

## **MR. MARMADUKE AND THE MINISTER**

**by Wilkie Collins**

I.

September 13th.--Winter seems to be upon us, on the Highland Border, already.

I looked out of window, as the evening closed in, before I barred the shutters and drew the curtains for the night. The clouds hid the hilltops on either side of our valley. Fantastic mists parted and met again on the lower slopes, as the varying breeze blew them. The blackening waters of the lake before our window seemed to anticipate the coming darkness. On the more distant hills the torrents were just visible, in the breaks of the mist, stealing their way over the brown ground like threads of silver. It was a dreary scene. The stillness of all things was only interrupted by the splashing of our little waterfall at the back of the house. I was not sorry to close the shutters, and confine the view to the four walls of our sitting-room.

The day happened to be my birthday. I sat by the peat-fire, waiting for the lamp and the tea-tray, and contemplating my past life from the vantage-ground, so to speak, of my fifty-fifth year.

There was wonderfully little to look back on. Nearly thirty years since, it pleased an all-wise Providence to cast my lot in this remote Scottish hamlet, and to make me Minister of Cauldkirk, on a stipend of seventy-four pounds sterling per annum. I and my surroundings have grown quietly older and older together. I have outlived my wife; I have buried one generation among my parishioners, and married another; I have borne the wear and tear of years better than the kirk in which I minister and the manse (or parsonage-house) in which I live--both sadly out of repair, and both still trusting for the means of reparation to the pious benefactions of people richer than myself. Not that I complain, be it understood, of the humble position which I occupy. I possess many blessings; and I thank the Lord for them. I have my little bit of land and my cow. I have also my good daughter, Felicia; named after her deceased mother, but inheriting her comely looks, it is thought, rather from myself.

Neither let me forget my elder sister, Judith; a friendless single person, sheltered under my roof, whose temperament I could wish somewhat less prone to look at persons and things on the gloomy side, but whose compensating virtues Heaven forbid that I should deny. No; I am grateful for what has been given me (from on high), and resigned to what has been taken away. With what fair prospects did I start in life! Springing from a good old Scottish stock, blessed with every advantage of education that the institutions of Scotland and England in turn could offer; with a career at the Bar and in Parliament before me--and all cast to the winds, as it were, by the measureless prodigality of my unhappy father, God forgive him! I doubt if I had five pounds left in my purse, when the compassion of my relatives on the mother's side opened a refuge to me at Cauldkirk, and hid me from the notice of the world for the rest of my life.

September 14th.--Thus far I had posted up my Diary on the evening of the 13th, when an event occurred so completely unexpected by my household and myself, that the pen, I may say, dropped incontinently from my hand.

It was the time when we had finished our tea, or supper--I hardly know which to call it. In the silence, we could hear the rain pouring against the window, and the wind that had risen with the darkness howling round the house. My sister Judith, taking the gloomy view according to custom--copious draughts of good Bohea and two helpings of such a mutton ham as only Scotland can produce had no effect in raising her spirits--my sister, I say, remarked that there would be ships lost at sea and men drowned this night. My daughter Felicia, the brightest-tempered creature of the female sex that I have ever met with, tried to give a cheerful turn to her aunt's depressing prognostication. "If the ships must be lost," she said, "we may surely hope that the men will be saved." "God willing," I put in--thereby giving to my daughter's humane expression of feeling the fit religious tone that was all it wanted--and then went on with my written record of the events and reflections of the day. No more was said. Felicia took up a book. Judith took up her knitting.

On a sudden, the silence was broken by a blow on the house-door.

My two companions, as is the way of women, set up a scream. I was startled myself, wondering who could be out in the rain and the darkness and striking at the door of the house. A stranger it must be. Light or dark, any person in or near Cauldkirk, wanting admission,

would know where to find the bell-handle at the side of the door. I waited a while to hear what might happen next. The stroke was repeated, but more softly. It became me as a man and a minister to set an example. I went out into the passage, and I called through the door, "Who's there?"

A man's voice answered--so faintly that I could barely hear him--"A lost traveler."

Immediately upon this my cheerful sister expressed her view of the matter through the open parlor door. "Brother Noah, it's a robber. Don't let him in!"

What would the Good Samaritan have done in my place? Assuredly he would have run the risk and opened the door. I imitated the Good Samaritan.

A man, dripping wet, with a knapsack on his back and a thick stick in his hand, staggered in, and would, I think, have fallen in the passage if I had not caught him by the arm. Judith peeped out at the parlor door, and said, "He's drunk." Felicia was behind her, holding up a lighted candle, the better to see what was going on. "Look at his face, aunt," says she. "Worn out with fatigue, poor man. Bring him in, father--bring him in."

Good Felicia! I was proud of my girl. "He'll spoil the carpet," says sister Judith. I said, "Silence, for shame!" and brought him in, and dropped him dripping into my own armchair. Would the Good Samaritan have thought of his carpet or his chair? I did think of them, but I overcame it. Ah, we are a decadent generation in these latter days!

"Be quick, father" says Felicia; "he'll faint if you don't give him something!"

I took out one of our little drinking cups (called among us a "Quaigh"), while Felicia, instructed by me, ran to the kitchen for the cream-jug. Filling the cup with whisky and cream in equal proportions, I offered it to him. He drank it off as if it had been so much water. "Stimulant and nourishment, you'll observe, sir, in equal portions," I remarked to him. "How do you feel now?"

"Ready for another," says he.

Felicia burst out laughing. I gave him another. As I turned to hand it to him, sister Judith came behind me, and snatched away the cream-jug. Never a generous person, sister Judith, at the best of times--more especially in the matter of cream.

He handed me back the empty cup. "I believe, sir, you have saved my life," he said. "Under Providence," I put in--adding, "But I would remark, looking to the state of your clothes, that I have yet another service to offer you, before you tell us how you came into this pitiable state." With that reply, I led him upstairs, and set before him the poor resources of my wardrobe, and left him to do the best he could with them. He was rather a small man, and I am in stature nigh on six feet. When he came down to us in my clothes, we had the merriest evening that I can remember for years past. I thought Felicia would have had a hysteric fit; and even sister Judith laughed--he did look such a comical figure in the minister's garments.

As for the misfortune that had befallen him, it offered one more example of the preternatural rashness of the English traveler in countries unknown to him. He was on a walking tour through Scotland; and he had set forth to go twenty miles a-foot, from a town on one side of the Highland Border, to a town on the other, without a guide. The only wonder is that he found his way to Cauldkirk, instead of perishing of exposure among the lonesome hills.

"Will you offer thanks for your preservation to the Throne of Grace, in your prayers to-night?" I asked him. And he answered, "Indeed I will!"

We have a spare room at the manse; but it had not been inhabited for more than a year past. Therefore we made his bed, for that night, on the sofa in the parlor; and so left him, with the fire on one side of his couch, and the whisky and the mutton ham on the other in case of need. He mentioned his name when we bade him good-night. Marmaduke Falmer of London, son of a minister of the English Church Establishment, now deceased. It was plain, I may add, before he spoke, that we had offered the hospitality of the manse to a man of gentle breeding.

September 15th.--I have to record a singularly pleasant day; due partly to a return of the fine weather, partly to the good social gifts of our guest.

Attired again in his own clothing, he was, albeit wanting in height, a finely proportioned man, with remarkably small hands and feet; having also a bright mobile face, and large dark eyes of an extraordinary diversity of expression. Also, he was of a sweet and cheerful humor; easily pleased with little things, and amiably ready to make his gifts agreeable to all of us. At the same time, a person of my experience and penetration could not fail to perceive that he was most content when in company with Felicia. I have already mentioned my daughter's comely looks and good womanly qualities. It was in the order of nature that a young man (to use his own phrase) getting near to his thirty-first birthday should feel drawn by sympathy toward a well-favored young woman in her four-and-twentieth year. In matters of this sort I have always cultivated a liberal turn of mind, not forgetting my own youth.

As the evening closed in, I was sorry to notice a certain change in our guest for the worse. He showed signs of fatigue--falling asleep at intervals in his chair, and waking up and shivering. The spare room was now well aired, having had a roaring fire in it all day.

I begged him not to stand on ceremony, and to betake himself at once to his bed. Felicia (having learned the accomplishment from her excellent mother) made him a warm sleeping-draught of eggs, sugar, nutmeg, and spirits, delicious alike to the senses of smell and taste. Sister Judith waited until he had closed the door behind him, and then favored me with one of her dismal predictions. "You'll rue the day, brother, when you let him into the house. He is going to fall ill on our hands."

II.

November 28th.--God be praised for all His mercies! This day, our guest, Marmaduke Falmer, joined us downstairs in the sitting-room for the first time since his illness.

He is sadly deteriorated, in a bodily sense, by the wasting rheumatic fever that brought him nigh to death; but he is still young, and the doctor (humanly speaking) has no doubt of his speedy and complete recovery. My sister takes the opposite view. She remarked, in his

hearing, that nobody ever thoroughly got over a rheumatic fever. Oh, Judith! Judith! it's well for humanity that you're a single person! If haply, there had been any man desperate enough to tackle such a woman in the bonds of marriage, what a pessimist progeny must have proceeded from you!

Looking back over my Diary for the last two months and more, I see one monotonous record of the poor fellow's sufferings; cheered and varied, I am pleased to add, by the devoted services of my daughter at the sick man's bedside. With some help from her aunt (most readily given when he was nearest to the point of death), and with needful services performed in turn by two of our aged women in Cauldkirk, Felicia could not have nursed him more assiduously if he had been her own brother. Half the credit of bringing him through it belonged (as the doctor himself confessed) to the discreet young nurse, always ready through the worst of the illness, and always cheerful through the long convalescence that followed. I must also record to the credit of Marmaduke that he was indeed duly grateful. When I led him into the parlor, and he saw Felicia waiting by the armchair, smiling and patting the pillows for him, he took her by the hand, and burst out crying. Weakness, in part, no doubt--but sincere gratitude at the bottom of it, I am equally sure.

November 29th.--However, there are limits even to sincere gratitude. Of this truth Mr. Marmaduke seems to be insufficiently aware. Entering the sitting-room soon after noon today, I found our convalescent guest and his nurse alone. His head was resting on her shoulder; his arm was round her waist--and (the truth before everything) Felicia was kissing him.

A man may be of a liberal turn of mind, and may yet consistently object to freedom when it takes the form of unlicensed embracing and kissing; the person being his own daughter, and the place his own house. I signed to my girl to leave us; and I advanced to Mr. Marmaduke, with my opinion of his conduct just rising in words to my lips--when he staggered me with amazement by asking for Felicia's hand in marriage.

"You need feel no doubt of my being able to offer to your daughter a position of comfort and respectability," he said. "I have a settled income of eight hundred pounds a year."

His raptures over Felicia; his protestations that she was the first woman he had ever really loved; his profane declaration that he preferred to die, if I refused to let him be her husband--all these flourishes, as I may call them, passed in at one of my ears and out at the other. But eight hundred pounds sterling per annum, descending as it were in a golden avalanche on the mind of a Scottish minister (accustomed to thirty years' annual contemplation of seventy-four pounds)--eight hundred a year, in one young man's pocket, I say, completely overpowered me. I just managed to answer, "Wait till tomorrow"--and hurried out of doors to recover my self-respect, if the thing was to be anywise done. I took my way through the valley. The sun was shining, for a wonder. When I saw my shadow on the hillside, I saw the Golden Calf as an integral part of me, bearing this inscription in letters of flame--"Here's another of them!"

November 30th.--I have made amends for yesterday's backsliding; I have acted as becomes my parental dignity and my sacred calling.

The temptation to do otherwise, has not been wanting. Here is sister Judith's advice: "Make sure that he has got the money first; and, for Heaven's sake, nail him!" Here is Mr. Marmaduke's proposal: "Make any conditions you please, so long as you give me your daughter." And, lastly, here is Felicia's confession: "Father, my heart is set on him. Oh, don't be unkind to me for the first time in your life!"

But I have stood firm. I have refused to hear any more words on the subject from any one of them, for the next six months to come.

"So serious a venture as the venture of marriage," I said, "is not to be undertaken on impulse. As soon as Mr. Marmaduke can travel, I request him to leave us, and not to return again for six months. If, after that interval, he is still of the same mind, and my daughter is still of the same mind, let him return to Cauldkirk, and (premising that I am in all other respects satisfied) let him ask me for his wife."

There were tears, there were protestations; I remained immovable. A week later, Mr. Marmaduke left us, on his way by easy stages to the south. I am not a hard man. I rewarded the lovers for their obedience by keeping sister Judith out of the way, and letting them say their farewell words (accompaniments included) in private.

### III.

May 28th.--A letter from Mr. Marmaduke, informing me that I may expect him at Cauldkirk, exactly at the expiration of the six months' interval--viz., on June the seventh.

Writing to this effect, he added a timely word on the subject of his family. Both his parents were dead; his only brother held a civil appointment in India, the place being named. His uncle (his father's brother) was a merchant resident in London; and to this near relative he referred me, if I wished to make inquiries about him. The names of his bankers, authorized to give me every information in respect to his pecuniary affairs, followed. Nothing could be more plain and straightforward. I wrote to his uncle, and I wrote to his bankers. In both cases the replies were perfectly satisfactory--nothing in the slightest degree doubtful, no prevarications, no mysteries. In a word, Mr. Marmaduke himself was thoroughly well vouched for, and Mr. Marmaduke's income was invested in securities beyond fear and beyond reproach. Even sister Judith, bent on picking a hole in the record somewhere, tried hard, and could make nothing of it.

The last sentence in Mr. Marmaduke's letter was the only part of it which I failed to read with pleasure.

He left it to me to fix the day for the marriage, and he entreated that I would make it as early a day as possible. I had a touch of the heartache when I thought of parting with Felicia, and being left at home with nobody but Judith. However, I got over it for that time, and, after consulting my daughter, we decided on naming a fortnight after Mr. Marmaduke's arrival--that is to say, the twenty-first of June. This gave Felicia time for her preparations, besides offering to me the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with my son-in-law's disposition. The happiest marriage does indubitably make its demands on human forbearance; and I was anxious, among other things, to assure myself of Mr. Marmaduke's good temper.

### IV.

June 22d.--The happy change in my daughter's life (let me say nothing of the change in my life) has come: they were married yesterday. The manse is a desert; and sister Judith was never so uncongenial a companion to me as I feel her to be now. Her last words to the married



pair, when they drove away, were: "Lord help you both; you have all your troubles before you!"

I had no heart to write yesterday's record, yesterday evening, as usual. The absence of Felicia at the supper-table completely overcame me. I, who have so often comforted others in their afflictions, could find no comfort for myself. Even now that the day has passed, the tears come into my eyes, only with writing about it. Sad, sad weakness! Let me close my Diary, and open the Bible--and be myself again.

June 23d.--More resigned since yesterday; a more becoming and more pious frame of mind--obedient to God's holy will, and content in the belief that my dear daughter's married life will be a happy one.

They have gone abroad for their holiday--to Switzerland, by way of France. I was anything rather than pleased when I heard that my son-in-law proposed to take Felicia to that sink of iniquity, Paris. He knows already what I think of balls and playhouses, and similar devils' diversions, and how I have brought up my daughter to think of them--the subject having occurred in conversation among us more than a week since. That he could meditate taking a child of mine to the headquarters of indecent jiggings and abominable stage-plays, of spouting rogues and painted Jezebels, was indeed a heavy blow.

However, Felicia reconciled me to it in the end. She declared that her only desire in going to Paris was to see the picture-galleries, the public buildings, and the fair outward aspect of the city generally. "Your opinions, father, are my opinions," she said; "and Marmaduke, I am sure, will so shape our arrangements as to prevent our passing a Sabbath in Paris." Marmaduke not only consented to this (with the perfect good temper of which I have observed more than one gratifying example in him), but likewise assured me that, speaking for himself personally, it would be a relief to him when they got to the mountains and the lakes. So that matter was happily settled. Go where they may, God bless and prosper them!

Speaking of relief, I must record that Judith has gone away to Aberdeen on a visit to some friends. "You'll be wretched enough here," she said at parting, "all by yourself." Pure vanity and self-complacence! It may be resignation to her absence, or it may be natural force of mind, I began to be more easy and composed the

moment I was alone, and this blessed state of feeling has continued uninterruptedly ever since.

V.

September 5th.--A sudden change in my life, which it absolutely startles me to record. I am going to London!

My purpose in taking this most serious step is of a twofold nature. I have a greater and a lesser object in view.

The greater object is to see my daughter, and to judge for myself whether certain doubts on the vital question of her happiness, which now torment me night and day, are unhappily founded on truth. She and her husband returned in August from their wedding-tour, and took up their abode in Marmaduke's new residence in London. Up to this time, Felicia's letters to me were, in very truth, the delight of my life--she was so entirely happy, so amazed and delighted with all the wonderful things she saw, so full of love and admiration for the best husband that ever lived. Since her return to London, I perceive a complete change.

She makes no positive complaint, but she writes in a tone of weariness and discontent; she says next to nothing of Marmaduke, and she dwells perpetually on the one idea of my going to London to see her. I hope with my whole heart that I am wrong; but the rare allusions to her husband, and the constantly repeated desire to see her father (while she has not been yet three months married), seem to me to be bad signs. In brief, my anxiety is too great to be endured. I have so arranged matters with one of my brethren as to be free to travel to London cheaply by steamer; and I begin the journey tomorrow.

My lesser object may be dismissed in two words. Having already decided on going to London, I propose to call on the wealthy nobleman who owns all the land hereabouts, and represent to him the discreditable, and indeed dangerous, condition of the parish kirk for want of means to institute the necessary repairs. If I find myself well received, I shall put in a word for the manse, which is almost in as deplorable a condition as the church. My lord is a wealthy man--may his heart and his purse be opened unto me!

Sister Judith is packing my portmanteau. According to custom, she forbodes the worst. "Never forget," she says, "that I warned you against Marmaduke, on the first night when he entered the house."

VI.

September 10th.--After more delays than one, on land and sea, I was at last set ashore near the Tower, on the afternoon of yesterday. God help us, my worst anticipations have been realized! My beloved Felicia has urgent and serious need of me.

It is not to be denied that I made my entry into my son-in-law's house in a disturbed and irritated frame of mind. First, my temper was tried by the almost interminable journey, in the noisy and comfortless vehicle which they call a cab, from the river-wharf to the west-end of London, where Marmaduke lives. In the second place, I was scandalized and alarmed by an incident which took place--still on the endless journey from east to west--in a street hard by the market of Covent Garden.

We had just approached a large building, most profusely illuminated with gas, and exhibiting prodigious colored placards having inscribed on them nothing but the name of Barrymore. The cab came suddenly to a standstill; and looking out to see what the obstacle might be, I discovered a huge concourse of men and women, drawn across the pavement and road alike, so that it seemed impossible to pass by them. I inquired of my driver what this assembling of the people meant. "Oh," says he, "Barrymore has made another hit." This answer being perfectly unintelligible to me, I requested some further explanation, and discovered that "Barrymore" was the name of a stage-player favored by the populace; that the building was a theater, and that all these creatures with immortal souls were waiting, before the doors opened, to get places at the show!

The emotions of sorrow and indignation caused by this discovery so absorbed me that I failed to notice an attempt the driver made to pass through, where the crowd seemed to be thinner, until the offended people resented the proceeding. Some of them seized the horse's head; others were on the point of pulling the driver off his box, when providentially the police interfered. Under their protection, we drew back, and reached our destination in safety, by another way. I record this otherwise unimportant affair, because it grieved and revolted me (when I thought of the people's souls), and so indisposed my mind to

take cheerful views of anything. Under these circumstances, I would fain hope that I have exaggerated the true state of the case, in respect to my daughter's married life.

My good girl almost smothered me with kisses. When I at last got a fair opportunity of observing her, I thought her looking pale and worn and anxious. Query: Should I have arrived at this conclusion if I had met with no example of the wicked dissipations of London, and if I had ridden at my ease in a comfortable vehicle?

They had a succulent meal ready for me, and, what I call, fair enough whisky out of Scotland. Here again I remarked that Felicia ate very little, and Marmaduke nothing at all. He drank wine, too--and, good heavens, champagne wine!--a needless waste of money surely when there was whisky on the table. My appetite being satisfied, my son-in-law went out of the room, and returned with his hat in his hand. "You and Felicia have many things to talk about on your first evening together. I'll leave you for a while--I shall only be in the way." So he spoke. It was in vain that his wife and I assured him he was not in the way at all. He kissed his hand, and smiled pleasantly, and left us.

"There, father!" says Felicia. "For the last ten days he has gone out like that, and left me alone for the whole evening. When we first returned from Switzerland, he left me in the same mysterious way, only it was after breakfast then. Now he stays at home in the daytime, and goes out at night."

I inquired if she had not summoned him to give her some explanation.

"I don't know what to make of his explanation," says Felicia. "When he went away in the daytime, he told me he had business in the City. Since he took to going out at night, he says he goes to his club."

"Have you asked where his club is, my dear?"

"He says it's in Pall Mall. There are dozens of clubs in that street--and he has never told me the name of his club. I am completely shut out of his confidence. Would you believe it, father? he has not introduced one of his friends to me since we came home. I doubt if they know where he lives, since he took this house."

What could I say?

I said nothing, and looked round the room. It was fitted up with perfectly palatial magnificence. I am an ignorant man in matters of this sort, and partly to satisfy my curiosity, partly to change the subject, I asked to see the house. Mercy preserve us, the same grandeur everywhere! I wondered if even such an income as eight hundred a year could suffice for it all. In a moment when I was considering this, a truly frightful suspicion crossed my mind. Did these mysterious absences, taken in connection with the unbridled luxury that surrounded us, mean that my son-in-law was a gamester? a shameless shuffler of cards, or a debauched bettor on horses? While I was still completely overcome by my own previsions of evil, my daughter put her arm in mine to take me to the top of the house.

For the first time I observed a bracelet of dazzling gems on her wrist. "Not diamonds?" I said. She answered, with as much composure as if she had been the wife of a nobleman, "Yes, diamonds--a present from Marmaduke." This was too much for me; my previsions, so to speak, forced their way into words. "Oh, my poor child!" I burst out, "I'm in mortal fear that your husband's a gamester!"

She showed none of the horror I had anticipated; she only shook her head and began to cry.

"Worse than that, I'm afraid," she said.

I was petrified; my tongue refused its office, when I would fain have asked her what she meant. Her besetting sin, poor soul, is a proud spirit. She dried her eyes on a sudden, and spoke out freely, in these words: "I am not going to cry about it. The other day, father, we were out walking in the park. A horrid, bold, yellow-haired woman passed us in an open carriage. She kissed her hand to Marmaduke, and called out to him, 'How are you, Marmy?' I was so indignant that I pushed him away from me, and told him to go and take a drive with his lady. He burst out laughing. 'Nonsense!' he said; 'she has known me for years--you don't understand our easy London manners.' We have made it up since then; but I have my own opinion of the creature in the open carriage."

Morally speaking, this was worse than all. But, logically viewed, it completely failed as a means of accounting for the diamond bracelet and the splendor of the furniture.

We went on to the uppermost story. It was cut off from the rest of the house by a stout partition of wood, and a door covered with green baize.

When I tried the door it was locked. "Ha!" says Felicia, "I wanted you to see it for yourself!" More suspicious proceedings on the part of my son-in-law! He kept the door constantly locked, and the key in his pocket. When his wife asked him what it meant, he answered: "My study is up there--and I like to keep it entirely to myself." After such a reply as that, the preservation of my daughter's dignity permitted but one answer: "Oh, keep it to yourself, by all means!"

My previsions, upon this, assumed another form.

I now asked myself--still in connection with my son-in-law's extravagant expenditure--whether the clew to the mystery might not haply be the forging of bank-notes on the other side of the baize door. My mind was prepared for anything by this time. We descended again into the dining-room. Felicia saw how my spirits were dashed, and came and perched upon my knee. "Enough of my troubles for tonight, father," she said. "I am going to be your little girl again, and we will talk of nothing but Cauldkirk, until Marmaduke comes back." I am one of the firmest men living, but I could not keep the hot tears out of my eyes when she put her arm round my neck and said those words. By good fortune I was sitting with my back to the lamp; she didn't notice me.

A little after eleven o'clock Marmaduke returned. He looked pale and weary. But more champagne, and this time something to eat with it, seemed to set him to rights again--no doubt by relieving him from the reproaches of a guilty conscience.

I had been warned by Felicia to keep what had passed between us a secret from her husband for the present; so we had (superficially speaking) a merry end to the evening. My son-in-law was nearly as good company as ever, and wonderfully fertile in suggestions and expedients when he saw they were wanted. Hearing from his wife, to whom I had mentioned it, that I purposed representing the decayed condition of the kirk and manse to the owner of Cauldkirk and the country round about, he strongly urged me to draw up a list of repairs that were most needful, before I waited on my lord. This advice, vicious and degraded as the man who offered it may be, is sound advice nevertheless. I shall assuredly take it.

So far I had written in my Diary, in the forenoon. Returning to my daily record, after a lapse of some hours, I have a new mystery of iniquity to chronicle. My abominable son-in-law now appears (I blush to write it) to be nothing less than an associate of thieves!

After the meal they call luncheon, I thought it well before recreating myself with the sights of London, to attend first to the crying necessities of the kirk and the manse. Furnished with my written list, I presented myself at his lordship's residence. I was immediately informed that he was otherwise engaged, and could not possibly receive me. If I wished to see my lord's secretary, Mr. Helmsley, I could do so. Consenting to this, rather than fail entirely in my errand, I was shown into the secretary's room.

Mr. Helmsley heard what I had to say civilly enough; expressing, however, grave doubts whether his lordship would do anything for me, the demands on his purse being insupportably numerous already. However, he undertook to place my list before his employer, and to let me know the result. "Where are you staying in London?" he asked. I answered: "With my son-in-law, Mr. Marmaduke Falmer." Before I could add the address, the secretary started to his feet and tossed my list back to me across the table in the most uncivil manner.

"Upon my word," says he, "your assurance exceeds anything I ever heard of. Your son-in-law is concerned in the robbery of her ladyship's diamond bracelet--the discovery was made not an hour ago. Leave the house, sir, and consider yourself lucky that I have no instructions to give you in charge to the police." I protested against this unprovoked outrage, with a violence of language which I would rather not recall. As a minister, I ought, under every provocation, to have preserved my self-control.

The one thing to do next was to drive back to my unhappy daughter.

Her guilty husband was with her. I was too angry to wait for a fit opportunity of speaking. The Christian humility which I have all my life cultivated as the first of virtues sank, as it were, from under me. In terms of burning indignation I told them what had happened. The result was too distressing to be described. It ended in Felicia giving her husband back the bracelet. The hardened reprobate laughed at us. "Wait till I have seen his lordship and Mr. Helmsley," he said, and left the house.

Does he mean to escape to foreign parts? Felicia, womanlike, believes in him still; she is quite convinced that there must be some mistake. I am myself in hourly expectation of the arrival of the police.

With gratitude to Providence, I note before going to bed the harmless termination of the affair of the bracelet--so far as Marmaduke is concerned. The agent who sold him the jewel has been forced to come forward and state the truth. His lordship's wife is the guilty person; the bracelet was hers--a present from her husband. Harassed by debts that she dare not acknowledge, she sold it; my lord discovered that it was gone; and in terror of his anger the wretched woman took refuge in a lie.

She declared that the bracelet had been stolen from her. Asked for the name of the thief, the reckless woman (having no other name in her mind at the moment) mentioned the man who had innocently bought the jewel of her agent, otherwise my unfortunate son-in-law. Oh, the profligacy of the modern Babylon! It was well I went to the secretary when I did or we should really have had the police in the house. Marmaduke found them in consultation over the supposed robbery, asking for his address. There was a dreadful exhibition of violence and recrimination at his lordship's residence: in the end he re-purchased the bracelet. My son-in-law's money has been returned to him; and Mr. Helmsley has sent me a written apology.

In a worldly sense, this would, I suppose, be called a satisfactory ending.

It is not so to my mind. I freely admit that I too hastily distrusted Marmaduke; but am I, on that account, to give him back immediately the place which he once occupied in my esteem? Again this evening he mysteriously quitted the house, leaving me alone with Felicia, and giving no better excuse for his conduct than that he had an engagement. And this when I have a double claim on his consideration, as his father-in-law and his guest.

September 11th.--The day began well enough. At breakfast, Marmaduke spoke feelingly of the unhappy result of my visit to his



lordship, and asked me to let him look at the list of repairs. "It is just useless to expect anything from my lord, after what has happened," I said. "Besides, Mr. Helmsley gave me no hope when I stated my case to him." Marmaduke still held out his hand for the list. "Let me try if I can get some subscribers," he replied. This was kindly meant, at any rate. I gave him the list; and I began to recover some of my old friendly feeling for him. Alas! the little gleam of tranquillity proved to be of short duration.

We made out our plans for the day pleasantly enough. The check came when Felicia spoke next of our plans for the evening. "My father has only four days more to pass with us," she said to her husband. "Surely you won't go out again to-night, and leave him?" Marmaduke's face clouded over directly; he looked embarrassed and annoyed. I sat perfectly silent, leaving them to settle it by themselves.

"You will stay with us this evening, won't you?" says Felicia. No: he was not free for the evening. "What! another engagement? Surely you can put it off?" No; impossible to put it off. "Is it a ball, or a party of some kind?" No answer; he changed the subject--he offered Felicia the money repaid to him for the bracelet. "Buy one for yourself, my dear, this time." Felicia handed him back the money, rather too haughtily, perhaps. "I don't want a bracelet," she said; "I want your company in the evening."

He jumped up, good-tempered as he was, in something very like a rage--then looked at me, and checked himself on the point (as I believe) of using profane language. "This is downright persecution!" he burst out, with an angry turn of his head toward his wife. Felicia got up, in her turn. "Your language is an insult to my father and to me!" He looked thoroughly staggered at this: it was evidently their first serious quarrel.

Felicia took no notice of him. "I will get ready directly, father; and we will go out together." He stopped her as she was leaving the room--recovering his good temper with a readiness which it pleased me to see. "Come, come, Felicia! We have not quarreled yet, and we won't quarrel now. Let me off this one time more, and I will devote the next three evenings of your father's visit to him and to you. Give me a kiss, and make it up." My daughter doesn't do things by halves. She gave him a dozen kisses, I should think--and there was a happy end of it.

"But what shall we do to-morrow evening?" says Marmaduke, sitting down by his wife, and patting her hand as it lay in his.

"Take us somewhere," says she. Marmaduke laughed. "Your father objects to public amusements. Where does he want to go?" Felicia took up the newspaper. "There is an oratorio at Exeter Hall," she said; "my father likes music." He turned to me. "You don't object to oratorios, sir?" "I don't object to music," I answered, "so long as I am not required to enter a theater." Felicia handed the newspaper to me. "Speaking of theaters, father, have you read what they say about the new play? What a pity it can't be given out of a theater!" I looked at her in speechless amazement. She tried to explain herself. "The paper says that the new play is a service rendered to the cause of virtue; and that the great actor, Barrymore, has set an example in producing it which deserves the encouragement of all truly religious people. Do read it, father!" I held up my hands in dismay. My own daughter perverted! pinning her faith on a newspaper! speaking, with a perverse expression of interest, of a stage-play and an actor! Even Marmaduke witnessed this lamentable exhibition of backsliding with some appearance of alarm. "It's not her fault, sir," he said, interceding with me. "It's the fault of the newspaper. Don't blame her!" I held my peace; determining inwardly to pray for her. Shortly afterward my daughter and I went out. Marmaduke accompanied us part of the way, and left us at a telegraph office. "Who are you going to telegraph to?" Felicia asked. Another mystery! He answered, "Business of my own, my dear"--and went into the office.

September 12th.--Is my miserable son-in-law's house under a curse? The yellow-haired woman in the open carriage drove up to the door at half-past ten this morning, in a state of distraction. Felicia and I saw her from the drawing-room balcony--a tall woman in gorgeous garments. She knocked with her own hand at the door--she cried out distractedly, "Where is he? I must see him!" At the sound of her voice, Marmaduke (playing with his little dog in the drawing-room) rushed downstairs and out into the street. "Hold your tongue!" we heard him say to her. "What are you here for?"

What she answered we failed to hear; she was certainly crying. Marmaduke stamped on the pavement like a man beside himself--took her roughly by the arm, and led her into the house.

Before I could utter a word, Felicia left me and flew headlong down the stairs.

She was in time to hear the dining-room locked. Following her, I prevented the poor jealous creature from making a disturbance at the door. God forgive me--not knowing how else to quiet her--I degraded myself by advising her to listen to what they said. She instantly opened the door of the back dining-room, and beckoned to me to follow. I naturally hesitated. "I shall go mad," she whispered, "if you leave me by myself!" What could I do? I degraded myself the second time. For my own child--in pity for my own child!

We heard them, through the flimsy modern folding-doors, at those times when he was most angry, and she most distracted. That is to say, we heard them when they spoke in their loudest tones.

"How did you find out where I live?" says he. "Oh, you're ashamed of me?" says she. "Mr. Helmsley was with us yesterday evening. That's how I found out!" "What do you mean?" "I mean that Mr. Helmsley had your card and address in his pocket. Ah, you were obliged to give your address when you had to clear up that matter of the bracelet! You cruel, cruel man, what have I done to deserve such a note as you sent me this morning?" "Do what the note tells you!" "Do what the note tells me? Did anybody ever hear a man talk so, out of a lunatic asylum? Why, you haven't even the grace to carry out your own wicked deception--you haven't even gone to bed!" There the voices grew less angry, and we missed what followed. Soon the lady burst out again, piteously entreating him this time. "Oh, Marmy, don't ruin me! Has anybody offended you? Is there anything you wish to have altered? Do you want more money? It is too cruel to treat me in this way--it is indeed!" He made some answer, which we were not able to hear; we could only suppose that he had upset her temper again. She went on louder than ever "I've begged and prayed of you--and you're as hard as iron. I've told you about the Prince--and that has had no effect on you. I have done now. We'll see what the doctor says." He got angry, in his turn; we heard him again. "I won't see the doctor!" "Oh, you refuse to see the doctor?--I shall make your refusal known--and if there's law in England, you shall feel it!" Their voices dropped again; some new turn seemed to be taken by the conversation. We heard the lady once more, shrill and joyful this time. "There's a dear! You see it, don't you, in the right light? And you haven't forgotten the old times, have you? You're the same dear, honorable, kind-hearted fellow that you always were!"

I caught hold of Felicia, and put my hand over her mouth.

There was a sound in the next room which might have been--I cannot be certain--the sound of a kiss. The next moment, we heard the door of the room unlocked. Then the door of the house was opened, and the noise of retreating carriage-wheels followed. We met him in the hall, as he entered the house again.

My daughter walked up to him, pale and determined.

"I insist on knowing who that woman is, and what she wants here." Those were her first words. He looked at her like a man in utter confusion. "Wait till this evening; I am in no state to speak to you now!" With that, he snatched his hat off the hall table and rushed out of the house.

It is little more than three weeks since they returned to London from their happy wedding-tour--and it has come to this!

The clock has just struck seven; a letter has been left by a messenger, addressed to my daughter. I had persuaded her, poor soul, to lie down in her own room. God grant that the letter may bring her some tidings of her husband! I please myself in the hope of hearing good news.

My mind has not been kept long in suspense. Felicia's waiting-woman has brought me a morsel of writing paper, with these lines penciled on it in my daughter's handwriting: "Dearest father, make your mind easy. Everything is explained. I cannot trust myself to speak to you about it to-night--and he doesn't wish me to do so. Only wait till tomorrow, and you shall know all. He will be back about eleven o'clock. Please don't wait up for him--he will come straight to me."

September 13th.--The scales have fallen from my eyes; the light is let in on me at last. My bewilderment is not to be uttered in words--I am like a man in a dream.

Before I was out of my room in the morning, my mind was upset by the arrival of a telegram addressed to myself. It was the first thing of the kind I ever received; I trembled under the prevision of some new misfortune as I opened the envelope.

Of all the people in the world, the person sending the telegram was sister Judith! Never before did this distracting relative confound me as she confounded me now. Here is her message: "You can't come back. An architect from Edinburgh asserts his resolution to repair the kirk and the manse. The man only waits for his lawful authority to begin. The money is ready--but who has found it? Mr. Architect is forbidden to tell. We live in awful times. How is Felicia?"

Naturally concluding that Judith's mind must be deranged, I went downstairs to meet my son-in-law (for the first time since the events of yesterday) at the late breakfast which is customary in this house. He was waiting for me--but Felicia was not present. "She breakfasts in her room this morning," says Marmaduke; "and I am to give you the explanation which has already satisfied your daughter. Will you take it at great length, sir? or will you have it in one word?" There was something in his manner that I did not at all like--he seemed to be setting me at defiance. I said, stiffly, "Brevity is best; I will have it in one word."

"Here it is then," he answered. "I am Barrymore."

#### POSTSCRIPT ADDED BY FELICIA.

If the last line extracted from my dear father's Diary does not contain explanation enough in itself, I add some sentences from Marmaduke's letter to me, sent from the theater last night. (N. B.--I leave out the expressions of endearment: they are my own private property.)

... "Just remember how your father talked about theaters and actors, when I was at Cauldkirk, and how you listened in dutiful agreement with him. Would he have consented to your marriage if he had known that I was one of the 'spouting rogues,' associated with the 'painted Jezebels' of the playhouse? He would never have consented--and you yourself, my darling, would have trembled at the bare idea of marrying an actor.

"Have I been guilty of any serious deception? and have my friends been guilty in helping to keep my secret? My birth, my name, my surviving relatives, my fortune inherited from my father--all these important particulars have been truly stated. The name of Barrymore is nothing but the name that I assumed when I went on the stage.

"As to what has happened, since our return from Switzerland, I own that I ought to have made my confession to you. Forgive me if I weakly hesitated. I was so fond of you; and I so distrusted the Puritanical convictions which your education had rooted in your mind, that I put it off from day to day. Oh, my angel....!

"Yes, I kept the address of my new house a secret from all my friends, knowing they would betray me if they paid us visits. As for my mysteriously-closed study, it was the place in which I privately rehearsed my new part. When I left you in the mornings, it was to go to the theater rehearsals. My evening absences began of course with the first performance.

"Your father's arrival seriously embarrassed me. When you (most properly) insisted on my giving up some of my evenings to him, you necessarily made it impossible for me to appear on the stage. The one excuse I could make to the theater was, that I was too ill to act. It did certainly occur to me to cut the Gordian knot by owning the truth. But your father's horror, when you spoke of the newspaper review of the play, and the shame and fear you showed at your own boldness, daunted me once more.

"The arrival at the theater of my written excuse brought the manageress down upon me, in a state of distraction. Nobody could supply my place; all the seats were taken; and the Prince was expected. There was what we call a scene between the poor lady and myself. I felt I was in the wrong; I saw that the position in which I had impulsively placed myself was unworthy of me--and it ended in my doing my duty to the theater and the public. But for the affair of the bracelet, which obliged me as an honorable man to give my name and address, the manageress would not have discovered me. She, like every one else, only knew of my address at my bachelor chambers. How could you be jealous of the old theatrical comrade of my first days on the stage? Don't you know yet that you are the one woman in the world....?

"A last word relating to your father, and I have done.

"Do you remember my leaving you at the telegraph office? It was to send a message to a friend of mine, an architect in Edinburgh, instructing him to go immediately to Cauldkirk, and provide for the repairs at my expense. The theater, my dear, more than trebles my paternal income, and I can well afford it. Will your father refuse to

accept a tribute of respect to a Scottish minister, because it is paid out of an actor's pocket? You shall ask him the question.

"And, I say, Felicia--will you come and see me act? I don't expect your father to enter a theater; but, by way of further reconciling him to his son-in-law, suppose you ask him to hear me read the play?"