off nobody knew whither, to return at the end of six