

tion, he grasped my arm convulsively, and demanded, with a look of ghastly terror, "Were you in the alley that night?"

"Yes," said I, "coming to visit you."

"Then, if you would have my blessing in this world or the next, never mention, never remember, what you heard or saw there. Let the law take its course, circumstances are strong against me; but if I am executed, it has been the fate of many a better man."

I could not dispute his request as the case stood; independent of the difficulty of bringing home the proof, there was considerations regarding the real criminal, and the fact that I must be the only convicting witness, would have made me keep the secret at almost any hazard but that of Desmond's life.

There was, therefore, no resource but the common defences of the law. All that prudence and legal knowledge could do was done to strengthen Eugene's cause: the first counsellors were retained, and the most respectable witnesses summoned; but still I felt that circumstantial evidence weighed heavily against my friend.

I had just been summing it up in my mind, when I chanced to meet Geraldine for the first time since the ball, at the house of a mutual acquaintance: her tone and manner were as gay as ever, but the few intervening days had made sad ravages in the thin, fair face, which looked as if it had been overwrought for years. As she entered, a group of morning visitors were conversing on the affair, which then formed the theme of general conversation; and one old lady raised her voice with the declaration, "That she would never believe Desmond could be guilty." This was, indeed, the most common impression—his previous high character, and the well known hostility of government, were prevailing arguments for him.

"It is hard to say, madam, who the law may find guilty," said Geraldine, with a degree of even philosophic composure, "but, to my certain knowledge, Mr. Desmond was a passenger on the Cork mail on the morning of the very day in which that awful crime was committed. Don't you remember it Julia?" she continued, addressing herself to a lately-come-out belle, with whom she was intimate on account of her high connexions—"don't you remember the gentleman who bowed so politely to me when we were shopping?"

Miss Julia was probably never annoyed with any remembrance beyond that of her own face and the last new fashion, so she hesitated a moment, then complained that her memory was very treacherous; and finally, when assured by Miss Fitzmaurice, that "She must recollect the gentleman, he looked so much struck with Miss Julia in her new hat," she grew quite certain on the subject, and much more earnest than even Geraldine, who now whispered to the old dowager, "How simple I have been to make that statement before Mr. Connelly—they certainly will summon me; but to save the life of an innocent man, one would go further than a court of justice."

What I thought on the occasion need not be related; false as it was, the *alibi* might be found; and the oaths of two such respectable witnesses would be sufficient to acquit Desmond.

Of course, I left the house only to have the summonses served. All the legal gentlemen engaged were delighted at the circumstance. Miss Fitzmaurice was found correct and distinct in her statement; it was certainly well arranged; and Miss Julia, after having got over her fears of appearing before a crowded court, in consideration of how much she would be admired, supported her evidence pretty clearly touching the gentleman who was struck with the new hat.

Seldom have I seen a court more crowded, or a trial which excited great interest, even in those days of legal spectacles. Copeland was there, looking rather dissatisfied; old Fitzmaurice, stately and stiff for justice; and Jackson, anxious to find what he called 'the bottom of the business.' The crown lawyers and their witnesses seemed determined to obtain a conviction; and the evidence, though brief, appeared conclusive against Desmond. When the case for the prosecution closed, a counsellor, distinguished for his cross examining powers, opened the defence; and honour to his memory, he succeeded in 'bothering' the informer: but when our principal witness was called up, I felt my hope begin to waver. She cast one long look down into the criminal dock, where Desmond was standing all unchanged, but looked a little worn, then took the book and swore. She knew it was direct perjury, but the woman's eye never quailed or quivered: and no cross examination—though, to do the gentlemen on the opposite side justice, they wished to do their best—could shake or alter her evidence in one tittle; it was a triumphant *alibi*. She had seen Desmond as a passenger on the Cork mail, on the morning of the day in which the murder was committed, and it was evident he had never returned to Dublin till he entered it as a prisoner.

The guard and driver of the mail, who were also summoned, corroborated her statement. Poor fellows, I fear that their anxiety to defeat an informer went beyond their love of truth on the occasion, but they swore 'to the best of their knowledge.'

Miss Julia's evidence was not quite so satisfactory; the poor soul did not know she was perjuring herself; but the new hat, and the gentleman who was struck with her, had equally found place in her memory; and the very vacuity of her mind saved her a world of questions more easy to propose than answer.

Though so much better supplied, my friend had requested me to address the jury for the last time in the defence; and believe it, readers, I did so with all my heart. Dwelling long and strongly on the character of Desmond's principal accuser, with all the moral beauties of his class, if I did steal a trifle or two from Curran, let the cause excuse it, and then lingering—God forgive me!—over the undoubted respectability, amiable disinterestedness, and moral and mental worth of our principal witnesses, with a power that went home to the hearts of the jury; and after the judge's rather long-winded charge, corrected by an hour's retirement, they delivered a verdict of most honourable acquittal.

It was received with thunders of applause, and Desmond was literally cheered home to his residence that day; but the consequences of the murder were not yet over; his confinement had been but short, but the typhus fever was in the prison. I had remarked that Eugene looked pale on the day of his trial, and called on the following morning; but the old servant, who, by the by, had returned with his master, and swore most lustily, as he expressed it, 'that they were in Cork all the time,' met me with tears in his eyes, and the intelligence that Eugene was delirious; the progress of the disease was rapid, and, in spite of the best medical attendance, my friend sunk daily. I had learned to love and esteem him more since his misfortune shewed me the real value of the man; and sat watching by his bed one long night while the old nurse slept. His delirium still continued: he never spoke of the murder, but often of Geraldine; and still in terms of most sorrowful affection.

He had dropped to sleep at last, when the servant came to say, in a whisper that there was a stranger inquiring for me. I left the room quietly, after, as I thought, sufficiently rousing the nurse, and found the stranger, a man of rather mean appearance, and very tedious in the delivery of his errand, had come to solicit my subscription to a forthcoming work, the name of which I have forgotten, but it never was published; and after some difficulty in dismissing him, I returned to the chamber; the old nurse was fast asleep, but Desmond was awake and looking earnestly around the room.

"Where is she?" were his first words as I approached; but the tone grew low and hollow. "Where is Geraldine? she was here this moment—it was not a dream. She gave me a drink from the cup on the table, and bade me forget her in the other world for we would never meet."

I glanced at the cup; it was, indeed, almost empty, some one had been in the room, and Desmond's fine black hair, which had been shaven off and heaped on the chimney-piece, was dishevelled, as if some hand had been choosing the long locks out of it. The back entrance, which was found open, confirmed the supposition, that he of the never published work had more ends than his own to serve in my brief absence from Eugene's room.

Geraldine knew not how much that dark night in the old alley had revealed to me; but when I turned to answer Desmond he had sunk into a sudden slumber, which was, indeed, the portal of death, for he never awoke till about the break of day; then fixed his eyes first upon mine, and next on his old servant's face, and without another motion closed them for ever.

His funeral was a demonstration of almost universal respect; for besides his unblemished life, Desmond was regarded as the martyr of liberal opinions; and as connected with his story, an article, which had appeared in one of the Dublin papers, was much talked of, being the early history of the deceased Dr. Donovan. It was said that Mr. Fitzmaurice was seized with a most laudable desire to behold the beauties of the English lakes after its publication; and they left Dublin almost immediately. Neither the uncle or niece ever returned; the former resigned his situation, having realised a handsome competence in the course of his bachelor life; of the latter I heard much touching her brilliant reception and general *eclat* in English society. It was said that those articles known as 'good offers,' were frequently met in her path; but people thought she was too ambitious, and her uncle had dropped hints that nothing less than a coronet need apply.

Lord Glenallen's son, however, remained constant in the pursuit; and death at last did wonders for that fortunate Scot, by removing his father and three brothers, in as many years, out of his way to the peerage; and six months after he took the oath to legislate for the nation by hereditary wisdom, the newspapers announced, 'his union with the beautiful and accomplished Miss Fitzmaurice.'

How Geraldine fared in her wedded life, I could never learn; but she was regarded as one of the cleverest and most fortunate dames of the British *beau monde*. Her uncle departed this life just in time to leave her the best part of his fortune; distant relations discovered, on making their wills, that her husband was the nearest of kin; his address and prosperity in politics were remarkable; and many choose to say he had married to some purpose. But when I last saw the Lady—readers, the years were long passed over me till then—her brow was still fair and furrowless, the early intelligence of the countenance was still there, but the sweetness was gone, and it had grown like a sealed book, that none might read or open; and they said—but I will not vouch for the fact—that she never cared to meet a clergyman or a lawyer.

SECOND THOUGHTS

For some considerable period previous to the world's arriving at years of discretion, it was a question whether women had souls; but the men, by whom the question was modestly mooted, had minds—each male creature having a whole one to his own share—was never disputed for an instant. Yet this, like other indubitable truths, there is great reason to doubt. How many hundreds of particular friends could each of us give a list of, who have never thoroughly succeeded in 'making up' their minds; who really never 'know their own minds.' How should they, when they change them so often? They are not in the same mind two seconds together. They never keep a mind long enough to know it. Yet while in this very state, the whole tribe of human cameleons are fain to flatter themselves that they have 'two minds' instead of none. When a man doesn't know what to think, he observes, 'I have two minds.' When most resolute, we think ourselves capable of wonderful determination. How to decide is more than we can tell—what in the world to do we know not—but we have 'a very great mind.' Second thoughts are often sneakers—treacherous uniters of true love knots—roguish dishonourers of handsome acceptances. The first thought comes with a hand open as day, the second with a tight fist, prepared rather for a blow than a boon. The first springs from a generous, disinterested impulse; the second, from a shrinking of the heart and a selfish betrayal of self. The first is a gallant gentleman, a little imprudent and headlong sometimes: the second, a close curmudgeon, who won't do good when it costs him nothing, lest it grow into a habit, and he be induced to sacrifice a sixpence at past eighty.—Second thoughts turn the jovial resolution to make your visitor stop to dinner, into a hesitating hope that he will come and dine some day when the weather settles. They pare a banquet down to a sandwich, under the pretence of making it the feast of reason, and leave you to find the flow of soul in cold water. All that need be said of them is, they are best once in a way, but the exception proves the rule inferiority. A man whose impulses are in favour of stinginess is seldom generous on second thoughts; but generosity often falls back upon meanness, when it has had time to cogitate. Second thoughts are far less liable to say, boldly, 'I'll make him a present of it,' or, 'I'll discharge the duties gratuitously,' than to mutter inwardly, 'Why should I?' or 'I may as well ask for another hundred while I'm about it.' The effort to be virtuous, in frequent instances, dies away before its purpose is completed; but meditated vice rarely rises, by the second thought medium, into pure and exalted virtue. Even when second thoughts come to a right purpose, they generally come in the wrong place. They thrust themselves in to break off a match after a heart has been won, and a family thrown into convulsions; but they never make their appearance at the heels of the declaration of love, when it might more easily have been tripped up. Second thoughts have an awkward habit of being too late.—They have a knack of sending the reprieve after the victim has been turned off.—*Sketches from Life, by the late Laman Blanchard.*

THE ORATOR AND THE NEWSPAPER.

Compare the Orator, one of the noblest vehicles for the diffusion of thought with the Newspaper, and we may gain a faint glimpse of the ubiquitous power of the latter. The Orator speaks to a few hundreds; the Newspaper addresses millions. The words of the Orator may die on the air; the language of the Newspaper is stamped on tablets imperishable as marble. The arguments of the Orator may follow each other so rapidly that the majority of the audience may struggle in a net of ratiocination; the reasoning of the Newspaper may be scanned at leisure without a fear of perplexity. The passion of the Orator inflames an assembly; the feeling of the Newspaper electrifies a continent. The Orator is for an edifice; the Newspaper for a world; the one shines for an hour; the other glows for all time. The Orator may be compared to the lightning that flashes over a valley for a moment, to leave it again in darkness; the Newspaper to a Sun, blazing steadily over a whole earth, and "fixed on the basis of its own eternity." Printing has been happily defined "the Art which preserves all Arts." Printing makes the Orator himself more than an Orator. It catches up his dying words and breathes into them the breath of life. It is the speaking gallery through which the Orator thunders in the ear of Ages. He leans from the tomb over the cradle of rising generations. Nor does the Art confine itself to the pasturage of him alone. The gorgeous though evanescent visions of the Poet are preserved:

"——— to which
Going o'er earth like a pure flame that glows
Larger and clearer, with one mind all men
Rise up for reverence."

The choring thoughts of Music are also seized and sent down, sparkling and mingling and roaring in one mighty stream of harmony through the misty chasms of Time. Music, that storms on listening multitudes the diapason of gods, or

"——— that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentler on the spirit lies
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies!"