POETRY.

PLAYING TEA.

In a quaint and dim old attic,
Fragrant with queer, withered herbs,
Joyous with the swift, wild-winged
And the songs of mating birds—
In a quaint and roomy attic.
Laughing in their merry glee,
Kate and Elsie sit together,
Sit together, playing tea.

Elsie spreads the oaken table,
('Tis the bottom of a chair.)
While Miss Kate with nimle fingers
Brushes dolly's curly hair.
And puts by the worn-out garments
For some others, fresh and new;
Smiling all the while she chatters,
And keeps Elsie chattering too.

But such bread is on their table!
"And such cake! so sweet and light,"
Katie says, a queer smile wrinkling
Up her forehead white.
"What preserves! and oh! what butter!
May I ask its price per pound?"
"Forty-five," the voice of Elsie
Ripples with a joyous sound.

"Forty-five I paid for this, Kate,
Last week's tasted rough and and old,
(Shut the window, please, dear Bridget,
Baby has a horrid cold.)
How's your children, Mrs. Loveless?
Well and happy? that is good;
But I thought Frank had the measles,
So at least I understood.

"Are you going, Mrs. Loveless?
You must come again some day;
You will surely soon forget me,
If you stay so long away.
Now play you were hostess, Katie,
And I'll come and stay to tea;
I will now be Mrs. Loveless,
And you, Katie, shall be me."

Years have passed; within a cottage
Kate and Elsie calmly sit,
Each with one foot on a cradle,
As a baby's sock they knit.
And I smile as a quaint vision
Of an attic flits o'er me,
And I see these two young mothers
Once more children, "playing tea."

SELECT STORY.

AN UNBROKEN PROMISE.

—OR—

A CASTAWAY.

PART III.

CONTINUED.

CHAPTFR IX.

QUO PATA DUCUNT.

Yes, that was how it must be managed; the game of respectability was played out, the news of the forgery and of his intended bigamy would be promulgated at once, and there was nothing left for him but flight. He would have time enough after his arrival in town to get together his most valuable articles of property, and to start by an early train or boat to such destination as he might fix upon without his flying visit to London being heard of, and while his servants and people at the office would imagine that he was still absent on a business tour, on which he was known to have started. He would not see Delabole, he would not see anyone; the cause of his flight would soon be perfectly apparent, and his enemies might then do their worst. He had sufficient money to take him to a place of safety, and then he would work the oracle with Mrs Bendixen. Properly managed, his fate would not be such a hard one after all. But what a difference one week, even a few days might have made! Had Asprey's calculations been fulfilled; had Sir Geoffry died at the time the doctor predicted, the forgery would not have been discovered; Madge could have been brought to terms; and as Mrs. Bendixen's husband, he, Philip Vane, would have had wealth and position, which were to him the only two things worth living for! As that bitterest thought of all, "what might have been" crossed Philip Vane's mind he stamped his foot with rage, thereby awaking the commercial gentleman, who struggling into a sitting posture, and wiping the steam from the carriage window, muttered, "London at last!" and proceeded to pick up his newspaper and get his travelling rugs together.

London! Now Philip Vane must have his wits about him, and be ready to carry into execution all that he has determined on. The porter who bustles about to get him a cab, eyes him, as he fancies, suspiciously, and he bids the cabman set him down somewhat short of his own house, in order that the address may not be remembered. It is comparatively early, not yet eleven o'clock, and being a bright night the streets are filled with people returning from the more sober entertainments, or the votaries of Saint Monday, who have been keeping their accustomed holiday. When these latter gathered together in little chattering knots, as they do at almost every street corner where there is a public house, Philip Vane looks out of the cab window at them, wondering what they are talking about; whether perchance the news of the assault had already reached town, and whether he might be the subject of their conversation. Some of the small shops, at once newsvendors and tobacconists, which are still open, have the placard bill of the contents of the evening papers exhibited at their doors, and Philip scans these eagerly, but finds in them no cause for fear. As he hears his home in the more aristocratic part of the town, he leaves all the noise and bustle behind him, and when the cab stopped as directed at the corner of the street, there was no one within sight. Philip alighted, and taking his rugs in his hand hurried to the Albany. He thought it would be useless to attempt to shirk the inspection of the gate-porter, but to his delight that functionary had temporarily yielded up his post to a deputy, who unexcited by the novelty of his position, had dropped off to sleep, so that Philip passed by him and gained his chambers unobserved. As he opened the door with his latch key, he recollected that he had given his servant a holiday, and he knew that he was not likely to come across anyone else, for the men holding chambers at the same block were all out of town, and their housekeepers were only visible in the early morning.

Now then to work. In the outer hall were two or three trunks piled on each other. He selected the largest of these, and dragged it into the middle of the sitting-room; then he paused, undecided as to how he should commence his work of selection. The rooms had been furnished by a leading upholsterer, who had been told to spare no expense, and as is usual with such people, had rendered them very handsome and eminently uninhabitable; wood of the finest grain, velvet of the softest texture, gilding of the brightest sheen were there in abundance, but could not be taken away. They had cost much money and must be left behind. At one time he had a notion of dismantling the shelves of the clocks, and the china ornaments, and the valuable nicknacks which were strewn about them; but on second thought he determined to leave them, fearing they would be missed by his servant on his return, and thus suspicion would be excited. Finally he dragged the large trunk back into the hall, and fetching the portmanteau which he ordinarily used, commenced filling it with wearing apparel, carefully packing, too, his splendid dressing-case with silver-gilt fittings, and a quantity of plate which he took from an iron safe in his bedroom.

He had opened the door of this safe, and was looking through a number of documents, bills and other securities with the intention of seeing which could be made available in his flight, when he heard a sudden knock at the door. Not an ordinary knocking— quick, hurried, but studiously low, as though the person knocking were fearful of attracting other observation than that person whose attention he was endeavoring to catch.

Philip paused in his task and listened; his heart beat so loudly that at first he could not hear anything else, and after the knocking had ceased, but a minute afterwards he heard it distinctly. He filled a wine-glass from a decanter of brandy on the sideboard and swallowed its contents, then he crossed the hall and paused at the outside door.

"Who's there?" he asked, in a low tone.

"I," replied the well-known voice of Delabole, pitched in the same key. "I; let me in at once—most important!"

Vane opened the door, and Delabole entered. He knew the way, he had been there often before, and with his host following him, he rapidly crossed the little hall and passed into the sitting room. When he saw the half-filled portmanteau and the room littered with clothes and papers, he started back and turned quickly round.

"Halloa!" he said, "so soon? I came to warn you, but you seem to have heard of it already."

"Heard of what?" said Vane, looking bluntly at him.

Delabole's face was pale; there was a strained, worn look round his eyes, his usual gorgeous shirt front was crumpled, and his ring-covered little hands were very dirty; but it was with something of his old jaunty manner that he said, "Won't do, my dear Philip—things are too serious just now for us too indulge in such gaff. You must have heard the news, or you would not be packing up to cut and run in this way."

"I have this moment returned to town, and I tell you I have heard no news whatever."

"Well, then, not to keep you in suspense any further, the short and long of the matter is this: Late this evening, after business hours, I received a private telegram in cipher from Garcia, the resident engineer at the Terra del Fuegos, and——" Delabole stopped and whistled.

"And ——" interrupted Philip, who scarcely had noticed the announcement his companion had to make to him, so great was his relief.

"And," continued Delabole, looking hard at him, "the water has come into the mine, and it is all U-P."

"That's a bad business," said Vane, striving to look interested. "What do you intend to do?"

"Well, you are a plucked one, Philip, I will say that for you," said Delabole in admiration. "You take this as cooly as though it were a trifle, instead of meaning tata to every sixpence you have got in the world. To be sure there is Mrs. Bendixen's money in prospect, but one ought never to reckon upon that until one has touched it. And you ask me what I am going to do. I will tell you, my dear Philip, in a word of four letters—bolt!"

"Leave England?"

"Leave England very much indeed for a short time. I had always arranged with Garcia that when this crisis happened—I knew it was always on the cards, having been told so by old Prothero, when he came back from his second visit and sold his shares—I had arranged with Garcia to let me have forty-eight hours' notice before the news could reach the city in the regular way. If he keeps his word, and I have no doubt he will, the interesting occurrence will not get wind until Thursday morning, by which time we—if you decide on accompanying me—can be on the other side of the Pyrenees, and well into Spain."

"Is there absolute necessity for your going?"

"Well, my dear Philip, when the T. D F. bursts up, there will be rather a howl, and it will probably, too, be better for me to be out of the reach of certain speculative persons who may think they have been defrauded of their money. What an extraordinary fellow you are! You must necessarily make yourself scarce, and yet you seem to be displeased with the notion of my company, which I thought would have afforded you the greatest delight."

"It is not that, of course; I should be glad of your society, but it's hard lines to have to run away into hiding just now."

"You can take Mrs. Bendixen with you, my dear Philip," said Delabole, sardonically. "She will not know that it is anything more than a mere commercial smash; and she will be doubly anxious to have the opportunity of concealihg her own stricken deer. Besides, you might have had to bolt in a hurried manner. Oh, by the way, I have news for you."

"What news?" said Vane, starting. "More trouble?"

"On the contrary," said Delabole. "good! Just before I came out, Asprey enclosed me this telegram, which he received to-night. Read it for yourself."

Delabolee took an envelope from his pocket and handed it to his companion, who opened it eagerly, and spread out its contents before him. But he had scarcely glanced at the first word, when, with a heavy groan, he fell senseless to the floor.

Delabole was a practical man; he rushed into the bedroom, and emerging with the water-jug, dashed a stream over his friend's face; then, dropping on his knees beside him, untied his neckerchief, unbuttoned his waistcoat and shirt, and lifted up his hand that he might feel how the pulse was beating.

What makes him drop the hand suddenly as though it been red hot, letting it fall heavily on the floor? What makes him bend over it again as it lies there doubled up and shapeless, and peer curiously at the cuff and shirt-wristband? What made him shrink back, regaining his feet with one bound, and looking down with horror on the prostrate form?

"He did it," he muttered, "by the Lord! What's this the doctor says?" picking up the telegram which had fluttered to the ground. "'Chenoweth, Springside, to Asprey, Cavendish square Sir G. H. is dead. Killed tonight in a struggle. Particulars by post. Shall want you at the inquest.' Killed in a struggle; and unless I am very much mistaken, this is the man that killed him. What's the meaning of his falling into a fit when he read that? What's the meaning of those stains on his hand and cuff and wristband? That was where he was all this dap, when he would tell no one where he was going! And here are his boots and trousers still cased with the heavy country mud! What was the meaning of this packing up, which I interrupted him in? his plate and papers, too, I see, to take with him. What did it mean but to bolt? This is an infernal bad business," he continued, dropping into a chair and wiping his forehead. "I wish to heavens I had not come here!"

At this moment Philip Vane opened his eyes, and after gazing wearily around him, gradually struggled into a sitting posture.

"Help me to get up, Delabole," he said, in a faint voice. "Give me your hand."

"Not I," said Delabole, drawing back and plunging his hands into his pockets.

"What's the matter?" said Philip, still faintly. "What has happened?"

"This has happened, Philip Vane; that I know where you were during this day and what you did! Henceforth we work separate and I advise you to keep clear of me. I don't pretend to be straitlaced; I am not particular as to how I get my money so long as it comes, but I have never gone in for murder yet, and I don't intend. And look here; you know I am sound enough, but if you don't want others, who might not be so reliable, to find out what I have found out tonight, look to your coat-cuff and shirt-wristband, and trousers, and boots, and be off out of this place before the hue-and-cry is upon you."

So saying, without another look at his companion, Delabole put on his hat and strolled from the room, leaving Philip Vane grovelling on the ground.

CHAPTER X.

THE LONDON LAWYER.

The rector stepped softly into the darkened room, and closing the door behind him, advanced towards the bed, and seat himself in a chair by its side. Madge lay with her head propped up by pillows, over which her long brown hair, here and there clotted with a deep, dark stain, and damp from the fomentations which had been applied, lay streaming. Her head was turning restlessly from side to side, and a cry of agony, not sharp, not broken, but one low-pitched, long-continued wail, in which her acute suffering often expressed itself, broke from her lips. At first she seemed not to notice that anyone had entered the room, and it was not until the rector had first lightly touched her hand, and then taken it gently between his own, that she ceased moaning, and calming herself by a great effort, saw her friend seated by her side. Even then she seemed either not to recognize him, or to confound the circumstances under which he was present, for she pressed the hand that was free, hard upon her forehead, and closed her eyes again for some minutes before she spoke.

Then she said, "I know now why you are here."

"You sent for me," said the rector, in his gentlest tone; "you told the servant you wished to see me."

"Yes," she said, "I recollect it all now. My mind is a little confused, I am afraid, and when I first saw you sitting there and holding my hand just as you used to in the old days when I had the fever, I thought that time had come back again, and wondered whether all the things which have occurred in the interval had been seen by me in a dream. I wish they had, oh, how I wish they had!"

"Your strength is not yet sufficiently returned to enable you to think, much less to speak of anything which is certain to excite your brain," said the rector, bending over her. "Margaret," he added, as if replying to an impatient gesture on her part, "I must speak plainly to you; your state is most critical, and if you excite yourself, your life, or what is perhaps worse, your reason is in imminent peril."

"You mean that I shall go mad?" said Madge, turning her eyes upon him and clutching his hand. "If I do, it will be from reference, not from speaking. You have been often pleased to praise my common sense, believe me, it has never been more active or more capable of doing me service than at the present moment. I must know from you what has occurred this night; you must tell without attempting to suppress or disguise anything. Do you hear me? you must say?"

The rector hesitated a moment before he said, "will you not wait until Dr. Chenoweth, who is coming up again tonight, has seen and spoken to you?"

"This is no matter for a doctor's decision. You, best of all men in the world, can judge how I can bear up against illness and trouble; you alone in the world know the story of my life, and what I have gone through. I tell you I must hear of tonight's occurrence at once and from you!"

The rector bowed his head. "If I refuse to answer any question you may put or stop in the midst of my recital, you will understand, Margaret, that it is solely on your own account."

"I understand," she replied; then involuntarily sinking her voice, she asked, "Sir Geoffry—is he—is he dead?"

"He is."

As the rector spoke, he felt a convulsive thrill in the hand that lay within his own, and the pallor of Madge's face grew yet more intense and ghastly, but she evinced no other sign of emotion.

"Tell me all about it," she murmured.

Again Mr. Drage hesitated, until prompted by a nervous hand clasp. "When the servants, whose attention had been aroused by the sound of the struggle and the crashing of the overturned furniture and the broken glass, collected their senses sufficiently to rush in a body to the library, they found a man bending over Sir Geoffry's dead body, and endeavoring to raise him from the ground on which it lay to to the couch; your presence on the spot was not noticed for some moments, not indeed, until the man had been secured and removed into the hall."

"Secured, do you say?" Is the man then, in custody, and is he known?"

"He was recognized by Riley on the instant; by a servant who had seen him on the occasion of his previous visit; finally, by Captain Cleethorpe, who spoke to you about him in the afternoon, when you expressed your dread lest he should come to——"

"Ah, my God!" screamed Madge, supporting himself on both hands, and drawing herself towards him. "Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of Sir Geoffry's son, George Heriot."

But at that instant Madge's strength gave way, and she fell prone on her face with outstretched arms, and hands working convulsively.

The rector gently raised, rnd laid her back upon her pillow. He was about to ring the bell to summon assistance, when he saw her eyes open and her lips move.

"Stay," she murmured, "for pity's sake. This is now a matter of life and death, which must be talked out at once between you and me alone; don't fear for me, I am strong enough; but I could not let things rest thus, even if I knew that to speak of them would kill me. What proofs are there against this young man?"

"Many and various, and most convincing. Riley, sorely against his will—for he is almost heart-broken at the turn which affairs have taken—will be called upon to prove the original quarrel between the father and son, when Sir Geoffry told him that he had discarded and disowned his son, whose name was never again to be mentioned in the household. Riley will further prove that on a recent occasion the young man came to Springside to seek an interview with his father, entered the house much at the same time and in the same manner; and that he, Riley, was finally ordered by the General to show George Heriot the door, and never give him admittance again. Cleethorpe, who had some slight acquaintance with young Heriot several years ago, will speak to meeting him in the afternoon, and to the young man's evident desire to avoid recognition; and I should almost think, Margaret, if you are sufficientiy recovered, that you will be called upon to state why you were so strongly anxious that a meeting between the two men should be prevented."

"All these facts that you have alleged. will be taken as reasons and motives, probable inductments for him to commit the crime. What proof is there that he did commit it?"

"As circumstantial evidence it can hardly be stronger. He alone is seized upon the spot immediately after the commission of the crime; the body of the victim is in his arms; his clothes are stained with blood. When you couple this with the enmity known to exist between him and the murdered man, with the fact of his presence at the place from which he had been more than once ejected and warned, with the fact that he evidently shunned discovery and recognition—witness his behavior to Captain Cleethorpe—however unwilling one may be to believe in the exisience of such a monstrous guilt, the charge seems to be impossible of refutation."

"The crime is one which it would have been impossible for George Heriot to have committed."

"One would think so," said the rector, "but still, sons have been——"

"It is not as a son that I speak of George Heriot; it is of himself," cried Madge. "He is too gentle-hearted, too brave, too noble to injure any human being, much less his father, whom he always held in aftection and reverence, notwithstanding the bad treatment he had rereceived."

"You speak as if you had known this young man, Margaret, said the rector, enquiringly.

"Then," said Madge, "I speak what is the fact. I knew him intimately for two years, saw him constantly, shared his confidence, knew the inmost workings of his mind, and never saw aught that was mean or dishonorable. And he has been arrested for this crime!"

"The evidence was so strong," said Mr. Drage, "that it would have been impossible to avoid arresting him, even if the expression of public opinion had not been loud against him."

"That evidence shall be overthrown; that public opinion turned in his favor," cried Madge.

"That can only be done by directly proving George Heriot's innocence," said the rector. "And who can do that?"

"I can." said Madge, "I, who stood by powerless, and saw the attack made upon Sir Geoffrey, which I was helpless to prevent; and saw my dear friend and master struggling with a man, whose back was then towards me, but whom I afterwards recognized, when, after Sir Geoffry had fallen prostrate, he ran past me and hurled me to the ground."

"And this man was not George Heriot?"

"No, that I can safely and positively swear."

"Thank God" said the rector, reverently raisng his hands, "thank God for that! That our old friend should meet a sudden and a violent death is in itself awful enough, without the horrible idea that he died by his son's hand."

"What is the first step to be taken that Gerald can be at once set free?"

"Nothing can be done tonight, Margaret," said the rector quietly, "and it is absolutely essential that you should now have thorough quiet, and not move until you have been again seen by the doctor."

"But am I to lie here while he remains in prison with this fearful charge hanging round him; with the belief in his guilt yet universal? Oh, it is monstrous to think of such a thing! I cannot and will not bear it!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

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It is false economy to refuse a good article and accept a poor one because of the low price. All goods cost money to produce. The better the goood the greater the cost. There are certain prices below which no good, honest materials can be bought. If you pay less, you get loss, no use dodging the fact. We always buy the best and sell the best, we don't believe in shoddy. We have just received one carload of STOVES and we consider them THE BEST in the market of their kind, and we invite the public to look them over if they are in want.

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F'ton, April 9, 1892.

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