THE CHOLERA-FIEND;

—OR—

THE PLAGUE SPREADERS OF NEW YORK.

A MYSTERIOUS TALE OF THE PESTILENCE

IN 1849.

BY CHARLES E. AVERILL.

AUTHOR OF


'Such wert thou, proud city, when o'er thee had swept,
Resistless and mighty, the pestilence 'dread?—
When came the plague-scorch, which for ages had slept,
And thy title was written,—'The Place of the Dead.'

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY GEORGE H. WILLIAMS, AT THE OFFICE
OF 'THE UNCLE SAM,' No. 52, WASHINGTON STREET.

BOSTON:

1850.
THE CHOLERA-FIEND.

BOOK FIRST.

HOW THE CHOLERA CAME TO THE CITY.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUACK DOCTOR'S SHOP.

LIHU QUACKENBOSS, Apothecary and Surgeon, No. —, Murray-street, was the stereotype sign of a certain New York dealer in drugs and medicines, who flourished in the renowned metropolis of Manhattan, so very late as the year of our Lord, Eighteen Hundred and Forty-nine; and who rejoiced in the possession of a by no means unprofitable 'run of custom,' probably so styled, because it is the custom to run up the profits at a tolerably liberal average of from fifty to a thousand per cent., all in the course of trade, which is, of course.

At any rate, such, in fact, was Mr. Ethan Quackenboss's calling and profession, tho' there were certainly some malevolent individuals, who presumed to insinuate that it was more profession than anything else; that the calling mostly consisted in the daily rounds of his drug-carrying office-boy; and to venture, also, more than one quiet hint that a part, at least, of this worthy man's name, was no misnomer!

But, as the good Dr. Quackenboss, himself, happened to be one of those sleek, oily, fat, round, sanctimonious-looking little personages of whom the world always has a good opinion, and who almost as invariably turn out to be some conspicuous ecclesiastic funcionary, deacon, warden, elder or vestryman, in the particular sectarian denomination to which they are morally sure to belong,—this must be set down, accordingly, in the long account of sheer 'Evy & Malice,' a well-known firm—dealing in human infirmities—which ought by this time to have a pretty little responsibility resting upon its broad shoulders against the day of judgment.

It was exactly the first of May—which, everybody knows, is 'moving-day' in New
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

York—the first of May, 1849, which, everybody must know, was no longer ago than last year. And, as seven o'clock was the evening and six o'clock was the morning, the little fat apothecary bustled from the little back-room into the little front-shop, where a small, shrewd-looking urchin was very busy assorting medicines behind the counter. But as his sharp, twinkling eye turned from his diminutive assistant, with a searching look around the shop, the keen, round face of the good doctor, which, on first entering the shop, had exhibited a suddenly ruffled aspect, all at once assumed a more marked and smiling countenance, as he advanced to the off-duty door and proceeded, with the same scrupulous amiable demeanor, to glance about and before the lighted windows, seeming with the view of satisfying himself, beyond the possibility of mistake, that no customer or other lingerer was in the immediate vicinity. And just as he was finishing this somewhat cursory survey of his premises—the utter object of which was not clearly apparent—there was a sudden sound of a sharp chuckle behind him, and then a very small and high-pitched voice saying:

"There's no 'un there, sir. Coast's clear, now!"

At this intimation, uttered in a rather peculiar tone by his office-boy, the doctor turned short round, with a face which, in the very short time before mentioned, contrived to exhibit a somewhat extraordinary change of expression, and looked full at the juvenile speaker.

"The coast is clear, hey? Clear, is it?—well, I'll ask you what it means by that!"

A broad grin came upon the shrewd face of the young fellow at this abrupt interrogatory, and the boy said, with an abrupt effort to keep his countenance,—

"Oh, nothing! nothing at all, sir; only—"
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

at the offender, and, in a voice over which he had lost all command, hissed, menacingly—

"Boy! if you ever breathe to a living being that I—"

"Swear!" suggested the boy, with perfect gravity.

"Shut your head, sir! don't let me hear you open your mouth again. I say, if ever you do so much as hint at such a soul that—your master sometimes so far forgets himself, owing to an uncommonly ardent temperament and an excitable imagination, as to to—to—I'll—I'll skin you—skin you alive, and—"

The apothecary's boy skillfully performed a piece of pantomime, which did not lack significance.

"There's plenty of skin to work on, sir, and precious little flesh."

"Break every bone in your body," thundered the little man, who was hot to be stopped in his withering course.

"Thank you! I'm all skin and bone, that's a fact; and it's all owing to good eating, perhaps."

We think it more than likely that this inimitable oration might have led to still more lamentable consequence, with peculiar reference to the personal comfort of the luckless Master Mark, the apothecary's boy, had not that remarkably quick-witted young gentleman, just in time to arrest the thunderbolt which he saw coming, suddenly whispered, with a cautionary point of direction of all the muscles of his face—

"Hush! hush, doctor, sir!"

A customer coming, sir,

There was something actually marvellous in the rapidity with which the apothecary's slack visage underwent transformation, from fierce savagery to amiable; until it settled down into an expression of the utmost benignity and benevolence.

His voice became all at once modulated to the softest tones of urbanity, while the hand which had been raised, rather threateningly, was lowered to rest gently on the head of the grinning urchin, with a most paternal gesture, as Doctor Quackenboss said, in the same fatherly way—

"Yes, my boy! let this be your guiding rule through life, this precious precept of pure Christian meekness and charity; this beautiful moral, which is so—so—morally beautiful, I may say; and O, remember, dear youth, on no account to lose your hold on the blessed truths—"

"Hold on, yourself, doctor, was the dear youth's rather irrelevant interruption—"

"There's no need of wasting any more beautiful morals just now, sir, seeing that it is only Parson Mathew's darke that's coming this way."

"Parson Mathew's darke!" with a thrilling abatement of his zeal, repeated the moral apothecary, and looking a little sheepish at the announcement.

"Yes, sir—the parson's darke."

"Ahem! — I thought, boy, you said it was a customer."

"Why so I did, so I did, sir," energetically reiterated the vigilant young gentleman who had so skillfully telegraphed the approaching party. "Why, sir, he's one of our very best patrons, he is—I—ha, ha!"

And indulging in this eulogium accommodation, the precious lad leaned back against the counter, apparently overcome by some unknown association, which amused him hugely.

The inscrutable apothecary was getting very angry again, when, for both parties, a burly tall individual of the pure Ethiopian species, presented his huge figure in the doorway and clumsily advanced to the counter, rolling his huge goggle eyes around the shop, as he asked for some medicine which the boy appeared remarkably6 anxious in providing him with.

Sarsaparilla? Sarsaparilla? Oh, yes—here it is, Gumbo."

And the drug was speedily boiled up by the lad, after a moment's fumbling at a side-drawer, and handed to the negro, with the inquiry—

"Well, Gumbo, what's the sarsaparilla for now, old fellow?"

"For de ole complaint, de ole complaint, Massa Mark," replied the African, with a sigh of alarming profundity, while he cast a most deprecatory downward glance at his own athletic person. "Dar am no longer any doubt un de subject—it am 'sumption dat am killin' me."

"Consumption!" echoed Quackenboss, in no small astonishment, as he measured from head to foot the gigantic negro, who looked as if he could have choked a polar bear with the most perfect ease. "Well, by the odds, that fellow is pathetically—consumption, did you say?"

The colored gentleman rolled up the white hair of his eyes with a deplorable air of desperate resignation.

"Yes, Massa Doctor, dat's um. De nigger hasn't long to live in dis world. It am 'sumption, I tell you; dis nigger am axed off dat."

And the afflicted African departed, giving vent to a deep groan from the lowest recesses of a pair of lungs probably made of cast iron.

The doctor looked after him with a shrewdness of the shoulders, then turned toward his assistant, on the corners of whose mouth he no sooner detected a slight smirk than he demanded, angrily, to know what he was laughing at.

This query proved to be a very injudicious one, for the moment it was propounded the young disciple of Esculapius forthwith went off into an explosion of the most extravagant merriment, of which he finally got so far the better as to be able, with some difficulty, to make answer.—

"Why, at that 'ere darkie, to be sure,—He'll be the death of me yet, he will. I never saw such a case as he is, in all my life, afore. There's always something the matter with that nigger. There ain't a bull-dog in York that's stouter or ruggedger nor he is, and yet there's everlastingly some one complaint a-tribbin' of him."

"Is there?" queried the doctor, interrupting, with a sigh of considerable resignation.

"Just so, doctor; just so, to a T! I still more briskly responded the lad, with this beautiful metaphorical illustration of his meaning. 'He's never well, that nigger ain't. He's had the dropsy, the dyspepsy, the liver complaint, the consumption, the—"the hyderpluh—"

"Eh! the Hydropluh!" exclaimed the little apothecary, with an unforgotten start of alarm.

"Yes, the hyderpluh! he always has that regular, in the dog-days; and now he's got the gallopin' consumption, and is going to take the first train of cars for the big railroad depot in the valley of the shudder of death. Oh, he's an awful victim of disease, that darky is—but I prescribe, I physicks him, I do."

"For physics him! indeed," said Doctor Quackenboss, taken a little aback; and pray, sir, when did you set up for a practitioner?—tell me that sir."

"Only since old Gumbo aquired my medical licence," said the youngest, with his slyly mouth stretched from ear to ear. "Perhaps, too, I fixes him, whenever I gets hold of him, and prays I don't. I never makes him sick on purpose, oh no! I hand always make a practice of giving him the very medicine he axes for."

"And don't you, sir?" inquired the astonished apothecary.

In course I dose,—oh, yes! May be it was Sarsaparilla he got, and may be it wasn't
and if it was, may be I didn't put nothing into the bottle, out of that 'ere drawer, just the color of the same paper.

But, while this ingenious experimenter in the probable virtues of powdered tobacco when taken into the human stomach, went off into a fresh convulsion as he pointed to the drawer labelled 'Scotch Surf,' his worthy master, meanwhile, was, in all likelihood, suffering his anger against the amateur practitioner to be considerably cooled by the consoling reflection that the unfortunate Gumbo would only come back again the sooner, and, for once, in unquestionable need of medicine.

Comfotred by this humane consideration, the corpulent vendor of drugs contented himself, therefore, with a slight shake of the head by way of fatherly reproval of such juvenile picaresquies, and suddenly appeared to recollect something previously forgotten.

"Here, Mark, run after that black fellow and bid him tell his master, the Rev. Mr. Matthews, that, Dr. Quackenbush wishes to see him at his office this evening, on important business—he will understand me! Or stop—on second thoughts, you may go yourself; that black rascal might make some mistake. You know where Mr. Mathews lives, don't you, Mark?"

"Know where old Gumbo's master lives? I should hope I did, sir! Don't I carry medicines there, and ain't it in the Parson's own church that you're head-vestryman?"

"Chief elder and vestryman, I repeat the doctor, composantly, as Mark glibly ran on,—"

"Exactly, sir; don't sit in the gallery on Sundays, and see you pass round the piece? I know the parson like a book."

"Do you!" ejaculated rather suddenly the chief elder and vestryman, with a half-apprehensive cast of the eye, and what appeared a very unnecessary emphasis. "Ahem! well, be off with yourself to Bratton Matthews, and be sure that you deliver my message correctly."

"All right, sir; I'll be back again in two shakes of a donkey's ears."

And with this 'elegant comparison the apothecary's lad was springing briskly over the marble-top counter, when his master hastily interposed,—

"Stop! stop, boy! you needn't come back again, afterwards. Take your basket of medicines along with you, to deliver on your way.

"All delivered, sir; two good hours ago," said the boy.

"Well, well," rejoined the apothecary, with some vexation in his manner. "Then you may have the rest of the evening to yourself."

"'Nuff said, sir! I'm off!" replied the lad, quietly and willingly enough; though he looked at his employer evidently in some little surprise at the permission granted. "Hello! what's that?"

This abrupt exclamation and interrogation were caused by a sound in the little drugstore, closely approaching that sonorous noise usually emitted by the human lungs in giving utterance to a cough.

It startled the boy—for it was too remote to proceed from the doctor, who was close at hand; and he was perfectly certain that the cough had never originated in his own throat.

The lad threw his quick, shrewd eye round the shop; there was no one else there. Then, naturally enough, he looked at the doctor again.

The latter seemed to be considerably startled, likewise.

Immediately he fell to coughing, himself. (This time there could be no doubt about its origin.) And nervously drawing forth his handkerchief, complained that he had quite a bad cold.

The shop boy stared at his employer for a moment, and then said, with a meaning laugh,—

"Oh! if you was, then was it? I thought there was some one else in the shop. You scared me."

"Did I?—he! he!—very good, said the little druggist, with a rather faint laugh. "Oh yes! I am troubled—a—a decidedly bad catarrh. There, there; it's getting dark, and you may go.

"Shan't I light up first?" asked the lad, lingering.

"No, no; I shall shut up early tonight," hurriedly answered Dr. Quackenbush, who, for some reason, appeared to be particularly desirous to accelerate his assistant's departure.

"Here's a penny for spending money; you may have the night to yourself."

The apothecary's boy looked hard at his master, but too shrewd not to take the piece of money, and with it the hint, the next moment Master Mark was half-way round the street corner, whistling forth at the top of a most vigorous purr of lungs, as he went, the melifluous burden of that classic melody of modern time, with a popular variation,—

"Oh, Susanna! Don't you cry for me; I'm going to California, For sol is gold for thee!"

The druggist waited till his musical young gentleman was out of hearing; then, first looking cautiously all around, and closing and locking the shop-door upon himself, he hastened to the back of the store, at the same time muttering between his lips, only—

"There! I have got rid of that infernal boy, at last."

Passing in quickly into the little back room we at first mentioned, he approached a closet-door in the wall, unlocked and flung it open.

All was darkness beyond. But, peering eagerly into this darkness, in a low, wavy pitch of voice the little apothecary called, quickly,—

"Come out! come out! There's no danger now."
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

There was nothing very startling, it is quite true, in this announcement, but there was in the expression of countenance with which it was delivered, a malignant coolness, heightened by the profligacy of deftness, that made the pithless dealer in drugs and medicines quail before his attack, freezing look, and change his tone, as, after a half-suspecting pause, he said,—

"Well, well; you know it was for your own good I spoke. That unlucky cough came very near betraying you to the boy; but I am not at all sure the little knife did not go away suspecting something, as it was.

Then what did you let him go away, at all, for? demanded the man sharply. 'Better let me have broken his back—and make him like me.'

The hunchback scowled darkly as he looked down upon his own uncouth form.

The druggist seemed to shrink before his savage companion, replying,—

"Well, well, there is no use working yourself into a fury about it. I am pretty certain I kept him in the dark, notwithstanding; and, at any rate, he's off for the rest of the evening," added Mark's master, 'with a penury for pocket-money.'

"Which he don't get very often, I suppose," sarcastically suggested the hunchback, with a grim smile which did not appear to please Dr. Quackenbush.

"Well, and what of that? what if he don't, I should like to know. Didn't I take the brat out of the street, and feed, and lodge, and save him from starving, when—when—when the—"

And for some reason or other, the doctor chose to stop short, and, with a little more stammering, added,—

"But that's neither here nor there. I've been too kind to him—a great deal, I have. That boy don't earn his salt—he don't; and, what's worse, he's the aggravating creature I ever set eyes on. Why, you believe—"

The hunchback took the boy, Quackenbush instantly interrupted the deformed.

"Have we something else to do, besides talking about this young jackass? If not, why the d— I was I boxed up here, like a chicken stealing fox in a spring-trap, to prevent my being seen on your premises? Where is this precious person that was to meet both of us here tonight?"

"I have sent for him," said the doctor; 'the boy, Mark—"

"D— that boy," angrily cried the hunchback. 'You are erriously dragging him in. I'll break his back, if I catch him.'

"No you won't," said the doctor, with a prophetic shake of the head.

"Won't I, though?" was the fierce retort,—

"Who's to prevent me?"

"You couldn't catch him," replied the druggist, with considerable asperity. Tried that thing too often myself, that he did! But, as I was going to say, the lad has gone to remind the— the Reverend Brother of his appointment here.

"Why," demanded the Deformed, 'did you think there was any probability of his forgetting it?"

"No," answered the druggist, readily. 'I did not send the lad as a reminder, but only as an excuse to get rid of him."

"And the priest?" asked the hunchback.

"Just as the doctor was proceeding to reply, the shop-bell was rung, in a peculiar manner. Making an expressive sign to the hunchback, the apothecary hastened to unlock the closed door of the drug-store, and then the Deformed, from within, heard the whispered sound of voice.

Presently Quackenbush rejoined him, in company with a third person.

The latter, who entered with a somewhat hesitating step, was a tall, spare man dressed in black brocaded with the white cravat which denoted his clerical profession. His head was quite bald, above the brow, which were high, but narrow; and perhaps the most peculiar characteristic of his countenance, was its extreme and ghastly pallor.

He started back as his eye rested, for the first time, upon the repulsive person of the Deformed.

This movement was instantly noted by the hunchback.

"So, sir, you shrink from me, do you?— You shrink from the mis-shape monster as you would from some unsightly toad that might happen to cross your path. I like that! I like to have men quake and tremble before the wretch they make a scoff and a by-word of; the very dog they spit upon and mock and laugh at, as if he were a dog, and not a human being like themselves. Here I look at me well, and tell me if I am not the devil's own instrument in the work of death that we three are to plan out and execute? Look! I say."

The clergyman, at this strange address, uneasily moved on his feet and looked from the speaker to the apothecary, with an expression of countenance that evinced small relief for the plain, blunt words with which he found himself thus accosted.

"You use scant ceremony, sir," he said, with a trembling lip.

"Ceremony! harshly repeated the ill-favored stranger, with a laugh of bitter irony. Precious little need of ceremony, of all other things, between three honest gentlemen, me, as we are, to work out three such ends by one and the same common means. Humph! talk of ceremony, will you, between a money-grabbing, avaricious doctor, who would bury the whole city, if each man's death would bring him in a dollar—a licentious priest, who would ride over the ruin of the daughters, wives and mothers of his congregation, to the gratification of his sordid passions and most holy desires; and, lastly, a distorted monster, who—"

A sudden and more than half-threatening motion, upon the minister's part, caused him to leave his harangue half finished, and confront the former with a steady look from his cold, gray eye.

The clergyman had twice raised his hand as if to strike the speaker where he stood, but the other's iron front seemed to daunt him—or, possibly, the influence of some other motive beside fear, alone.

In truth there were reasons—as we shall soon see—why he did not wish to quarrel with his strange acquaintance—reasons which had brought him here, and which he would not willingly lose sight of, even in retreat.

Inwardly those reasons actuated him now to check the angry impulse, and his uplifted hand fell listlessly beside him, without th-
THE CHOLERA Fiend.

meditated blow; while, with a quiet sneer, the hunchback said,—

'Ah! you have thought better of it! I like your prudence. Quite right—quite right—merely for the sake of a hard knock or two, it would never do to lose all that you have set your heart upon, by making an enemy of me.'

He spoke with a peculiar intonation that made the minister start nervously, and his pale cheek grew paler yet.

'Fish man,' he impatiently continued, 'what earthly use is there in trying to dissemble, this way? Come, the sooner you throw aside the parson's smooth face and sanctimonious look, the better it will prove for you. It's time we understood each other—and to convince you that I, for one, do understand you fully, all that I have now to do is to pronounce two words—two words will do—'

'The Cholera!' he repeated both the preacher and the druggist, with a strange energy, and a glance full of fearful but hidden meaning, passed between the two.

'The cholera.' You have heard that name before. It is now advancing toward this city, with slow but certain strides. Already it is raging in St. Louis—in a month, in a week—may, even in one short day—it may be here.

The preacher shuddered slightly.

'At any hour,' went on the hunchback, and with the same strong but secret significance, 'the scourge may be among us, with its work of death and dread. Newton Mathews, we are preparing for it!'

There was a terrible excitement in the speaker's manner, as well as a mysterious purpose.

The clergyman, who at first had started at the mention of his name, made another movement, but, this time, it was a motion of absorbing interest.

'We are preparing for it; you, getting ready for the cholera! But not in fear, in terror, or dismay—'

Then, with an accent of ferocious joy he added,—'We hail its coming and drink to its health!'

Involuntarily did the minister shrink back. The Deformed laughed aloud.

'Ay, ay! and why should we not? What to all others is a curse, to us must prove a blessing! Each one of us three, here, has his own end to gain. You, to make money. He glanced with ill-concealed contempt at the oily apothecary.

'You,' (and his look of bitter irony returned again to the minister,) 'you, Newton Mathews, to find, in the pestilence, the means of ministering to the revered purposes of a libertine priest, who would fain be rid of one wife that he may take another—'

'Very true,' smiled the druggist, but as if scorned by a red-hot coal. 'Who told you that!—who told you that?'

The hunchback, with his cool smile, gazed at him.

'Why, man, that is as good as confessing it. It is quite enough that I know you for what you are!'

'Ah! what mean you?—what am I? was the last retort.

'A minister of the gospel, with a loving, eccentric, a living worth at least three thousand dollars a year; and last, but not least, an amiable wife, whose greatest misfortune seems to be, that she has a sister much handier and younger, than herself, whom you would very much like to call Mrs. Newton Mathews; also, since the young lady is not to be won in any way short of the rite of marriage.'

This time there was no response to the sneering speech—no interruption—no fierce retort, as previously. The clergyman stood trembling like a leaf.

Satisfied, seemingly, with the impression he was producing, the hunchback mercifully persisted,—

'Well, is it a thing to be wondered at, then, that you, though a meek and pious teacher of the church, should have become a little impatient of the bar between you and your wife's pretty sister?'

Again he paused to mark the strong effect of all he was saying, then, in a short, stern tone, abruptly demanded,—

'Now, sir! in one word, is it not by the help of the cholera that you hope to make this handsome sister-in-law your wife?'

Whether it was that he had had time enough given him for reflection; whether it was the repetition of the ominous sounding pestilence, or that the cord had been already stretched to its greatest tension, and the revulsion was now coming; certain it is, that the minister's whole air and manner underwent an almost immediate change, and his voice, for the first time, became quite collected and composed, as he laid his hand on the hunchback's arm, saying feebly,—

'That is sufficient! I see we understand each other. With our common friend, the doctor, here, I am better acquainted; yourself I only know as what he has described to you, as one of the most desperate characters in the church, whom, on that very account, he has selected as the most fitting agent in the dangerous undertaking we have on foot, and in which you must be the leader. Am I right?'

'The Deformed smiled grimly.

'Plain words, Newton Mathews! plain words, but to the point; I like you all the better for it. I will show you that you have not mistaken your man in making common cause with one who has such good reason as I, the hunchback, have, to be a guerdon to all mankind.'

'Woman!'—money! he ejaculated, with a wild laugh and a snerc; 'what are they to revenge—a good round hatred of everything human? Give me that I give me that, and you may have the rest. Good! I shall make you a first-rate tool in helping you to satisfy both avarice and lust, most pious priest and worthy doctor, by means of—'

He lingered designately upon the utterance, the better to enunciate, with slow and fiendish emphasis,—

'Yes! by means of the cholera!'

And again, the breathless lips of his auditors repeated, fearfully, that dread name,—

'The cholera!'

But the next moment the preacher, by a hurried gesture, gave token of his wish to change his companions' attention.

'Seeing that he had arrested it, after a moment's hesitation, in which he seemed to be struggling with some repugnant impulse, he proceeded, with the same appearance of eager haste, to say,—

'I have one word to say to you both, which should have been said before. Since we last communicated together, I have learned one fact which I am sorry to say, will interfere with our plans.'

'Ah!' exclaimed the Deformed, quickly; while the apothecary looked doubtfully at both the speakers.

'Perhaps ruin them altogether,' added the minister.

'The hunchback started and muttered an oath.

'The preacher hurriedly continued, addressing him directly,—

'It is perfectly true, as you have said, that this pestilence was marching toward New York, eastward coming from St. Louis, with its dead and dying in its wake. But you did not mention, what is equally true, and equally important, that its influence, in this city will be comparatively light.'

'The growl of a wounded bear issued from the hunchback.

'The devil,—ahem!' stammered the little apothecary.

The preacher anxiously marked the effect on both.
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

Comparatively light, I said. By which I mean that it will not be felt here with the severity that has characterized it throughout the West.

The heart-like sound was still more fiercely repeated.

"This will prove, undoubtedly, the fact," the minister proceeded, uneasily looking toward his utterer. "Men of science tell us that local causes will greatly moderate its virulence; that the farther East it journeys, the milder is the form it takes—that this mighty city, which suffered so terribly in 1852, will, in the present instance, escape with little injury from the ominous visitor. What do you say to this?"

"Say to it," said the hunchback, gruffly, "with a gloomy brow. "All I have got to say is, that it's cursed unlucky. Our cake is done already, I'm very much afraid."

And he ground his teeth tightly together as he spoke.

"This is bad news—bad news," added the doctor, in a whining tone, and with a very grave shake of the head.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STARTLING PROPOSAL.

DEAD silence fell upon the three men. The city outcast remained with his huge head sunk upon his profligate breast; his stern eye bent on the floor, and his shaggy eyebrows knitted into one another, in the intensity of steadfast thought. More than once his savage visage was contorted by the angry expression of disappointment, each time succeeded by that iron look of deliberate, determined, inexorable reflection.

Suddenly the hunchback's head was raised with a violent jerk. A gleam of joy darted from the cavern-like hollows of those deep-set eye-balls, and there struggled through his clenched lips a suppressed sound, like the smothered hiss of a snake.

Before his perplexed associates could comprehend the cause of his passionate excitement, that excitement was gone, and he had resumed his usual icy demeanor. But their wonder was changed to startled surprise, when they heard the apothecary's shop echo no less abruptly to the sound of the deformed man's discordant laughter.

"What! monotonously cried the hunchback, "this information does not please you? You are in a humane mood now—the milk of human kindness has turned a little sour, just now, and—and—it does not suit you to learn that the dreamed4reformed man may visit us so lightly."

For a moment the deformed paused, as if to note the effect his sarcasm was taking, then proceeded:

"Not that I mean to imitate anything against your philanthropy—oh, no! You are a good priest; one of the Lord's anointed, who daily looks upon the grim old chasms as a right proper judgment upon the ungodly and the sinner, and who would think it flying in the face of Providence to minster at the blazing of Satan and Gomorrah."

And again the outcast laughed aloud, in the withering sarcasm which had caused the minister so often to quail.

Then his sneering look fell on the druggist, who, with open mouth stood watching him.

"You, too—you are an honest trader; yes, a humane and tender-hearted doctor, no brimful of brotherly love and benevolence, considereate creature! I that it really distresses you to think how many hundred of your brother-quacks must starve, if the cholera—or just some other such blessing should not luckily, turn up."

The deformed crossed his long lean arms before him, curving still more his distorted spine, and gloated forth upon them both, with his keen hard eye gleaming with a devilish meaning.

"Is this? That, as the cholera promises to run so mild a race, we must take the necessary measures to give it the poison, the severity, the danger that it lacks. That if the cholera will not come to town of its own accord, then we must find a way to force it here!"

With an ejaculation of horror and of terror, stronger, even than his utter astonishment, Mathews, the minister, recoiled; as did the confounded apothecary.

It was a moment before the former of the two could recover the speech of which amazement had deprived him.

"Impossible!" he cried, as if in a dream. "The idea is impossible as it is terrible!—Means—what means, in God's name, could we take to spread the cholera? Impossible!"

"There is a way, I tell you," almost screamed the ruffian, "and I have thought of it. A way to spread the cholera—yes, you have named it well. Quackenboss!—a light!"

Frightening from head to foot, the stupefied apothecary obeyed. A moment, and it was in the hands of the hunchback.

A way of the city!—this is what I wanted. Leave me alone by myself, and I'll lay a plan before you, by means of which the prevalence of 1849 may, in its midst, force, be stamped, by human agency, with all the horrors of the cholera in 1852!"

With this word on his lip and the map in his hand, the outcast darted into the same dark corner from which we have seen him originally emerge; the foible-like triumph and merriment of his last look, sending a shudder through the frames of the two men left behind.

The renewed silence that followed was broken first by the druggist, who, prompted by some motive best known to himself, abruptly turned toward the preacher, repeating..."
quickly, the word last uttered by the hunchback.

The cholera in 1832. That makes me think of a wild legend of that fearful year of pestilence and death. Come! to make the time pass quicker, while that born devil is working at his chart, shall I tell you this strange tale of the cholera times?

Engrossed in his own reflections, the parson did not answer.

"I will tell it to you. Perhaps it may give you an insight of some of the secrets of the terrible agent we are about to press into our service—Lito con gold from it; you, to make yourself the lawful husband of your living wife’s sister."

The preacher started.

"Ha! I thought that allusion would arouse you. Ask, you shall hear my legend—it is a terrible one."

The preacher Mathews waived his hand—

Speak he could not—his excitement was too great.

Unperceived by him, Quackenboss cast a peculiar look upon the clergyman, and with a suppressed but singular smile, prepared to commence the narration he seemed so desirous his companion should hear.

---

CHAPTER IV.

A LEGEND OF THE CHOLERA IN 1832.

BEFORE, however, we allow Dr. Quackenboss to proceed with his story, it is proper that we should make the reader somewhat better acquainted with the history of his clerical companion, who was to be his listener in the strange and exciting relation he had promised.

The Rev. Newton Mathews was the wealthy pastor of one of the largest and most flourishing congregations in the city; but to what particular denomination he belonged, we are not at liberty to say, and for the reason that this same Rev. Mr. Mathews is both a living and a well-known character, whose reputation and whose deeds have filled the largest place in the public ear and eye.

The minister had been several times married.

The last time save one, he had united himself to a wealthy widow lady, with the incumbrance of only a son by her former husband, a third of whose large property became her own at his decease.

She had been the third wife of the clergyman, but had died suddenly within a few years after her re-marriage, leaving Mathews the entire estate she had brought him and the guardianship of her young son, whose fortune was wholly independent of his mother’s. And then the thrice-widowed minister led to the altar his present wife—the fourth and last—a lady of his congregation, of considerable personal attractions, and the elder of two sisters. The younger had resided with them, since the marriage; and it is with this fair relative and inmate of the pastor’s family that our story will have much in common.

As for Mr. Mathew’s step-son, by his previous wife, this young man was a midshipman in the Navy, at the present time; but though he kept up an occasional intercourse with the clergyman’s new family, it was rumored that the young roisterer and his revered father-in-law, Mr. Newton Mathews, were not on the best of terms.

With respect to the minister himself, his third marriage, as we have seen, had placed at his disposal the widow’s large property; while each of his two former wives had also brought him a considerable portion; so that the preacher Mathews now, at the time of his fourth union, in very affluent circumstances.

The present Mrs. Mathews, it is true, had brought him little beside her youth and her good looks; but there were those among the number of his acquaintances, who smiled and winked, when alluding to the subject, and whispered their belief that the clergyman of—Church knew how to prize beauty as well as the best of them: that no one had a quicker eye for a handsome woman than the Rev. Mr. M.

No such scandal, however, found currency among his parishioners; it was confined to the ungodly without the pale of his pious charge.

By his devoted congregation, their pastor was honestly regarded as a pattern Christian, and a saint; in fact, his talents as a preacher were of a high order, and the rigid austerity of his manners was such as to command, to a like extent, their reverence and respect.—Nevertheless, the nodders and the winkers counted over his four wives, and only nodded and winked the more.

But this was not quite all. Mr. Mathews having been four times to the mill, it followed that he was looked upon as decidedly a marrying man; and an immense favor, as a matter of course, among all the female part of his large congregation. No surer evidence of his popularity is, consequently, adducible.

As it was, therefore, Mrs. Newton Mathews the fourth, had been little more than a year the successor of his three former wives, at the time, and on the night, when her revered husband and his worthy elder, the doctor, stood together in the apothecary’s shop, waiting the expected disclosures of their hunchback companion, and occupying the meantime in the relation of the somewhat peculiar narrative, the startling character of which the sleek little apothecary had spoken of in such strong terms.

Silent and pale, and even without seeming to hear, the city-clergyman listened while the quack began—

---

Just seventeen years ago, commenced the doctor, looking keenly at his only auditor, the cholera in this country. That you know; and in New York it held its reign of death and desolation, as it had never reigned before or since.

It was in Montreal, Canada, too, in all its terrors, and at that time I was in practice, in that city, as surgeon and apothecary. I had business enough, I do assure you. I was in clover then.

I was not employed at the hospitals, yet exactly a day passed that I had not twenty cases, at least. I made money hand over hand—made hundreds of dollars where I had made a sixpence before.

But I had one case of Cholera, in particular, that filled my pocket better even than this...It is of that very case I am now about to speak.

One evening, when the plague was raging at its greatest height, I was returning home from my office, chumming over the profits of the day, when I stopped on the very steps of the drug-shop, by a Catholic priest of Montreal.

I knew the monk well. He belonged to one of the three convents in the city; and we had already had dealings together, that paved the way for a tolerably good understanding between us.

Here the minister seemed to half arouse from his lethargy, and became faintly conscious that the other was speaking to him.

"Nor was it at all remarkable that such should be the fact. The first, life most of his brethren of the cowl, was not a little given to the infirmity from which not even St. David was exempt; and the consequence was, naturally enough, that, when the good father and one of the pious nuns had wandered from the path of duty, my services were rather acceptable in the way of arresting the threatened scandal from the church. Eh! do you hear me, brother Mathews?"

In fact, the minister, who had previously
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

...some signs of attention, now aroused himself, with some alacrity, and looked earnestly at the apothecary.

"Ah, you are listening, now!" said the latter. "I have not, I have some little speaking lesson to deliver to Protestant priests in this good town of Gotham. Eh! brother Mathews, eh? he is not too much the preacher; the clergyman's lips moving rapidly.

"That personage, however, shrank hastily from the danger of exposure; and replied only by an indignant but somewhat tremulous, though withering look.

The jocose doctor, who seemed to think that he had ventured rather too far, immediately resumed.

"I was not the one here nor there—" I had been useful to the holy monk, as I said, and he knew, well enough, he could trust me, and trust me he did, with a vengeance.

"His errand was a strange one, certainly. He spoke of things of two curious minds. One was a powder that would produce all the symptoms of the prevailing epidemic. The other was a sleeping potion, a narcotic, that might cause a deadly lethargy.

By the time the narrator had got thus far in his story, the minister had now become thoroughly interested. This was plainly to be seen, from an involuntary half-start on his part, and a sudden increase of pallor in his cheeks.

The druggist pursued his story.

"I, the priest, did not stop to say what he wanted of me. It was not my business to ask that; my business was to mix the drugs and ask for payment, which I did in the shape of the best gold coin in Canada.

"It was so much the more money in my pocket for that day's work; but I must say, my thoughts dwelt much less upon the solid cash, that night, than they did upon the prompt use to which the holy father intended to put that narcotic and the accompanying drug.

"But what are you talking to yourself about, there, Parson Mathews?" he suddenly added, as he observed the clergyman's lips moving rapidly.

And as those words the lips turned, they seemed to utter—

"The drug!—the narcotic—the cholera! Heaven's, what a resemblance!—what a striking coincidence!"

And he appeared to check himself in the middle of a word.

"The incoherent murmur then recovered himself, and said, and added—"

"Go on; go! I beg pardon for interrupting you. I was thinking of something else."

"Very well," continued the doctor, "but you must pay more attention, hereafter. The interest of the story is coming now.

"As I told you, the thing kept running in my mind; in fact, I had my suspicions and my manœuvres, but, like a wise man, I kept them to myself. What say you? do you think I did right?"

"You did—you did; quite right," resounded the preacher.

"I am glad that's your opinion. I did not repent my prudence, at all events," the doctor replied, with a half-smile. "Now listen a little better.

"This happened in the old Canadian town of Montreal, as I have told you, brother—and you must know that, as your pius elder was in a Catholic city, I was a very good Catholic in those times! I tell you this, Brother Mathews, merely to let you know how it was that I came to be attending mass at the convent, one fine morning—the same convent where this reverend father counted his beads and pattered his Ave, and—kissed the nun.

"Well, mass was soon over, and then we should have all gone home again, but for one thing more. We stopped to hear the funeral service read, over a good Catholic who had given up the ghost.

"This was a wealthy citizen of Montreal, a married man, who had been so accommodating as to die, and leave his wife a widow and the mistress of his fortune. He had died of the cholera, and rumor, which is rarely charitable, whispered that the lady would not die of grief at the bereavement, for her late husband had been somewhat jealous, and the fair dame herself was said to be somewhat too kind—to others were concerned.

"In fact, it was thought that the jolly monks themselves were not excluded from the number of her friends. Indeed, her pious father-confessor was supposed to be on highly confidential terms with her, in more senses than one, perhaps. But who this father-confessor of hers was—"

"By-the-bye, are you listening, Brother Mathews?"

The clergyman moved his hand from his forehead, which he had been tightly pressing, and replied—

"Yes, yes; go on!"

The doctor recommenced again—

"It was, if the truth must be told, none other than my friend of the drug and the sleeping powder: the good monk who was now at the funeral. Perhaps, therefore, being so close in the lady's confidence, he could pray with peculiar effect, for the repose of the dead man's soul.

"Poor fellow! the Cholera had made but short work of him; and there was nothing very wonderful in that, when so many died in an hour, and hundreds dropped dead in the street.

"There were terrible times in '32!—but glorious days for the doctors!"

"He was a rich man—so everybody went to his funeral. Perhaps, had it been otherwise, the attendance would have been a good deal more scanty, for his had been one of the most malignant cases, and the cholera, then, thought to be contagious.

"It was this general belief in the infectious properties of the dark disease, that was the cause of what would have been both shocking and startling under any other circumstances. The mysterious terror which the pestilence inspired, was universal throughout the city; and in all Montreal, no one was to be found willing to perform the usual office of stripping those who died of the dreadful scourge.

"This was a fact—the plague-striken were buried in their clothes—in the very garments they wore, when living. It had been the same in this instance. The dead man went to the tomb in his every-day suit, and the widow, in her weeds, followed him to his last, long home.

"By the way," said the apothecary, breaking off at this point, "I believe such was the custom, to some extent, even in this city, in 1832!"

"I believe it was," stammered the clergyman, as if some not unwelcome recollection rose before him.

"Just so, Brother. But it was unwholesome to die in London; they didn't even allow them coffins, then—to say nothing of the funeral service over the corpse—both of which, in this case, we had. But I must tell the rest seriously; what followed was solemn enough, God knows!"

And with an air much more grave than he had made use of before, the doctor proceeded to the final and most important part of his story, in the following terms:

"The funeral preliminaries over, then, in the convent church where he was to be buried the last pious offices were performed. The holy fathers offered up their prayers for the spiritual felicity of the deceased; the departed man's relations had taken their last look at their poor kinsman's face; and the coffin lid, which had been opened for a single moment, and shut as quickly, to prevent the..."
danger of contagion, was being nailed for the last time, over the motionless corpse—when three distinct, hollow knocks were given against the closed coffin's interior—there was a harsh, heavy, grating noise from within, like the bursting of iron rivets—and then, with a crash that made the vault rattle, the wooden cover flew suddenly off, and the full-dressed body of the dead choleræ-patient leaped half-way up in his prison, and fell over on his knees

In this plight passing, the druggist glanced keenly at the minister, whose eyes were fixed in a wild and mazy stare; but whether to watch his listener's consternation, or to take breath, merely, he had thus slapped, it was only to go on again,

'Lord bless you! it was then that I smelt the rat! I had not been a choleræ-doctor for nothing, that's a fact. Aha! I know now why the good priest came to me. I knew what the holy father-confessor wanted with the sickening-powder and the opiate! hey, brother Mathews, hey!' The preacher had bounded a pace backward from the spot where he had listened to the startling tale. His face, all the while ghastly and livid, was now strangely altered; the features, before so fixed and stony, were now convulsed and writhing, with a terrible agitation that possessed the whole man. While Quackenboss interrupted, once more scrutinized him with apparent astonishment, he heard him ejaculate—

'This coincidence! this hellish coincidence!' The quick-doctor took another look—a rapid but furtive one—at the strongly-moving minister; and his oily lips curved into a faint approach to a quiet smile. Then he said, cooly,

'I believe you have got St. Vitus' dance in you, to-night, brother.' This business of ours which that hump-back rascal is plaguing, has got the better of your nerves. But I have not told you quite all, yet. Shall I finish?'

Mathews, thus interrogated, made a strong effort to control himself, and replied with a quivering voice—

'Yes. Finish your devil's legend. I want to hear it out. Good, God! he murmured, 'can such coincidences come by mere chance? Can—'

The excited clergyman abruptly checked himself.

'Nervously still? hey? said the doctor composedly; 'well, it is a nervous story, I admit. A few words more will end it; in fact, I must make way with it before our friend in the closet, yonder, gets through with that chart of his.'

His eyes wandered to the closet; but the door had been closed by the hunchback behind him, and the gleam of his light through the interstices was all that told of his neighborhood. The preacher made a movement of apprehension as he followed the druggist's eye, and said—

'Do you think he could have heard you, Quackenboss?'

'No; or I should not now be telling you this story, was the reply, 'What little remains is soon disposed of—

'Brother Mathews, it was the priest's work and the widow's; they both wanted to be rid of the poor man, you understand? But the sleeping-potion was not strong enough; the momentary opening of the coffin had admitted the fresh air; that fresh air had brought back life, and conscious, and desperation's strength—and the corpse revived and burst the half-nailed coffin.'

'Revived and burst its coffin!' gasped the preacher. 'There, at least, the accursed coincidence ceases!' And a strange flush of exultation, as he spoke, brought returning color to his ash cheek.

'Why, what coincidences are you talking about? demanded the little apothecary, rather abruptly. 'How you keep harping on that word.'

'Harping on it! do I?' repeated the preacher, vaguely.

Then with another of his frequent attempts at self-command, which was productive of a still more icy and unnatural calmness, he inclined his head earnestly toward the doctor's now silent lips, and asked this question of him—

'Eliza Quackenboss, tell me, is this story that you have been relating to me, actually true?'

'Did not assure you so, in the outset? It is a veritable tradition of the jolly choleræ, a piece of my own experience.'

'True in every detail!' ran the next earnest query.

'Substantially so,' was the druggist's brief answer.

'Substantially! Then you have been coloring your story,' exclaimed the minister, half-angrily.

The wily Quackenboss, however, observed that he awaited his answer with the deepest anxiety.

CHAPTER V.

THE COINCIDENCES AND THE CONTRACTIONS.

If indeed I did the doctor, coolly, 'I'm afraid there's rather too much of the ghostly about the story to admit of much color in the case.'

Still,' maintained the preacher, sharply, 'you have drawn on fancy for some things!'

'Not for any of my facts. In the names of place and persons,' replied the doctor, 'I might have made some slight mistake for convenience sake.'

'Place and persons! place! echoed the preacher; 'why, was it not in Montreal—in Canada, then, that all this occurred? You told me so!'

'Why, yes, I believe I did. It's not always best to give places and names, you know—when others will do as well. 'No,' continued the doctor, in a very matter-of-fact sort of tone, 'it was not in Montreal. In point of fact, it was in—'

'Where? where, then?' interrupted the excited clergyman.

'To speak on the square, then, it was in New York.'

'In New York!' The faint flush of excitement, which, as we have mentioned, had so lately relieved the habitual pallor of his cheek, died out that instant, and left him more ghastly white than before.

The druggist did not fail—though still furiously—to mark the full effect of his words. Suddenly reawakened resentment flashed again from the eyes of Mathews.

'Quackenboss!' he exclaimed, 'you have deceived me. Why this folly! this absurdity. If it was in New York this thing really took place, and not in Montreal, what is all this nonsense about Canadian convents, and monks, and—'

'Ah!' said the doctor, not at all disconcerted; 'a trifling inconsistency, at first blush, I admit.'

'A trifling one—it is an irreconcilable one. Your whole tale is a tissue of fabrications, sir!'

'Tolerably sweeping remark, that, brother Mathews. But it must be confessed, the thing doesn't seem to hang together, exactly. It's pretty certain that there's no convents in New York, if you were to hunt a year of Sundays—and that's 365. And as for the father confessors—'
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

As he spoke he dashed right forward to the druggist's smirking face and fiercely grasped him by either shoulder, in a grip that rooted him to the spot, and then thundered forth.

"Speak, sir! In this, the last of your intentional misrepresentations of a—yes, too true tale—say, sir! have you not likewise lied—yes, lied, in saying that the chest was discovered—that—that the coffin was—burst open—that the corpse—that the corpse revived!"

Rigid as a marble, and full of astonishment in his looks, stood the Rev. Newton Mathews, awaiting the final answer which he had so peremptorily demanded.

But how was that answer given?

"Keep cool—keep cool, do, Brothar. On my soul I believe you are determined to go stark mad, unless you answer me quick. Well, I may as well confess that you're right—that the coffin was burst open; that the corpse did not revive; that the sleeping-powder was amply strong enough, and that, Newton Mathews, your third wife the supposed victim of the Cholera, was buried alive."

Without a word or groan, the guilty minister sank down.

As he fell, he struck sideways against the closed door of the hunchback's closet, which rattled in its rickety socket as it felt the weight of the falling man rebounding on the floor.

The doctor smiled one of his strange, shrill smiles, and stood silently looking on the swooning preacher. A voice behind him recalled him to himself.

CHAPTER VII.

NUMBER III. AND NUMBER IV.

CONFOUND it man! what is the matter?
do you mean to break the door down? demanded the occupant of the closet, giving the door a strong push outward, when he found that a slight one would not do.

But the body of the Rev. Mr. Mathews had fallen in such a manner against, that the opening of the closed door was by no means an easy task.

Grumbling with surprise and growling at the trouble, the outcast succeeded, by a third and more vigorous effort, in thrusting it open from within.

On seeing the nature of the impediment, the outcast stopped directly in the entrance of the obscure retreat, within which he had been maturing his ominous and mysterious designs.

Quackenbass, whose eye he met, appeared aware that some explanations were necessary on his own part, and in the character of his grotesque comrade seemed, also, to make him feel very certain that the sooner those explanations were given, and the more tersely, the better it would probably be—The distorted outcast was not a man to be trifled with.

Quackenbass made the unmasking, therefore, by saying—

"Pah! he has fainted—like a sick girl—because I have been raking up an old story about his third wife."

"Ah!" said the hunchback, winking; "did he love her so well? Wonder if he loved her as much as he does the fourth one—eh?"

"Why, I suppose so," replied the quack, with a laugh, "for he cut her days short, in pretty much the same way as he would like to do, with our help, in the case of his present lady."

"His third wife, you said," observed the outcast, musing; "so that was the way he disposed of her?"

"Yes; to make way for the Mrs. Mathews that is. He married the third wife for money—which was all he wanted of her—and as that was settled on herself, exclusive of all claims from her son, it went to him, as her husband, at her death—"
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

'Yes, my chart of the city, its streets, its buildings, and—its churchyards. You will then begin to know what I meant, by engaging to bring the cholera to New York, whether it would come or not.' I have the whole planned out, and ready to show you both, when you are both ready to hear.'

While the outcast was groaning his way, again, in the dark closet, where the apothecary's lamp scarce bashed the obscurity; the Doctor busied himself in professional efforts to call back the clergyman's wandering senses, and suspended animation.

It was the task of several moments; but by and by, the Rev. gentleman was again upon his feet, and by degrees was able to stand, and look around him.

The attentive apothecary gave him sufficient time to recover himself; and then when he saw him in a measure restored, deciding it best to avoid all recurrence to the dreadfully agitating recital through which he had obliquely passed, he called to the inmate of the closet:

'Are we ready now?'

'And so am I, at last!'

With these words the hunchback reappeared at the door of the closet, with the light; but just before he reached the outlet, his feet stumbled and he tripped headlong over some object which the gloom had prevented him from discerning, in reason to guard against the disagreeable accident.

The light was in one hand; the mysterious chart in the other. His hold of the latter, he let go, instinctively, in trying to save himself with his right arm; but the former fell with him, and under him, the weight of his huge body breaking the lamp into a hundred atoms, as the hunchback-bearer came thundering down upon it.
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

ral rough shakings to which it had been subjected, in its progress from the closet promised to turn out of a good deal of use, in treading it from the dingy zoating of age and dampness.

Had it been anything else but what it proved to be, the ruffled discoverer would probably have dashed it to pieces, or trodden it into fragments under foot.

As it turned out, therefore, the hunchback did not sacrifice it, directly, to a superious vengeance, but contended himself with another compensatory oath or two, and a closer examination of it.

However gloomy the demolition of the lamp might have left the dark close, there was still light enough streaming in through the window into the outer shop, from the flickering street door without, to show to him who held the picture, the framed portrait of a person whose dusky features he proceeded to scrutinize.

While the city-outcast did so, something very peculiar was manifest in the apothecary's actions.

When the outcast first appeared with the worm-eaten wooden frame in his grasp, the druggist had been seen, by the row nearly recovered minister, to start, change color, and then take a quick step forward, with outstretched arm, as if to snatch the portrait from the hand that held it.

The gesture was repeated, less decidedly, as he saw the examiner of the painting brush away the mildow from its face; and his lips opened twice, as though he would have said something to prevent it.

He altered his mind, however, to all appearance; and Mathews saw him draw back, though his oily face retained its look of un estados.

The preacher's observation was, on a sudden, recalled from the disturbed druggist to him in whose possession remained the portrait, and to whom his attention was now drawn, in consequence of a sound from the latter of the two, that struck him as singular in the extreme.

The sound was a choking, strangling sort of noise in the hunchback's throat; a kind of gurgling effort to suppress some strong emotion.

He could not see the outcast's face, for the portrait came between it and his range of vision. But in a moment the other lowered the painting and, coming forward, with the portrait, and a very wry face, said, by way of explanation,—

"I have decided, I believe I swallowed my cud of tobacco in that infernal fall I had! It came up in my gullet, just now, and half choked me."

"Did it? Shall I give you something to prevent it making you sick?" asked the doctor, making, at the same time, a motion to take the portrait.

"No, thank you. I've chewed the cud a little too often before the mast, aboard ship, to knock under at an ounce, or even more, in the locker."

"So you have been to sea, then, have you? Still, permitted the doctor, a little Cherokee Cholagogue—to take off the bad effects. Adorable preparation is that Cherokee Cholagogue!"

And the doctor endeavored, by a second effort, to get possession of the painting, which the hunchback did not seem inclined to yield.

"Thank you, I want none of your quick nostrums, replied the deformed, coolly, and seaming, for the first time, faintly conscious that the druggist was pulling very eagerly at the painting. "By the by, whose portrait is this?"

And he turned it so that both the minister and the apothecary could now make out the features of a very young and handsome female.

The doctor turned away with what appeared a muttered imprecation on seeing the portrait exposed.

Not so the clergyman. His languid form received, from within, a sudden impulse that caused him to extend his hands before impressive arm, and catch at the object with an activity strongly enough in contrast with his previous listlessness.

"Let me see it! let me see the portrait!" he cried, with an energy that occasioned the holder to let go his somewhat too tenacious grasp.

In fact, the hunchback, who had not surrendered it to the apothecary, now relinquished it without objection to the third person of the group.

The Rev. Mr. Mathews, in whose hands it now was, scanned the picture intently; and, as he so scanned it, a slight shiver ran thro' his frame, he turned aside his head and murmured,—

"I thought so!"

"What? inquired the deformed, quickly. "Quickensbush," he added, "whose portrait is this?"

That personage hesitated before he answered,—

"My daughter's!"

"Your daughter's!"

With a sudden look Quickensbush answered,—

"Yes; my daughter's—don't her!"

"If she was your daughter," said the inquirer, scanning him narrowly, "why do you damn her?"

"Because she disgraced me," said the druggist, sulkily.

"Disgraced you! repeated the other, with supercilious sneer. "Pray how did she manage to do that?"

The apothecary eyed the questioner as if he had a great mind not to answer at all, but finally he replied,—

"As girls usually do,—by the seducer's help."

"Seduced! eh?"

"Yes, and I turned her out of doors, d—n her."

"Turned her out of doors, eh? Humph! that's fatherly," sneered the outcast. "Well, what became of her?"

"Cursed her and her brut, too. I don't know and I don't care," was the heartless response.

"Don't care, eh? Comfortable feeling, that, when you don't know? By the bye, you haven't said yet, who her seducer was. I suppose, now, pursued the deformed, casting a mocking glance at the preacher Mathews, who still retained the picture, though his face was averted from it; "I suppose, now, it might have been some pious friend of her affectionate father; perhaps her pastoral shepherd, himself, whose business it was to see that she did not wander from his spiritual fold! Eh, Brother Mathews, eh?"

And the last words were inexact mimick of the apothecary's voice and style, when addressing the minister.

The minister looked up quickly, his pale face redhening at the charge; but his friend the doctor, saved him the trouble of defending himself, interposing,—

"You are quite mistaken. The best man living has quite enough sins of his own to answer for, without having those he never committed laid to his charge. It was altogether a different person."

The interrogator proceeded to ask carelessly,—

"Who was it then?"

"It was a young sailor. A young sailor, who is at sea, or dead, now—this was some fifteen years ago."

"Fifteen years ago, hey?" said the outcast, nonplussed. "That was some two years after the cholera times in '32. But what sort of a fellow was he, this young sea-dog, who played the girl so false? I hope he was handsome, wasn't he? As good looking as I am, at all events,' added the hunchback, with a mocking laugh.

"Why, yes—he was a tall, stout, good-looking fellow. But devilishly below the girl, curse her. He was nothing but a com-"
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHART OF THE CITY CHURCHYARDS.

BEARING loud and long on the air, the deep, measured, booming stroke of two of the city clocks, striking, simultaneously, suddenly warning the conspirators of the lapse of time.

Although, in truth, not two hours had passed since the Rev. Mr. Mathews first joined his two boon companions in the apothecary's shop, and scarcely three since the druggist's boy had left it; yet much of that time had been consumed, as we have seen, in a manner foreign to the object which had brought the three men together, there; and these accidental interruptions had more than once stopped between the plecters and the important but unknown plan of procedure, which its hunchback originator had already announced himself prepared to disclose to his expectant comrades.

Looking eagerly into each other's faces, they read, there, mutual impatience of the long delay, and their common resolve at once to end it.

Quackenbuss lighted another lamp in place of the broken one.

The outcast was the person to whom the rest of the trio were to look, for he was that one who was now to be furnished to the future movements of the cholera conspirators, in view of their strange, their frightful purpose!

Silently the hunchback took from beneath his arm the map, or chart, over which he had pored so steadily, so mysteriously, in secret and alone.

With careful hand he unrolled it, smoothed out the wrinkles, and pressed down the folds; and spread it before himself, the doctor and the preacher.

The two latter bent over it eagerly. But Mathews drew back with an expression of disappointed curiosity upon his pallid features.

It was, as the outcast himself had once informed them, nothing but a map of the city, its streets, its squares, its public edifices, its churches and its churchyards.

The minister's disappointment, as we have said, was plain enough; for his expectations had gradually been wrought up, by the ruf-fian's impressive manner, to the highest pitch.

The druggist, on the other hand, who had been previously aware of the original character of the roll of parchment, only glanced inquiringly back at the ex-sailor, simply saying:

"I see nothing!"

Without one word of reply the deformed man pointed the doctor's eye to several small, distinctly marked circles, drawn with a lead pencil, around particular portions of the map before him.

The apothecary, and also the minister, closely scrutinized the several spots thus specially indicated; and then they looked once more at their still silent companion, but with an air that plainly intimated,—Well, what of this?

Preserving the same taciturnity, the guide, by whose help they were following their uncertain clue, directed their attention to the printed labels stamped upon the spaces which he had encircled with his pencil.

Then the two men read these inscriptions, originally made by the printer on the spots in question.

The first of the series on which their eyes rested was,—B street Churchyard.

Following the guiding finger of the hunchback, they read the second label on which it was laid.

That label was,—Eighteenth Ward Burying Ground.

The third to which the finger passed,—Episcopal Cemetery, corner of Hudson street.
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

And then,—

Roman Catholic Cemetery—First Avenue and Twelfth street.

At the fifth and last of the marked spots in the map, which bore the still more ominous inscription of 'The Potters Field,' there the pointed finger stopped.

Dumb with doubt and amazement, the preacher and the druggist knew not what to think.

The slow, deliberate portentous manner of their singular companion sufficiently informed them that he attached the utmost importance to those little square and circular spots he had marked with so much care.

The sublunary sinner saw that he must be more explicit if he would suit himself to the slower comprehension of minds not so crafty as his own.

'You have looked through these little black spots over and over again, I see; said he, putting an end to his long silence, and do not perceive their meaning.'

Both shook their heads.

'I suppose I must come down from my stilts a little and explain them, especially as it is by the agency of these same little black spots I intend to keep my promise and bring the cholera to New York.'

A feather could not have fluttered unheard during the thrilling moment of suspense and expectation in which the two ponders awaited the explanations of their fellow-conspirators.

Those explanations, so long looked for, were now given. They consumed but a short time in their communication; yet the during the whole of that short time there was scarcely a moment when some ejaculation of surprise, astonishment, dismay, or consternation, did not break from one or another of the two listeners to the secret unfolded then and there.

The pale cheeks blanched paler, the starting eyes protruded yet more from their sockets—the trembling hand grew doubly tremulous; and when, at last, the whole depths of the hunchback's Satanic cunning became fully revealed to them, one low, simultaneous cry of horror might have been heard echoing through the interior of the apothecary's shop.

It was the first involuntary, instinctive impulse of shocked humanity; but the soil was stony, and the seed perished instantly. That first natural recoiling over, and they saw no longer anything but the dreadful means of compelling the one fiendish end in view.

What that hidden means was—in all its mystery and all its terror—the reader who would learn, will learn it soon enough.

But, when, in each detail, it was finally laid bare and understood, between the guilty trio there; then did its dark originator, as hideous and repulsive as his own; his creation, exultingly demand of his scared listeners—

'Well, well. Have I kept my promise, now? You see that it is possible to do all that I have guaranteed to do. The cholera shall sweep New York in 1849, as New York was never swept by any plague before. The pestilence of 321 pshaw! It shall prove a child to it.'

And the hideous hunchback laughed as an archfiend would laugh when triumphing in human misery.

Such seemed to be, indeed, his strongest attribute; this hatred of humanity, which spurred him on to all. He stood like a mocking spirit among the three, and asked—

'Well, what do you both say now? You agree to the measure; shall we examine the ground to-night?'

It was with increased respect that the druggist replied—

'Yes; yes; sir! if you think it best.'

But the guilty preacher's white lips refused to utter the trembling assent he fain would have given, yet had not the courage.

But the deformed had turned short upon the previous speaker, as if he had taken offence at something in the very words whereby the giving of it had been so carefully avoided. 'Sir! sir!' he repeated, mockingly, and in his most jarring tones, 'sir, to me! Ho! ho! that is too good, now—too good by—'

'Why, Elihu Quackenboss, you are the very first man who has said 'sir' to me, in a dog's age. The very first man who has called me anything but Hunchback, day in and day out. Sir, indeed I ho! ho!'

His grey eye glared with wolfish fury. 'No, no! I cried. 'Don't call me 'sir,' or I shall faint! Call me Broken Back—Broken Back! That's the name I always go by, and that's the name I choose to take.'

'But,' said the little apothecary, hesitatingly, 'you don't mean to have us call you that?'

'Yes, I do! yes by —!' screamed the hunchback. 'I like to hear it!—it keeps me in mind of my wrongs—my wrongs, do you hear? and makes me hate all mankind the more. I use to hate the 'curse' nickname, once; hate and loathe it, when they jeered and spit at me, and flung it in my teeth, every hour in the day. But now I like it—I love it and I want you to call me by that name—and no other!'

'I aren't' protested the doctor. 'I don't hardly.'

The deformed smiled contemptuously.

'Hark ye! I rejoined; 'I have said it, and I will have it so. Call me always Broken Back, mind that; or, hang me if I don't break your back.'

The doctor started, in no little alarm, at the threat.

The outlaw cooled his lip again, soothingly, at the fright he had produced, and turned to the preacher.

'Come! let us be off to the city churchyards. We must visit them to-night.'

'The churchyards?' echoed the clergyman, looking fearfully around him.

'Yes, it is getting late. Our ground must be surveyed before to-morrow morning,' was the outlaw's answer.

He motioned his companions to follow him as, with a quick, strong step, he passed from the little back-parlor of the drug-store into shop, beyond, and sternly bade the apothecary unfasten the street door, in order to let them out.

The doctor hurried to comply with the ruffian's bidding, and while he was busy at the fastenings, the outcast suddenly left them in the outer shop and returned silently in the little back-room.

The doctor, after unfastening the shop-door, glanced behind him, and was surprised at not seeing the hunchback.

'Where are you, Broken Back?' called out the doctor.

'Coming! I had forgotten the chart,' was the reply from within of the person addressed—who was groping in the dark closet, not for the chart, which was safe in his hand, but for the portrait of the druggist's daughter, which the unnatural father had tossed among the rubbish, with his brutal arm.

It was now so dark that the deformed could discern nothing of the features as he possessed himself of the sought-for object; but as he hurried back to rejoin his comrades, a very keen ear might have heard him mutter, exultingly—

'Humph! Jack Stedman has got the likeness, at any rate. The two fools they little guess who Broken Back is!'

He found the preacher and the doctor both in readiness, at the door, for their immediate departure.

The hunchback-sailor was not disposed to delay.

As with his own hand he flung open the shop door, he turned for the last time to the others, quietly whispering in the ear of each—

In three days' time you will read in the city newspapers, that the cholera has broken out in the city—that hundreds are dying of it every night—that the wife of the Rev. Newton Mathews has fallen among the rest.

Then, silently and together, out into the sleeping city: which they had doomed to desolation, passed the cholera propagators!
BOOK SECOND.

A NIGHT’S ADVENTURES.

CHAPTER I.

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE LADY OF THE TOWN.

CIRCUMSTANCES have compelled us, we are sensible, good reader, thus far to keep company not altogether the most creditable that might have been selected; but we trust you will cheerfully do us the justice to suppose that this has been more through necessity than choice, and that we shall be as well pleased in hearing it, presently, for a higher and better sphere.

But, in the meanwhile, we must not allow ourselves altogether to lose sight of our old, or rather, young acquaintance and friend, Mark, the apothecary’s boy, whom we hope the reader has not quite forgotten; and to whom we must now return, for reasons which will soon appear, to follow and watch awhile his movements, immediately subsequent to his departure from the shop of the quack doctor, as narrated at the end of the first chapter of the first book of this history.

When, therefore, that interesting young gentleman reached the first corner, he left off whistling, and stopping short looked back with a thoughtful face, and an appearance of puzzled speculation, that might have been highly amusing to an observant passers-by.

First, he balanced himself on one foot, then upon the other, and then stood on the toes of both together, flattening his nose and rubbing his chin, most industriously, for full five minutes.

At the expiration of that period, down went both hands into the profoundest depths of his trouser’s pockets, jingling and rattling away at the piece of spending-money his master had given him, the better to get rid of him for the residue of that eventful evening. All of which appeared indicative of a highly perplexing process of cogitation in the shrewd lad’s mind.

‘Something’s a brewin’! I muttered he presently. ‘Something’s in the wind, I know! repeated the boy, very confidently. ‘Mister never would ha’ g’in me a night to myself, of his own accord, and a penny’s worth of pocket money, if there warn’t something or other to pay. Han’t known of such an instance as this since I was President of those ‘Nited States,’ said Master Mark, quite positively, and he ruminated again.

‘Can’t understand it!’ and he shook his head still more dubiously. ‘Can’t see thro’ it, no how. Now, supposin’ I go back, and try to find out what in thunder murther’s up to.

Why not?’

At this felicitous suggestion he was starting off at a run, when some sober second thought appeared to strike him, bringing the lad to a dead halt.

‘No! I won’t either! Darned clear of it! Like as not he’d take that quaker penny away- again- shouldn’t wonder if he’d repented the giving on it, by this time. No! hope to be shot if I go back again—till the money’s gone.

This prudent reflection naturally enough led the cautious lad to an immediate personal inspection of his purse, in the possession of which he had been made so unexpectedly to rejoice.

In the dim, wavering glare of the street-lamp, everything was defined and certain to the eye; and as the boy stood twirling the coin between his fingers, and talking to himself, he looked repeatedly at the little circular piece of metal, and then wisfully up and down the street.

‘What a bright copper it is,’ said he, surveying it more closely; ‘it’s as bright as gold, why it’s a bran new cent, I swoon! I just fresh from old Uncle Sam’s mint, and as yellow as a guinea. By hokey! how it shines, though. Just coined, that’s certifying—

‘Hallo! thunder and lightning!’

Whatever might, really, have caused this last rather vehement ejaculation, the lad, at all events, was now keenly and eagerly scrutinizing the paltry piece of money so munificently bestowed upon him.

‘Thunder and lightning! may I catch the consumption as bad as parson Matthew’s nigger, if this ain’t a goin’ to a regular, right up and down go as I ever yet seed. Hooray! ain’t I in luck?

‘Whoa! git coat!’ fairly yelled the youth in his delight, throwing up his cap with every gesitulation of the most extravagant and exquisite joy.

‘Hooray! hooray!’ he shouted; ‘only jest think of old Quackenboss giving me a real gold eagle in mistake for a bright cent—a geniune shiner of a ten dollar yellow boy, sure as a Lilu Quackenboss never sees his two blessed eyes on it again. Whoa! I guess I will have the night to myself, and this little fellah, too.

And executing a series of the most beautiful antics, he tossed up the glittering piece of money in the air, and watched it with infinite enjoyment as it came dropping back into his unpracticed palm.

‘Heads up—it heeds it. That settles the thing to a T. Won’t I have a hank with this ten bright gold X? Oh, no, no, of course I won’t.’

Hereupon curbed a most profound discussion in the shrewd lad’s mind. Like the discomfiter of many a more valuable treasure, the happy possessor of the apothecary’s stray gold piece, found his chief perplexity in deciding what he should do with it.

No doubt he might have laid it out mentally in fifty different ways, in as many seconds, if the savory steam of sundry divers juicy edibles, from a neighboring restaurant had not

chanced to reach his youthful olfactories, giving his vacillating predilections a sudden tendency.

‘Oysters!’ chuckled the ingenious Mark.

‘I’ll have some oysters—‘em’s um! Some real Jersey Rays, and nothing else. I’ll have ‘em stewed—no, roasted—stews is vulgar.

Two dozen roasted, in the shell: that’s the kind.

But I won’t get ‘em here,’ he said, looking with great contempt at the aforesaid restaurant; ‘it’s too vulgar, that place is too damned vulgar. Oysters ain’t fit to eat unless you give ‘em in Broaday!’

Accordingly, at a very smart pace, the insidious young gentleman whose notions of gentility carried him so far, trotted away without further ado, to the first respectable establishment he could find in ‘Broaday,’ which proved to be a small oyster saloon kept by a little old woman, who was so fat that she could scarcely waddle; a fact in natural history that, as the apothecary’s boy failed not shrewdly to conjecture, furnished pretty good evidence that there was a plenty of good eating, there, at all events.

He reached the lad, as bold a lion, and snapping up to the counter, delivered his order—

‘Bring on yourysters, old lady! Two dozen in the shell, roasted—veal be a less—

Have ’em done in five minutes, Malam: time is valuable.’

‘The Lord! my mercy!’ cried the old woman, sticking up her arms akimbo as she saw the urchin plung himself down into a little boy, with considerable more independence than an alderman. ‘Are you sure you’ve got the money to pay for ‘em, boy?”

‘Am I quite sure!’ indignantly returned the city-boy; and pulling out his gold piece he brought it with a thundering sound upon the table before him. ‘Am I quite sure that I’ve got money to pay for them yysters? Is this the way you treat gentleman custom-
ers as comes with spread hagens in their pockets! Look here, ma'am! catch me a remending any of my friends here, will you?"

"Lord bless you, young gentleman!" said the good dame, waxing Cardinal, all of a sudden, at the sight of the talismanic piece of gold; 'you shall have it, dear—anything you want.'

"That's the talk, old lady; now fire up! I am hungry enough to eat them--ysters, shells and all."

"I've have them cooked right off, young gentleman," said the 'mistress of the eating' cause.

"Oh! I am a young gentleman, now, is I?" said the lad. "I was a boy, you're gone a squint at that yerler thing!"

And then, for want of something better to occupy his active mind, after relentlessly beheading all the unfortunate fives he could lay his hands on, he looked all around the oyster-cellar, and then out at the door and windows.

It was one of the ten thousand and one oyster-cellar of the city, into which he had descended; and before and above him Broadway lay outspread.

It was long past midnight, as we have said; the streets were lighted, for it was a moonless night, and the hour was just that time at which the fallen fair ones of the city come forth on their unhallowed rounds, with their rustling silks and their painted cheeks, their echoing laughter and broken hearts.

Dozens and scores swept by, before the door of the oyster saloon, successively in their quest.

The city-boy counted the fluttering satin, in each color and shade, until by the different tints he could recognize and identify each successive wearer, as they came and went, passed and repassed again.

One dress, in particular, he noticed; a superb blue watered satin, that had flitted by, and back again, full twenty times while he was watching.

He noticed, however, that the step was lagging; the round, full ankle, so voluptuously displayed, moved less lightly, and there was a languor and listlessness about the gliding feet that indicated weariness and want of animation.

But those gliding feet, that tempting ankle, and that flapping skirt, were all that he could see of their fair, frail owner, the rest of whose person was hidden from him by the elevation of the sidewalk above his place of observation.

Growing a little curious to catch a glimpse of the face of the flattering damsel, Mark called out in a very important tone to the busy dame,

"Is them 'ysters ready yet?"

And then, getting up, lounged lazily to the door.

From this post he had a full view of the pavement, but the wandering nymph had vanished, and several of her sisterhood, only, met his disappointed gaze.

"Never mind I she'll be back again," murmured the boy.

By the time he had delivered another ad

onatory recommendation to—hurry up the 'ysters, or he should be starved,—the rustling robe was heard again.

"Here she comes!" chuckled the lad, as a tall girl, rouged up to the eyes, came fl au ting along.

But this time her weary pace was exchanged for a somewhat hurried step, as he saw her hasten to and accost two young gentlemen, who were promenading up Broadway, arm in arm.

One of these, he noticed, was a youth of about nineteen, in the undress uniform of an American naval officer, who was sauntering leisurely along in company with a young friend.

It was him that she addressed, with a courte

tezan's wanton invitation; but the young man only favored her with a cold stare, and with a look of contempt, passed on with his companion.

The refused girl drew back, with a disappointed air.

For a moment the countenance paused, and then darted after the two young men, laying her hand upon the same youth's arm, and murmuring,—

"Well, if you will not go home with me, at least treat me—take me down into this oyster cellar and treat me. Young man, I am starving!"

The young midshipman turned in surprise, colored—besotted, and quickly thrusting a bank note into her hand, hastened on with his friend.

Mark saw the girl examine it eagerly, and heard her falter,—

"Thank God! now I can get something to eat. It is a five dollar bill!"

While he was still looking, the wearer of the blue watered silk descended the steps of the oyster cellar.

The lad quietly retreated into his box. As he did so, the girl, who, with a feverish eye, had been advancing, with her money in the counter, saw the old woman place the dish of oysters before him.

No sooner did she observe the boy and the oysters, than she seemed to change her mind, and concealing the bank note, made up to the lad.

The mistress of the saloon, who had just set back her burden upon the table, immediately bent over and said to theurchin, in a whisper.

"Look out for that girl, young master! I know her, and she don't bear a very good character. If you don't take care, she will douse you out of your oysters—and money, too."

"What's that she's been saying to you, ducky?" said the girl, sitting up to him.

"She says I'd better look out sharp for you," replied the boy, grinning, and preparing to open an oyster.

"Does she?" the old termagant, said the girl, looking after the shop woman, rather angrily. "She's always talking bad about her neighbors."

"She says as how you likes oysters," reported the lad, significantly, grinning still more broadly as he flung away the divided shell.

"Why, so I do," returned the young woman, sitting down opposite to him, with the table between them; "and so do you, too, ducky."

"Why, I 'spect there ain't much doubt of that," answered the shrewd lad, as he bolted his first oyster whole.

"No, no," said the girl, smiling, and perceiving that he had not quite understood her.

"I didn't mean that, exactly. I meant that I liked oysters, and liked you, too."

"Oh, ho! you do, hey? I laughed the keen-witted boy. "My eye! you don't, though! Now, see here, young 'oman, how many 'ysters do you expect for that 'ere compliment?"

The girl burst into a laugh, and looking at him keenly, replied,—

"I see you have cut your eye-teeth, my lad—I'll just try one of them, to see how good your oysters are. I won't ask anything for my compliment, but perhaps you will give me an oyster or two for this?"

And leaning smilingly over the table, she pressed her poucing lips upon the impudent ones of the boy, who received the salute with so much resignation and fortitude, that she was encouraged to repeat it; and passing over to the same side of the table, sat down beside him.

But when she attempted to wind her full, white arms around his neck, and draw his head coaxingly towards her, making a pillow for it upon the heaving bosom which swelled but too plainly into view beneath her own uncovered neck, chucking him under the chin,
and kising him; then he withdrew himself from her close embrace, and pushing her back, looked the girl directly in the eyes, with a wink and a grin desiring to be formed.—

"Did she see anything green in his eyes?"
The young woman sank back, evidently in some disappointment.

"So you won't treat me to any of your nice oysters?" she asked.

Mark, who had been quietly salting and peppering his second oyster, swallowed it and said,—

"Why I thought it was the midshipman was to treat?"

"The midshipman!" repeated the girl, in some little confusion.

"Yes; the little rascal won't give you the five-dollar bill. That 'ere V, would pay up for a smashing lot of yysters."

The young lady looked at him closely, and demanded how he came to know it was a five-dollar bill.

"Hearing you say so—that's how," replied Mark with his third mouthful in his jaws.—

"Wonder what young midshipmate's father, the parson, would say, if he knew his son had given money to—"

"Was he a minister's son?" demanded the girl of the town.

"Yes, and no—pretty near, and not exact,—either, was the not very intelligible reply. 'The fact,' he's a step-son to a preacher; that's how it is."—

"Stop now, boy! what's his name?" she next inquired.—

"Don't remember. It ain't the same as his stepfather's, accuse his mother's wasn't when she married him."—

"No matter what his name is, he's a clever liberal fellow," said the girl, "that's very certain."

"The apothecary's boy put another oyster to pickle, and replied,—

"Don't be too sure of that! Preap you'd better make certain it ain't a counterfeit V."

Half the gent'lm'man about town pays in that 'ere coin, and them young reellers is just devils enough to serve a poor gal the same trick!"—

"A counterfeit?" echoed the young woman, in alarm, and with an accent of such keen apprehension and grief, that the boy stopped with his sixth oyster halfway to his mouth.

"Oh God! I hope not!"

And snatching the bank-note hastily from her pocket, she looked at it eagerly, dropped it on the table before her, and burst into tears.

The boy started up in consternation; and, overturning the pepper-box, in his dismay, exclaimed,—

"What—what's the matter? You liked to make that 'ere last mouthful choke me, you did!"

The unfortunate girl raised her streaming eyes to the boy's face, with such an expression of heart-piercing and bitter sorrow, that it was impossible for him not to perceive that it was unfounded and sincere.

"Poor boy!" she murmured, in a sobbing voice, "you do not know what will become of me, if that bill should turn out to be counterfeit. I have eaten nothing in forty-eight hours, and was staring when that good young man gave it me."—

"I hasn't eaten nothing in forty-eight hours!—Thunder and lightning!" ejaculated the startled Mark; "why that's worse, a darned sight, than old J. A. kept me. And here I've been gulpin' down yysters all the while, right afore your face, like a young sucking pig, have I?"

"Hallo, there! Old omen! Old omen!" he shouted.

"Old woman yourself; don't call me old woman," retorted the dame, sharply; appearing, nevertheless, at the loud summons.

"Bring on some more yysters! I set a couple a dozen more roasting this minute, d'ye hear? Don't stand staring! I've got the p'wter—I'll pay the damage. Be alive, now—this gal's a staring!"

And pushing over the unseasoned dozen and a half of the delicious shell-fish, which remained on the table, the kind hearted lad loudly beseeched her.—

"Set to work—put at 'em! I don't be bashful. There's more where they come from, and I stand the treat. Never mind me; I can wait for the others. Dig in!—dig into 'em like fun!"

The half-familiar girl hesitated—looked at the generous boy, greatly—then wistfully at the dainty mess, and with the tears still wet on her cheeks, eagerly and thankfully complied, cheered and encouraged by such comforting suggestions as,—

"Eat away!—go it! I'll open 'em for you—don't be afraid, more's a comin', presently. Here, old wo—old lady! Bring us a glass of ale—a couple on 'em; and some gin-and-sugar—strong!"

Mark would not touch another oyster; and by the time the starving girl had eaten all he had left, the second batch made their appearance on the table.

"Now I'll put in and help," said Mark, animadverted, handing her the strengthening glass of spirits, while he swallowed the ale, at a gulp.

"Ain't those little chaps prime?" he added, as he dissected a fresh bivalve.

"What is your name, my little fellow?" inquired the young woman, gently, leaning back with a sigh of relief and gratitude there was no mistaking.

"Mark."—

"Mark what?"

"That's more than I knows," answered the boy; "old J. A. never called me anything else, except lazy rascal."—

"Have you got a good master? and is he kind to you?" she asked, with grateful interest.

"No, that I hasn't. No, that he ain't. He is a regular old skinflint; and I wish he had half a dozen of those yyster-sheils down his throat, I does!"—

"Are you apprenticed—are you bound to him?"

"Bound to him?—why, I suppose I is. I'm bound to give him thunder some time or other."

"I mean—does he keep you?"

"He keeps me half-naked—if that's what you mean! But I spose what you're driving at is to know whether he took me from the poor 'ouse, or not! He says he did, no thanks to him."

"Does he treat you well?"

"He don't treat me, at all—specially to yysters! He had to furnish the dust, though, this time—darn his hide. But, say what's your name?"

"My name?"

"Yes, if you've got any."

The girl sighed.

"I have more than one, poor boy."

"Well, then, give us the right one—bother the others."

She shook her head, sadly.

"I cannot do that, my boy. Miserable women, like me never speak the names they must ever blush to own. Call me Lizzie."

She spoke so sorrowfully, so mournfully, indeed, that the young lad left his pickled oyster untasted, and took a long, wisful look at the girl.

She was a woman of tall and full figure, inclined to the buxom and plump; but suffering, and her course of life, had somewhat thinned the rounded outlines, and left a feeble fire in her eye; while dissipation and the paint-brush, had impaired what might have been a very attractive face, and was still handsome by help of the wanton's art.

He perceived now, that she could not be so young as he had supposed her, by several years.

Indeed it was a fully matured woman who sat beside him, and not a young girl, fresh in the ways of sin.

"How old are you?" he asked, bluntly, in the midst of his steadiest survey.
The old dame looked at him sharply, as she said:

"You ain't going' after that girl, I hope, are you?"

"Ahem; that's telling. But what put it into your head to hope so, old lady?"

"Acause," returned the beldame, shrugging her shoulders. "You is most too youn' a chick to keep company with the likes of her."

"Better clear up your 'yster shells, old 'oman!" retorted the boy, bounding up the steps of the celler.

There he stopped; and thought a moment—looked carefully up and down the street—caught one distant glimpse of a gliding skirt—dropped his change into his capacious pockets—and a shrewd smile on his shrewd face, set off at a run in the direction in which he had taken his last view of the blue watered satin.

### CHAPTEE II.

A NIGHT IN THE STREETS OF GOTHAM.

**Moonless night,** we have said it was.

The street lamps but partially supplied its place.

The boy hastened on. Just as he was passing one of the handsome private residences fronting Broadway, his name was pronounced, and he stopped short on hearing a guttural voice accost him in the following words:

"Bress my soul, Massa Mark! Be that you? Who dat you runnin' after so fast? What de deblis do matter? Anybody got de 'sumption, or de hydeffy? Eh! tell dis negger, quick!"

Mark paused on recognizing the negro, on whom he had played so many tricks. Looking up at the lighted house, he saw that it was the minister's mansion he was passing,—the residence of the negro's master.

Recollecting the dose of snuff and tobacco which he had mixed with the unfortunate African's snuffpaper, he tarried a moment, in order weakly to inquire,—

"Ah, dat you, Gumbo? How do de sich'pilla set?"

The colored gentleman afflicted with so many physical infirmities, showed the whites of his eyes expressively, and replied in his guttural tone,—

"Set bad; yer' bad, Massa Mark. It kick-

ed up de bery deblle inside of me. Thought I was goin' to die for sure, for two or three hours."

"Well, but did it do that consumption of yours any good?"

"Dat's a 'sumption! Oh, Massa Mark," said
the negro, wagging his woolly head vehemently, "it am not 'sumption dat an de matter kild me, any more. It am quittin' wot dis dat!"

"Scratlin' worst holle, have you been catchin' some new disease so quick? How in de blazin' did you find that out?"

"All 'long; oh de sah'pilla, massa," re-

sponded the negro, striking his enormous chest, mysteriously. "It rise up de bery deblle ob a runup in here; I no longer hab no doubt am him up at last."

"Set him up? What in duration do you mean by him?" inspired the boy, a little puzzled by the pronoun.

"Oh! de tape-warm, massa."

"The tape-warm eeked Mark, astonished.

"Yes, Massa Mark; sorry to have to say it," said Gumbo, dolefully. "Yer see, massa, while dis negger was sick, de doctor, Old Thad de cook was readin' de paper, and den he come to a coust ob it. de tape-warm, wid forty feet, or forty feet long, I do' know which, —as it was cut out ob a man's body, in分布, all alder an' spurrimg, and den I know'd in a minute what was de matter wid me, an' what
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

A few moments more, of such accelerated progress, proved to him that he was less than half-mistaken. Not two hundred yards ahead, the same azure-tinted, watered satin was rustling along over the smooth flagging of the street.

But that step was no longer flunting; there was no longer the studied wantonness of carriage; the man was hurrying on with an eager and earnest foot, looking neither to the right or left, in search of the syren's prey. But hers was not the only figure in sight. The sound of voices, on the opposite side of the way, caused Mark to throw his eye across the street—coming down which, at a slow and pondering pace, he observed two young men, arm in arm, each with a cigar in his mouth, and moving towards him with their careless steps and conversation.

One was a mere youth, in undress uniform, and a second glance quite satisfied the keen-eyed Mark that it was none other than the young midshipman of nineteen, who had been so flush with his Y. spurn, as Mark expressed it, and who was just returning, with his friend from what seemed a long promenade, or what might possibly have been a fashionably late party.

The shoreward Mark, however, as he recognised them, appeared to be of a different opinion; for he instantly gave vent to a quiet whistle, and muttered to himself with a slight grin—

"Guess them 'ere nice young gentlemen is out for a lark!"

But as they were on the opposite side of the street, neither Mark, nor the female he was dogging, encountered them in their way; and Mark judged on, coolly wondering, how many cigars them youngsters 'ad smoked since the first one? How many they 'ad flung away, silly, when one of 'em warn't lookin', purtindin' to have smoked 'em up!' and whether they wouldn't be as sick as an otter, presently.

The young men sauntered on; came oppo-

site the boy; passed him, and continued to lounge leisurely down the street, evidently not in the smallest possible hurry.

"Taking it easy, aren't you?" apostrophised the observant urchin, over the way, turning round to look after them, when the two had got by, enveloped in an atmosphere of smoke.

And thereupon, wheeling twice round on his right heel, the practised city-boy applied both hands to his mouth, making a trumpet for the louder passage of his voice, and vociferously shouted out—

"Halloo, you young gentleman! does your mothers know you're out?"

At this striking original, peculiarly felici-

uous, gentleman. Forgot to recollect, then, that that 'ere midshipman's mother died of the chol'ry in '32, as I've heard say. At all events, I wonder if the old lady knew he smoked?"

The cloudy atmosphere in which the two smokers had encircled themselves, tinctured with the natural obscurity of the moonlight night, prevented them, for the first minute or two, from seeing anything at all. This was the best reason why they did not immediately discover the intarising Mark, who, with the whole of his ten digits applied to a very prominent feature in the human face divine, at this juncture swung out—

"I say, over there! guess you'd better blow away the smoke, first, if you want to see much."

A puff of fresh wind, from up street, saved them the necessity, even, of complying with

this very friendly advice. But, like a good
deal of other gratuitous advice, in this curious
world, it did not seem to be received in quite
as friendly a spirit by those for whose especial
benefit it was designed.

"What impertinent young rascal was that,
Mark? I hastily demanded the midshipman's companion, a spruce young dandy, as the toba-
co-mist rolled away and discovered the apo-
theocracy's boy in the midst of the very re-
spectful pantomime n'est-ce pas?

"Some young dog or other, Allen. Never
mind him," replied the reeler, coolly, resum-
ing his cigar.

"No, no! cried Allen. 'I consider myself
insulted! Let's give chase.'"

"Oh, very well," answered Clinton, "any-
th ing for a lark?"

"A lark it is, then! so here goes," was the
prompt reply; and you'd p'lay his ears if I
catch him!"

Mark, who now thought it high time to be
moving, only stopped long enough to satisfy
inquire—

"Don't you wish you could?"

Saying this, he at once made the best use
of his heels.

It was lucky enough that he did so, for the
infatuated Mr. Allen had dashed across the street, flinging away his cigar as he went; while the midshipman, quite as ready, but considerately more cool, had raised his at the bend of the returning arch, with which he struck just on the extreme tip of the threatened ears, at the height, end, causing master Mark to jump about a half a yard into the air, and give unhappily vent to more than one involuntary

"Thunder!"

The lad grinned, first with pain, and second
with admiration of the midshipman's dexterity, and then started on, ruffling his fire-touched ear very briskly as he ran onward.

"By the Lord, he's off!" shouted Allen, in
full pursuit.

"I see it, Allen!"
The Cholera Fiend.

Ten minutes' run had already brought Mark in full sight of the distant female, once more, and he was contemplating a strategical dive down a side-street, and then a serpentine turning and twisting back again, two or three squares ahead, when an unlooked-for incident interposed to drive the idea altogether out of his head.

This was neither less nor more than the sudden appearance of a new party in the scene.

Up the broad avenue, a short distance in advance of the female figure which he had so nearly overtaken,—turning into the spacious thoroughfare, at the corner, from a small, narrow side street, three men crossed into Broadway.

One of these three men was tall and thin, with a long black cloak wrapped closely about him.

The second was short and corpulent, and had on a greyish box-coat, which, at all events, had the merit of being well-filled—so far as flesh was concerned.

On the other hand, though both fat and short, as compared to his tall companion in the cloak; yet short he did not seem, in comparison with the third person of this new group.

The last, in fact, was so greatly beneath the common stature, that his height, from head to heel, must have fallen considerably short of four feet; and there was a grotesqueness about the whole disproportioned figure—if so it could be called—which made it conspicuous at first sight.

This odd shape, forming the third and last of the party, moved with a rolling, unsteady gait, that betrayed the influence of intoxication.

As the three men issued from the side street, they stopped, as if by common consent, to take a survey of the broad open avenue before them.

It presented, at that particular moment, a rather a curious prospect,—the grinning ur-
dwarf, in his intoxication, had staggered up to the poor creature, throwing his bloated arms around her, and when she shrank back, with the aroused instinct of fear or loathing, from his repulsive embrace, he had dealt her, in the wantonness of maudlin fury, a violent stroke with his open palm, that sent her halfway across the sidewalk.

Only a single moment had elapsed since that blow had been given; yet before Mark, who was first to arrive on the spot, could intervene, he had wished; before the two friends—Clinton the foremost—had time to reach the scene, they were, in part, anticipated by the interference of the party who accompanied the hunchback.

Scarcely had the shriek of the stricken female followed the blow, when the tall man in the black cloak stepped precipitately forward, exclaiming—

"My God! what have you done?"

While the short, fat personage, making a spring of considerable agility, for a corpulent figure, pulled the drunken man sharply by the sleeve, saying,—

"Broken back! man, are you mad? Do you want to bring half the watchmen in the ward down upon us, by a drunken brawl with a girl of the town? Ten thousand curses light on you if I could make you see but to drink yourself into a perfect sob, to-night, too, of all others."—

"He would do it," exclaimed the tall man, in an agitated tone; "nothing could prevent him from drinking, till—till—you see the consequences. My God, he will ruin everything!"

But, heedless of their remonstrances, the bully shook them off and struck the trembling woman a second and yet more brutal buffet in the bosom.

The deep agonal groan, which she this time gave utterance to, was more fearful to hear than even the wildest shriek would have been.

It did not plead for pity unanswered, for the generous Clinton had that moment gained the spot.

With one sudden, unexpected, indignant blow from his strong young arm, delivered directly under the left ear, and planted with the practised expertness of a midshipman’s berth boxer, he knocked the brutal dwarf headlong to the pavement.

The two companions of the prostrate bully stopped short in the very act of throwing them selves once more upon their intoxicated associate, on purpose to tear him forcibly from his prey; but finding themselves thus anticipated they drew back to examine the new party, whose summary interference had taken one and all by surprise.

Then it was that a very singular thing occurred,—

No sooner did the eye of the tall man in the black cloak fasten itself upon the slight, graceful person and handsome uniform of the young midshipman before him, than he gave a violent start.

No sooner had he taken his second look at the frank, open, handsome, but indignant-suited face of the fighting-officer, than recoiling with a suppressed ery, he turned with the greatest rapidity upon his heel, darted away, and fled round the corner of the first street.

The young man, startled by this abrupt flight, gazed after him; an expression of surprise in his fine dark eyes, which this strange retreat might well cause, or to which some other mingled feeling might possibly have given rise.

His attention scarcely had time to be called off in this quarter, however, before another and not very dissimilar circumstance occasioned it to revert back again, as suddenly as it had been summoned away.

This was nothing less than the unequally unceremonious disappearance of the fat man in the box-room.

That corpulent personage had no sooner caught sight of no less an individual than the redoubtable Mark—who had stood for the last two minutes staring him point-blank in the face—that the aforesaid proprietor of the gray coat precipitately took to his heels and vanished down the street from which his party had originally emerged.

Now, unluckily for that gentleman, Mr. Allen, breathless from his run, and the last to arrive, had just come up with his more active friend, the moment before the little fat man had taken it into his head to decamp so accountably.

The natural and inevitable consequence was, that as the late pursuer of Mark stood immediately in the little fat man’s way—the little fat man, accordingly, brushed directly against him, in passing, overturning him in an instant.

The Falstaff-like figure did not think it all necessary to stop for the purpose of ascertaining the damage done; and the ill-starred Broadway exquisites all at once rounded himself—without so much as one consoling apology—landed directly in the gutter, not three feet from the drunken bully.

A suit of the very finest and most unexceptionable French broadcloth, ruined to all eternity; groaned the elegant Mr. Allen, surveying the defaced condition of his no longer immaculate sables, with infinite chagrin; by all the gods and goddesses!

And then, immediately, at a rather suspicious sound from behind, he wheeled round and caught the grinning Mark by the ear, fiercely demanding—

"You precious young varlet! what are you chuckling at, sir? Oh! I’ve got you now, have I? I’ll teach you to insult a gentleman of my cloth!"

"Your cloth’s rather damaged at present, sir, ain’t it?"

This saucy query, from the incorrigible Mark, caused him to get two cuffs and an additional shaking, where he would probably have received only one of each kind, had he possessed the prudence to refrain from this last little pleasantry.

But Mark was not thus prudent, and the involuntary smiling Clinton was obliged to interfere in his favor.

"Let the lad go, Allen; and let us look to this poor girl."

The humane young man was advancing toward the sobbing and trembling creature, who was leaning for support against one of the dark and silent buildings which fronted the street, when the boyish voice of Mark, in its shrillest and most caressing key, arrested his movements.

"Better look to the chap you just knocked on the head."

And then he heard the same voice warmly add,—

"Take care! take care!"

The caution was no superfluous one. Lutt- erly unnoticed in the amazement caused by the unaccountable flight of his two more sober associates, and the consequent consequences, the prostrated dwarf had risen quietly, well-nigh sobered by his fall, and selecting his opportunity, rushed forward, with fury in his eyes, upon the unguarded young man who had given him such forcible proofs of his interference between the bully and the original object of his rage.

The boy’s warning, however, came too late—for all that Clinton had time to do in self-defense.

The friendly lad who had given it, never- theless, had his wish as well as his eyes about him; and at the critical moment when the drunken man flung himself, with the ferocious violence of a wild beast, right forward upon the unprepared young midshipman, Mark quickly stretched out one foot and tripped the ruffian up.

Down he went, upon the solid flagstones, and there he lay quite senseless from the shock.

"Go it, lump-back!" shouted Mark, springing to his side.

Clinton now drew a step nearer to scrutinize more narrowly the misshapen lump of bu-
THE CHOLERA FiEND.

Clinton, in fact, had turned round abruptly at the sound of a slight movement proceeding from the hitherto forgotten female, whom they had left leaning against the building to which she had tottered for support. At the sudden noise made by her, the midshipman, as he turned, perceived that she had advanced a step or two toward him, and stopping there, stood quite still, gazing fixedly on him, with an eye strangely haggard and a face deadly pale, wherever the deceptive rouge did not hide its ashy pallor.

There was a wild, singular expression in her eyes that he could not define; and now, recalled to the recollection of her condition, and fearing for the consequences of the hunchback's violence, he approached her, and in a kind tone inquired,—

'You are faint—you are ill, are you not? from the effects of those heartless blows. You have nothing more to fear, however, from that—'

He stopped here, voluntarily; for he discovered, for the first time, that the female to whom he was speaking was no other than the painted wanton, the famishing unfortuniate, who had once already been the object of his careless bounty.

The female knew him, also, in her turn, it seemed; for after returning his gaze with the same indefinable, earnest expression, which we have before mentioned, she said,—

'You are very kind to me, young sir. You have already been very kind to me, to-night. An unhappy watch such as I am, can never repay such generous goodness as you have shown me.'

'You do not seem wholly lost to feeling, girl,' said the young man, seriously. 'Why, do you not leave this miserable life you now lead?'

'God knows—God knows, how willingly I would it was the faltering and sobbing reply, for the young woman had burst into tears.

The young man watched her suspiciously and searchingly, for he was no novice in the arts and deceptions of a city life, youthful as she was.

His practiced eye failed, however, to discover hypocrisy or deceit, for hypocrisy or deceit there was none; and as he became more and more satisfied of it, his frank countenance regained all its openness.

'If that be the case, what prevents you, then?'

With a voice whose plaintive, heart-rendering accents touched him to the soul, she answered,—

'Poverty! Necessity, young man. I should die of want and starvation—die in the streets, at night.'

Clinton shuddered.

'Tell me your name, young woman!' he said.

The lost creature started, and shuddered also; but with a far different feeling;—

'It is—it is—I had a better one once, and most not tell you the true one now. They call me Lizzie.'

'Well, tell me, Lizzie, what sum would enable you to forsake this hateful life for ever, and turn to a better one?'

'Speak; do not stare so! I am rich—and mean what I say!'

The woman was indeed glaring on him, with clasped hands and eager though doubting looks.

'Oa, no, no—it cannot be—you do not mean it. It would be too generous, even for you, young man,' she cried.

Clinton replied by placing in her trembling hands, a silk purse—heavily with gold and notes.

The scorned and despised creature of the town gazed wildly, incredulously and wonderingly upon him.

Mad with joy, one hand mechanically clutched the precious prize; the other was pressed convulsively against her bosom, as if the heart within threatened to burst with happiness and gratitude.
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

It is more than probable that Mark, as well as his remaining companions in the broken group, might have felt some little wonder at the abruptness of her departure; had it not been from, that neighboring streets, came at this moment the distant sound of springing rattles, cluttering sharply on the air, and furnishing sound reasons for the immediate dispersing of the whole party.

'The Charlies are coming,' ejaculated Allen, hastily.

'Ah, yes—the watch!' said Clinton, absentmindedly.

'Why, you are asleep, man! Mark! I hear their confounded rattles. We shall have to cut and run, my boy.'

At this moment the abstracted Clinton felt his coat-sleeve pulled suddenly. Supposing it to be his impatient friend, Allen, who was manifesting unmistakable signs of a desire to be off, Clinton looked round.

It was not the abstract—"it was the apothecary's boy.

Struck by the lad's meaning face, he met his shrewd eye awaiting his own.

'I want to speak to you, sir,' said the boy, with a manner perfectly respectful. 'I want to ask you a question,' he said, sinking his voice at the last word, which the mercurial Mr. Allen caught.

'Confound your questions!' interrupted that gentleman, with some little irritation.

'Those internal Charlies will be asking rather unpleasant ones, if we don't make pretty good work of it.'

'What is it, my lad? be quick,' replied Clinton to the boy.

Mark whispered.

'You did me a good turn, sir, and now I'll do you one. You saved my ears from being jerked off by that 'ere gentleman, and I'll tell you a secret or two to pay for it.'

'A secret—what do you mean?'

'Why, sir! just this. You recollect that funny-looking, little fat fellow that tumbled over your friend, the other gentleman, and spilled his clothes for him?'

'The short, fat man, you mean!' said the midshipman.

'The short'un, sir. Well, I knows him, and his grey coat, too.'

'Ah!' said Clinton.

'Yes sir. He's my master—he's Doctor Llib Quackenbush,' continued Mark, as fast as possible, 'and that's why he runs when he saw me.'

'I thought as much,' muttered the young man.

Mark's eyes brightened instantly.

'Did you, sir? Perhaps you recognized the tall man, in the black cloak, too?'

'Coz if you didn't I did.'

'You recognized him!' exclaimed Clinton, with a start, and a frowning brow.

Certainly, sir. He was—' stammered Mark, 'he was—'

'Who?' demanded the young man, fixing his eye sternly on the boy.

'Why—why—your stepfather, sir—if the minister.'

For a moment the young midshipman said nothing, but remained with his brows knit. Then he said, in a clear, distinct, but somewhat agitated tone—

'You have a stepfather, boy! I had been hoping my own might have deceived me—Look you, my lad—you seem to have wit enough to keep a secret—think you can do so?'

'I can and will, for your Mr. Clinton,' replied the lad, frankly, meeting his eye, with a world of shrewd intelligence in his own.

'Do so, my good boy! and I will see that you do not lose by it! Heaven's only knows,' pursued the young man, his agitation increasing, 'what my stepfather could be doing, at the dead of midnight, in the streets of New York, in the company of one of the greatest desperadoes in the city. My God, what will his wife think of this?—his wife and Alice? he murmured, distractedly.

But, at this juncture, the patience of perhaps, the courage, of the watchman-dealing Mr. Allen, having become quite evanished, after the number of urgent but unsuccessful appeals which he had been making, in the meanwhile, he seized his indignant friend by the arm, calling out—

'Clinton! Clinton, I say! Deuce take me if I am going to pass the rest of the night in the station-house, to suit you or any one else. I'm off!'

And having a gentleman's regard for his word, the Broadway exquisite sided the action to it, and made good his own escape round one corner, as some watchmen made their appearance at another.

Smiling slightly as he saw his faithful companion's solitary retreat, the young midshipman intently gathered his naval cloak around his elegant figure, and bidding the sleepy-witted Mark look to his own safety, Clinton darted across Broadway, eluding the watchmen, and rapidly disappearing in the obscurity.

But that his thoughts were occupied with other than the mere considerations of escape, was more than evident from his abstracted manner, and his frequent muttered repetition of the words,—

'His wife—his poor wife, and Alice! what would they, what could they think of this?—Jack Standish—what could he and my stepfather have in common?'

But, as he for the third or fourth time reiterated these thoughts, while passing another corner, a watchman suddenly dashed across his path and plumed himself in his way.

Young Clinton drew back, aimed a rapid blow at the head of the man, and sent him header to the pavement, without speaking a single word.

Then, ceasingly pursuing his onward course, the young man continued to mutter—as if to an audience that had happened—'It is strange! It is very strange!'

BOOK THIRD.

THE DREADED VISITANT

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST CASE OF CHOLERA.

RANK CLINTON, the young midshipman of nineteen—our hero, as we now acknowledge him to be, was scared at break of day, in his private room, on the morning of the third day following that highly eventful night which has occupied so extended a space in the story, thus far.
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

The quarters of young Clinton, when off duty, were at the house of his stepfather, the Rev. Mr. Mathews. He had breakfast alone, as was, indeed, his frequent habit; and was taking his coffee, eggs and toast by himself, when a woolly head was thrust suddenly into the door, and the guttural tones of his black waiter delivered an unexpected announcement.

'Here I is, wid de mornin’ papers, Massa Clinton. Dey hab just come, bof ob digum.'

And the African laid down two fresh daily papers on the breakfast-table, without, however, offering to leave the room.

His yokel master who, in truth, had been more occupied in meditation than in consuming the broil'd chicken before him, mechanically took up one of the papers and began glancing over it.

As he turned the sheet, his somewhat abstracted eye happened to fall upon his table attendant, who was nodding bolt upright beside his master's chair, in an attitude expressive of great patience.

'What are you waiting for, Gumbo?' inquired the young gentleman, as he observed him.

Gumbo twisted one leg uneasily over the other, rolled up his eyes after his own peculiar fashion, and with a good deal of sincerity made answer:

'I no want to see de paper, massa, I no want to see no paper.'

'I'm a wanting to see de paper,' pursued Clinton.

'Why, Gumbo, this very instant! It must be read from your lips;—read aloud from the page!—merciful heavens!—I will do it myself!' And snapping up the paper, the negro, the most desperate determination in all his looks—Clinton bounded toward his suffering servant, the dissecting-blade energetically raised.

The astonished Gumbo gave one look at the carving-knife, and making one jump to the door, bolted like a rabbit from the room, gained the stairs, leaping down the steps, ten at a time, and when within six of the bottom, stumbled, lost his balance, and tumbled head first, down the remainder.

Clinton, with laughing at the complete success of his artifice, his master, dropping the carving-knife, stood looking after the terrified negro, who slowly picked himself up, rubbing his woolly pate—which he had reason to believe for his thickness—and carefully feeling of his shins, which had probably suffered most of the two.

'Come back, you scoundrel! I want you,' ordered Clinton, after indulging for some time in the reflection of his master's face.

Reluctantly and cautiously the African crept up stairs and recounted the chamber side-long, stopping right by the door, in order to secure his sudden retreat, in case of necessity;

'What did you run away for?' demanded his master.

'I—I—I thought I'd better,' stammered the negro, with his hand grasping the door-handle.

'You'll never be better, till you have that operation performed.'

'I'll wait and see, massa Clinton; I'll wait and see.'

'Days are dangerous, Gumbo; you had better let me go through with the operation,' said Clinton, very gravely.

'Lo!' bress dis nigger, no! spluttered Gumbo hastily; 'me feel better now—de snake am quiet now.'

'Well, I hope I've scared him out of you, now, altogether. Now go down stairs and present my compliments to Miss Hascal, and ask her if I can speak with her for a short time, this morning. You may go now.'

'Pleaze God I will, sir!' eagerly replied the negro; only too willing to avail himself of the permission to get out of the way of the dreaded carving-knife.

Resuming the perusal of his papers, something more than ordinary interest appeared immediately to strike the eye of Clinton; that eye was instantly riveted in its attention. A violent start was visible in the young man's manner, a sudden paleness overspread his cheek, and more than ever he regarded himself to the reading with an intensity of interest that betrayed itself in every feature, and in the nervous fingers with which he held the paper.

The color had not yet fully returned to his countenance when he had the paper down, and raised his head thoughtfully.

'The cholera! the cholera!' he repeated, earnestly, to himself. 'And is it possible that the cholera is in New York—the scourge in our midst, at last. Good heavens! the first case occurred yesterday, and there were thirteen others before the night set in. This is news, indeed!' He remained sitting in deep and anxious thought for several moments, the shifting footsteps of the negro, reascending the stairs, surrounding him.

Gumbo had returned from his errand.

Clinton had almost forgotten the commission, so completely had the astounding intelligence taken possession of his mind.

'Well, what said Miss Hascal?'

'Why, if you please, Missa Clinton,' said the African, hesitatingly, casting a wary glance at the carving-knife, 'dis nigger did n't hab any message to de same.—wasnt dat right, massa?'

'Ned Allen, hey? Very well,' replied Clinton, smiling at the mention of his friend's name, 'I am glad you did not disturb him, then. You may go. Stay in Mrs. Mathews up yet?' he inquired, recalling him.

'No, sa. I heard her tell de she should at get up, dis morning.'

'Should I! Why not?' inquired Clinton, in surprise.

'She say she no feel well,' replied the servant.

'Not well, eh!'

'Not well suff to dress herself and leab her room, de gal say. I no ax de same what de matter, but I spect she hab a tape-worm, too.'

'Mrs. Mathews have a tape-worm, you accoudrel! I thought I had cured you of that yet.'

And Clinton made a sudden movement to take up the carving knife from the table on which he had laid it.

At the bare sight of this formidable eygory in the bands of his master, the negro made a desperate rush through the door, and was down stairs again, with marvellous celerity.

Satisfied with the discomfort of poor Clinton, Gumbo folded up the paper which contained the weighty announcement that had so startled and interested him; and carefully depositing it in his pocket, left the chamber, crossed the spacious hall and knocked at the door of an opposite apartment.

A servant girl answered his knock.

Clinton instantly inquired,—
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. NEWTON MATHEWS.

LINTON advanced to the bedside of his step-father’s wife.

‘Mrs. Mathews was an entirely handsome woman. The marked personal attractions which had won her her reverent husband, she still possessed, though a good deal faded by a few years of married life.

In comparison with the minister, she was young. Her own age could not much have exceeded twenty-eight; and yet there was a look of care upon her face that seemed to have become habitual, and an expression of anxious and painful thoughtfulness that corresponded with her pervading melancholy.

Clinton was pained to perceive that her usually pale cheek was greatly flushed, and that there was a leaden dulness beneath the eyes, which confirmed her alleged indisposition.

As with his kindly inquired he approached her pillow, the lady laid her hand upon his own and looked up affectionately, and even gratefully in his face.

‘She is a ways thus, Francis,’ after a moment’s silence, said: ‘your generous solicitude and goodness are always the same. I am only your step-father’s wife—the last of his four wives—and yet you have ever given me the respect and the attention due to a dear mother.

‘The young man regarded her with visible emotion, and the tears in his eyes filled instant the preacher’s blue linen handkerchief and found himself in the presence of Mrs. Newton Mathews, the minister’s fourth wife.

‘My dead mother’s husband!’ repeated the young man, half-bitterly. ‘You have well named him so. He has been little else to me before or since her death.’

Gently Mrs. Mathews sought to check him.

‘Do not speak slightingly of him, Francis—for my sake, do not.

‘It is for your sake, dear madam,’ replied Clinton, earnestly, ‘that I do speak, rather than for my own.

Though he stopped here, his lips moved as if he would répétition more of his words.

‘How can you say so, Francis? I said the lady, with a glance half of reproach—but there was a singular mingling of just perceptible apprehension in her tone.

The young man noticed it—careless distinguishable it was.

‘Fixing his fine, dark eyes full upon her, Clinton answered,—

‘I say so, my dear madam, because—cause—I have my doubts that you are happy with him.’

‘Francis!’ And the sick lady’s flushed cheek grew pale, while she rose in her bed with a sudden start.

‘I repeat it, madam; you are not happy with your husband?’

‘I never said so.’

‘I know you never did. You are too mild, too patient, too forgiving, to breathe a murmur against him.

‘If that be so, Francis,’ replied the young woman, fittingly and tremulously—but with a glance that sought to read him to the soul—

‘how, then, could you divine what you assert so trivially?’

The singular young man folded his arms across his breast, and, drawing a step nearer,

regarded her with a look full as keen and searching as her own.

‘Yes, I will tell you, madam, how I divined the truth you were too careful to conceal—by your faded bloom—by your pallid youth—by your cheek growing daily more thin and wan—by the sorrowing look of your pleading eye. Far plainer than words speak they!’

A low deep sigh reached the speaker’s ear, as the form which had half raised itself on its couch sank faintly back.

‘Your lips refuse, then, a denial. You dare not say that it is not so. Ah, madam! I have long feared it—but not myself, alone.’

‘How!’ exclaimed the minister’s wife, agitatedly, ‘you speak of another! Who—who that?’

‘Your sister.’

‘Your sister.’

‘Your sister Alice,’

The lady turned away her face, sighing deeply.

‘Ah, Alice!’ he heard her murmur, ‘and has the dear girl, too, distressed herself with this belief, and died?’

‘Yes, believe me, dear madam, Miss Hastier has more than once sighed in secret over your hidden griefs—for such she feels her sister has.’

The sorrowing wife only faltered the word, ‘Alice!’

Clinton perceived how much she was affected, and hastened to agitate her until she should have become more composed again; but he did not seem willing to waken all further reference to the subject, exciting as he saw it was, to her.

After a moment, or two of silence, therefore, he returned to it.

But when he did speak, it was moodyly, and with a frowning brow, and a lip that was tremulous.

‘Perhaps I have had sharper eyes for your sorrows, madam, from knowing those of my own mother.’

Mrs. Mathews raised her face from the pillow in which she had buried it, and with an earnest, startled air turned once again toward the young man. There was eager inquiry in her whole manner.

Her step-father’s step-son proceeded,—

‘I was but two years old when she died—it was full seventeen years ago; but the private papers and letters she left me have left me little room to doubt her unhappiness with her husband and her.

As he spoke these latter words, the invalid suddenly stretched out her hand and grasped that of the young man. He almost turned pale at the wild expression he could trace in her eyes, as in a hollow voice she demanded, rather than asked—

‘What, Francis!—you do not mean to have me understand that—that she died of a broken heart?’

By a violent effort Francis Clinton restrained the powerful emotion that manifested itself in every feature, and with a tone of forced calmness answered—

‘No; Newton Mathews’ third wife by a swifter and her stroke—my mother died of the cholera.’

‘Oh, that was very terrible! And she died of the cholera?’

‘Yes, it was—terribly swift!’ murmured the lady.

‘Then! That was very terrible!’

The son answered, with a sigh.

‘In a single day! She was sick twelve hours that was all. And my poor mother went to the tomb.’

‘It was swift—terribly swift!’ murmured the lady.

Clinton was silent. He was debating within his heart whether it was best to communicate to her the startling intelligence he had that very morning learned.

He thought of himself as the sudden reappearance of the dread vision of seventeen years before—the scourge whch had swept away his only parent; and recollected that he had not, as yet, broken the momentous information to her.

He hesitated now to do so, as he beheld her flushed cheek, and laden eye, and saw that she had already passed through as much excitement as it was prudent for her to bear, in her present indisposed state.

This decided him to say nothing about it, though he tried to win her to the subject from his thoughts.

He perseveringly repeated the effort, however, and asked—

‘But you have not yet told me how far unwell you are. Is this sickness anything serious?’

She answered him languidly, pressing her hand to her forehead,—

THE CHOLERA FIEND.
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

'I feel a slight headache. That is all—unless it be a little fever here.' And she pointed to her temples.

The young man laid his hand gently on her smooth, white brow.

'Here’s fever, indeed.' Your forehead is absolutely hot,' he said, 'and your cheek is unusually flushed. When did you first feel unwell?'

Last night, only,' was the reply; 'I did not rest well, I believe. But this little illness is nothing new to me—I am indisposed very often.'

'Still, you need care,' said the young man, gently; 'there are strong signs of fever, and you must not neglect yourself. I'll send your sister to you?'

'Oh, no; there is no need of disturbing Alice for such a trifle. She is engaged down stairs.'

'Ah, yes; with my good friend Allen. It had quite slipped my mind.'

'By the bye, added the young man, abruptly, 'it seems to me that Allen comes here very often.'

'So Alice tells me, Francis. In fact, I believe he has some serious intentions with regard to her,' said Mrs. Mathews, forcing a smile.

'Indeed?' said Clinton, compressing his lips a little.

'Yes, but you need not look jealous,' returned the clergyman's wife, with the same difficult effort at gaiety; and added, more gravely, 'You need have no fears of Alice. Her affection is too firmly fixed on you for that.'

The young man smiled likewise; and then, as if a sudden thought occurred to him, demanded:

'But where is your husband?'

'The wife looked quickly up, as she rejoined,

'Mr. Mathews? I do not know. He must have passed the night in his private study—as he sometimes does. He was absent from the house as late as three o'clock, the night before last; and the night before that, he did not return till next morning.'

'Indeed?' exclaimed the minister's stepson, with an energy and emphasis that caused her eyes to linger upon his face, inquiringly.

'Indeed!' he reiterated, with the same vehemence. 'These are strange hours for a minister to keep. And it is but three nights ago, that—'

'He checked himself abruptly, and continued hastily—'

'But I must apologize to you more. I have already done so sufficiently—perhaps too much. As for—'

'You interrupted the lady, earnestly, telling me what it was that you were going on to say. Why did you check yourself, Francis?'

'But Clinton now seemed eager to hasten away without explanation.'

'It is nothing—all of consequence. I was merely wondering what business could detain him out so late. And now, as you are resolved not to let me do anything for you, I must go and send Alice to you as soon as Mr. Ned Allen thinks fit to decamp. I must not go before, or possibly Ned might consider my coming a decided intrusion.'

'With the gay, parting sally on his smiling lips, he left the chamber, before she could interpose another question.

'But, once out of the chamber of his stepfather's nest, he paused on his own accord, and remained for a moment in an attitude of deep thought.

'Appearing to have formed a resolution in his own mind, he descended the stairs, passed the door—expecting, however, to find it locked from within.

'The young man smiled likewise; and then, as if a sudden thought occurred to him, demanded:

'But where is your husband?'

'The wife looked quickly up, as she rejoined,

'Mr. Mathews? I do not know. He must have passed the night in his private study—as he sometimes does. He was absent from the house as late as three o'clock, the night before last; and the night before that, he did not return till next morning.'

'Indeed?' exclaimed the minister's stepson, with an energy and emphasis that caused her eyes to linger upon his face, inquiringly.

'Indeed!' he reiterated, with the same vehemence. 'These are strange hours for a minister to keep. And it is but three nights ago, that—'

'He checked himself abruptly, and continued hastily—'

'But I must apologize to you more. I have already done so sufficiently—perhaps too much. As for—'

'You interrupted the lady, earnestly, telling me what it was that you were going on to say. Why did you check yourself, Francis?'

'But Clinton now seemed eager to hasten away without explanation.'

'It is nothing—all of consequence. I was merely wondering what business could detain him out so late. And now, as you are resolved not to let me do anything for you, I must go and send Alice to you as soon as Mr. Ned Allen thinks fit to decamp. I must not go before, or possibly Ned might consider my coming a decided intrusion.'

'With the gay, parting sally on his smiling lips, he left the chamber, before she could interpose another question.

'But, once out of the chamber of his stepfather's nest, he paused on his own accord, and remained for a moment in an attitude of deep thought.

'Appearing to have formed a resolution in his own mind, he descended the stairs, passed the door—expecting, however, to find it locked from within.'

This was the minister's study.

He knocked at the door—twice—thrice.

There was no answer.

He knocked a fourth time.

Receiving, still, no response to his last and loudest application for admission, he tried the door—expecting, however, to find it locked from within.

On the contrary, the glass handle of the lock turned in his hand, and he quietly entered, presuming that his father had not yet arisen, and was not actually, or that he was already up, and had left the library.

Quietly advancing, he approached the compass where he knew it was Mr. Mathew's custom to pass those nights which he did not spend in his wife's chamber.

The bed had not been slept in the previous night!

Where, then, was the minister?
Orleans were being ravaged by this fearful visitor to our shores. But scientific men—
keen observers of the philosophy of the pestilence—had repeatedly expressed, and unied in
the confidence opinion, that a happy com-
bination of geological and local causes would
warrant absolutely arrest the progress, eastward of the ominous traveller, and that New
York, Philadelphia, and Boston, were almost se-
cure from the dread contagion of its devouring
sting.

"Alas, for human calculations! alas, for
the fallacy of all human science!—The cholera
is here!

In a single day—a warning—si-
len and stealthy as the arrowy snake—leap-
ing mountains, and rivers—and the cholera
is here!

A bound of a thousand miles—and it is
here ere rash!

Yesterday morning's sun rose over a
healthy city—a happy and prosperous people
—yesterday evening's sun set on a gloom-
shrouded metropolis; set upon half a million
of human beings, filled with fearful forebod-
ings and dark dismay.

They knew that the cholera had been
there—it had taken thirteen of their number
away.

Only thirteen—thirteen, alone, out of half
an million.

But they shuddered at the terrible con-
sciousness, that this was but the first breath of
the sweeping scourge—the first knell of the
funeral bell!

The cholera was there—the cholera had
come!

Reader, we expect, before another day's
race is run, to chronicle the fearful progress
of the pestilence. In the course of the next
twenty four hours, hundred will probably
have followed those original thirteen.

Reader, you or we, may be among
them.

One word of advice to you, then. Re-
member our warning is of the cholera. Ex-
ercise caution—the greatest care and caution,
in your daily diet. Let fresh of every kind be
banned from your dessertable—there is in-
fection in it. Avoid excitement of any de-
gree. Let your minds be kept composed;
and, above all, do not give way to fear.
Agitation and apprehension are known provo-
caires of the pestilence. Beware of these sec-
ret stimulants to infection! In one word,
beware of the cholera!

Beware of the cholera—oh, Francis! I re-
literated the pale and trembling girl. "Oh, this
is very, very terrible."

"It is, it is indeed, dear Alice. May kind
Heaven, in its mercy," replied Clinton, "shield
us from it. My poor, dear mother died of
the cholera."

The young girl gazed with tender sympathy
into her lover's face, but did not trust herself
to speak.

The emotion which the mournful associa-
tion had called up, the young man hastened
to conquer.

"I came to tell you, Alice, dearest," he then
said, "that your sister is not so well as usual,
this morning, and that, perhaps, it would be
as well for you to go to her."

"Not well! Francis?" repeated the sweet
girl, apprehensively. "I did not know it."

"Unwell is she?"

"I left her with a slight headache, and a
face unusually flushed, a few moments since," he
replied. "She complains of having rested
ill last night."

"Indeed! I will go to her immediately."
And Alice was turning toward the stair-
icase, when a word from her lover arrested
her purpose.

"Stay a moment, Alice. Her mood is with
her, and I am anxious to have a single min-
ute in private conversation with you, and I am
afraid I must say it will be on a painful
subject."

Alice woefully paused, and Clinton con-
tinued—

"I sent my man, Guiano, a half hour ago,
in search of you, to request this favor, but he
brought me word that you were engaged with
Mr. Allen. I could not, therefore, think of
disturbing you."

He had taken her by the hand as he thus
spoke, and led the wondering girl back into
drawing room.

Carefully closing the door through which
they had passed, he looked into the back par-
lor to satisfy himself that there was no pos-
sibility of his being overheard by any person
in the adjoining apartment, which was sepa-
rated only by folding doors from the other;
and then drawing a chair close to that of the
greatly surprised Alice, he encountered her
inquiring, he startled glance, and addressed
her.

His first and abrupt words were—"Tell
me, Alice, you have the smallest idea where
your brother-in-law, and my step-father, pass-
ed the night?"

"Passed the night, Francis? What a strange
question! Why, at home, Francis, of
course."

"No, Alice he did not. His pillow has not
been pressed last night," replied the young
man, in the same firm, deliberate tones in
which he had commenced; "at least, not in
this house."

"You do not mean to understand that
he did not sleep at home?" said the young
girl, in surprise. "I noticed he was not at the
breakfast table this morning, but presumed he
had preferred his breakfast in his own room,
as he often does."

"Depend upon it, he was not here, Alice."

"Mr. Matthews was absent all night?" cried
the astonished girl.

"Yes! Matthews was about—where I
know not, during the whole of last night. I
should not, perhaps, think so strange of the
circumstance, were it not that for the last two
or three nights, he has been absent until un-
commonly late hours, and what is more ex-
traordinary yet, Alice, but three days have
passed since I encountered my step-father, at
night, in the streets of New York, in com-
pany with one of the most notorious rascals
in the whole city."

A cry of astonishment from the young girl
excited the sensations of dismay and consci-
sation with which she received this deliber-
ate declaration.

Some seconds elapsed before she could
be induced to speak—"Impossible! Francis, you cannot be seri-
ous in what you assert. My brother-in-law—
a minister—a minister of the gospel, in com-
pany with such a character—at dead of night—

impossible!"

With a calm, decisive tone, the young man
assured her that it was truth he spoke—truth
and no more.

In a few words as possible, he explained,
so far as he could with delicacy relict the par-
ticulars, the singular details of his nocturnal
encounter with the clergyman and his two
companions.

Alice listened in silence and thoughtfulness
—but when he had finished, she raised her
eyes to her lover's face, with a strange ex-
pression in her countenance.

"Francis," she said, with energy, "I am
glad that you told me this, and now I must
ask you to listen to me, in turn; for I too,
have a secret to confide to you."

There was a depth of earnestness and mean-
ing in the young girl's rapid utterance, inde-
pendent of the words themselves, that gave to
what she said the most poignant emphasis; and
it was now the young man's turn to be sur-
prised.

"Francis! you know that to no living per-
son have I ever breathed the strange doubts
and vague suspicions you have at times ex-
pressed of your step-father's character—of
his perty."

"Alice, those doubts, those suspicions, I
have not had!"

And I continued Alice, "I have never
whispered them—not even to my sister, tho'
I have sometimes feared, as you do, that some
secret unkindness of her husband may have
caused her failing spirits and her failing
health."

"I, Alice, am convinced of it."

"Enraged!"

"Even more—I have paused the test ad-
mission from her."

"Francis, I must no longer keep se-
crency toward you, in a matter which so greatly
concerns us both."

"What is this matter, Alice?"

She waited for her answer, anxiously. It
was not given as readily as her previous words
might lead him to expect.

"Alice's eyes were bent upon the ground,
but her lips moved not, she appeared com-
municating with herself.

I am thinking, Francis, how best to
break it to you, that which is my duty to re-
veal. I choose the frankest way. Francis—
she spoke in a low, agitated tone—"Francis,
were you not for my sister's sake write it not
that I trouble at the thought of deserving
here—I should no longer have any wish to re-
main an inmate of this house."

Clinton started and regarded her with an
expression of consternation, clearly mixed with
other feelings.

"Alice!" he exclaimed.

"You are surprised, Francis; but your sur-
prise will be still greater when I speak more
plainly; but reluctantly, but cowardly tell
you, that there has been the least of the con-
duct of Mr. Mathews, which should make me most
anxious to leave, at once and for ever, the
shelter of his roof!"

With the strongest and most forcible em-
seem in the least surprised by his visit, called him close to his chair and proceeded to question him.—

"So, my boy, you have found me out, it seems. But what news do you bring, and why did you not come sooner?

Mark’s peculiar physiognomy lost all of its impudence, but none of its shrewdness, in replying to the young gentleman.

"Couldn’t do it, sir—the faces were against me. But I have brought you plenty of news and have got all the more on it in consequence of the time I’ve taken."

"Ah, my boy! and what does this news of your relative to?"

"The girl," said Mark, briefly.

"The girl!—what girl?"

"Lizzie!"

Once more recalled to mind his nocturnal adventure, three nights before, and all its singular associations.

"Lizzie, sir—the girl you gave the money to. I followed her home, and found out where she lives," was the lad’s reply. "But that is not all I found out."

"Indeed! what more did you discover?" was the immediate inquiry fromClinton, who had his own reasons for desiring this very information.

The only response the boy made was to take a heavy-laden purse from his pocket, and fling it upon the table before the young officer.

Clinton took up the purse, and let it drop again in astonishment. It was the same he had given to the fallen but repentant Lizzie, three nights before.

He knew it again, instantly.

With an intelligent smile the shrewd Mark watched Mr. Clinton, while he examined it in his surprise.

Clinton, laying it down and turning to the person who had so unexpectedly reproduced his former property, directly demanded of the boy:

"How came you by that purse?"

The lad, with his ready tongue, and in his own curious style, then proceeded to solve the young gentleman’s doubt and perplexity by explaining what had happened immediately by subsequent to the forced flight from the police, on the memorable night of the rencentre; communicating, as he did, an occurrence which was as little known to our hero as it is to our readers.

But through our good friend, Mark, told his story in his usual concise and pointed way, the other hand, must give it in a plain

One of these worthy, in fact, had actually overran him, and was in the act of collaring the recumbent boy, when Mark, just as he struck out his bludgeon arm for the purpose, suddenly and drolly slipped down on his knees, right in front of the man, who, missing the object, and unable to stop himself, pitched directly over the lad’s head, and measured his whole length on the pavement, from which he was in no condition to rise in a hurry.

Then Mark, gripping at the case with which he had outwitted the crest-fallen watchman, made haste to get out of the vicinity of the whole tribe of “Charlies” who were springing their rattles around.

He did not avail himself indiscriminately, however, of the first avenue of escape that offered itself to him; but, from the motives he understood by himself, he selected the street by which Lizzie had effected her previous retreat, and rapidly pursued the same course which the girl had taken before him.

He had not pursued long, nevertheless, although he had left his own pursuers behind, before he became very well convinced that a policeman was in advance of him—not with the view of heading off himself, but evidently in hot chase of some other fugitive, who had got the start of them both.

This the quick-witted youth instantly conjectured to be the girl Lizzie, who had been the first to take the alarm and the first to fly from the gathering guardians of the night—Notwithstanding, the nocturnal policeman were on her track!

This discovery had, by no means the effect to arrest the lad’s further progress; on the contrary, he might very well have done. Mark kept on in the wake of the watchman ahead, who was altogether too intent on his fugitive to allow of his perceiving that his own steps were dogged.

In a few moments more, a glimpse of the girl herself convinced Mark that he had not been mistaken.

She was flying along the street, far in ad
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

the face; but the old man's eye told him that the policeman was gaining upon her at every stride he took. As he was hurrying on at the same swift gait, his foot suddenly slipped upon some dark object on the sidewalk, lying directly in his path; with some little trouble he managed to preserve his equilibrium, picking up the object which had glided away from his tread.

It was the purse.

The fugitive girl, in her alarm and terror, had evidently dropped it, and continued her flight without perceiving her loss.

Mark was a little staggered on finding such a treasure in his possession, but after a moment's close cogitation, he dropped the purse into his pocket, buttoned up his jacket over it, and abated not one atom of his former speed. By this time he had become quite satisfied that he was a much faster runner than the policemen ahead, and Mark, for reasons of his own, determined to gain in advance of the Charlie. There was but one safe way to do this, which was by cutting round the first corner, and coming out again into the same street, several squares farther on—a manœuvre which, he calculated, would bring him out very nearly on a line with the fugitives, at some distance ahead of the policeman.

He soon overtook her, and knew every turn and winding of the street, and, finding that she was really the beautiful, and that her appearance was more than typically English, with a manœuvre

—self drawn under the arched opening beneath the stately stone-work.

Before she could recover from her astonishment, her unknown friend had darted out at her side of the arch, to the open street, at the corner, a few yards farther on. The policeman came up—looked around for his prey—saw only the boy, and accosted him with a hushed inquiry whether he had seen a woman pass that way.

Mark, with the most innocent countenance, replied—

"Certainly! certainly, sir. She tore by me, just now, like mad!"

"Did she? Which way?" eagerly cried the watchman.

"Down that corner, sir! down the corner. I say, old fellow, what will you do to help to catch her?"

But the alarmed policeman was out of bearing and half way out of sight by this time, as he dashed away in the supposed direction of the fugitive.

Mark coolly watched him till he was quite out of view, and then plunged a second time beneath the archway. The surprise of poor Lizzie, on recognizing, in her protector, the boy Mark, may be easily conceived.

But he put a stop to all her acknowledgement, by warning her, in his own most impressive style, that he would hunt her out and foil her in double quick time. From that moment, he was one powerful inducement to ensure their final escape with as little delay as possible.

Mark, who had given such good proofs how much his boyish sympathies were enlisted in her favor, assured her he would see her safely housed, before he bade a rod from her side, but even ho, as he heard the distant sound of the echoing rattles, was not sorry to learn from her that her home was now quite near, and that five minutes would bring them thither.

In even less than the time mentioned they reached it; but when they gained the very door and stopped, the woman Lizzie, with a low, sad tone, and a saddening smile, turned to the boy and said, "You will—must not ask you to go in with me. This house is no place for one like you. Thank God, poor boy! you are yet too young to know of such evil as those brick walls hide you from starving, long ago. Money to pay me, hey? It's a lie, a lie, I say! You've been drinking, Miss, and now you're trying to command me. But it won't do—it won't work! You owe me twenty-eight dollars for two weeks' arrears—twenty-eight dollars! and I ain't going to be cheated out of it; that's what I ain't!"

She shook her first in the face of Lizzie, as she spoke:

"No, no, you don't! Your trunk or your clothes you don't have, Miss, while you owe me a single cent."

"I shall not owe you long, then, Mrs. Martin," was the calm reply. "Would to Heaven I could square my long account with my God, as easily as I can with you."

Her hand, for the second time, sought for the purse.

As Mark and the reader knows, it was not there!

With a faint cry, and trembling like a shivered reed, she staggered back, the picture of despair.

"Oh, Good God! I have lost it! God help me, now."

Mark's hand went to the bottom of his pocket, but before he could draw forth what it hastily fumbled for, he heard the shrill laugh of the ogress and her mocking voice, explaining:

"Oh! you've lost it, Miss; have you? I thought something of that kind would happen, I did. So that pocketful of rocks isn't forthcoming, oh! oh!"

Saying this, the Xanthippe stretched out her skinny arm, and catching hold of the poor girl, dragged the half-fainting Lizzie over the threshold, by main force, into the house, explaining:

"There, there! Miss! I've got you safe, now; and out of this house you don't stir till you've paid me my twenty-eight dollars!"

"None of that! none of that, you old she-bear!" cried Mark, indignantly, springing up the steps and through the door-way, as, not content with malignant taunts, the vindictive woman commenced shaking her victim violently.

What reception the boy met with must be told in the next chapter.
CHAPTER V.
THE OGRE.

ND Mark continued his story to the young officer—which, how-
ever, we prefer to relate in our own manner, rather than in his
quaint style.

The sputul belladonna released her hold of her trembling prey,
and made an effort to close the door forcibly upon him; but not succeeding in this—for
Mark was too quick for her—she dealt the boy such a tremendous cuff on the side of
his head, as he entered, that she sent the undulated half-way across the open hall.

Thanks to his rather extensive experience in that line, under Doctor Quakenboss, Mark
was a perfect philosopher with regard to cuffs and blows of every description; but even he
was a little amazed at the exceeding emphasis with which a blow on the ear, from an angry
woman is certain to come.

His face tingling not a little, he gathered himself up from the floor and cautiously ap-
proached the two females, from one of whom he received such a doubtful welcome.

'Well, brat!' cried the old woman, fiercely,' you'll make myself the victim, I reckon
what business had you to put in your jaw, and whatever business have you here, anyway?
Yes, and what business had you to bring him here?

And she turned again, sharply, upon the
shrieking Lizzie.

As for you, Miss! I'll keep you snugly enough. I warrant you, till I'm sure of
my honest dues. Here you and your traps
are—and here they'll stay! Oh, you needn't
think I'm going to let you out, Miss, to give
you a chance to run away;

And the ogres gazed at her with a malic-
sious leer.

'Not I, Miss! not I. I'll keep you locked
up in your room—locked up, do you hear?
But you needn't think to be lazy, and earn
nothing! I'll find business for you, you hussy
—though you can't find it yourself.' I'll send
customers to you, when the other girls is out,
or engaged.'

The wretched Lizzie uttered a moan—
of the ruffians usually kept in reserve by the
keepers of dens like the one into which she had
penetrated.

Instantly springing to the drooping Lizzie's
side, he energetically called on her to seize
the opportunity and escape with him from the
house.

'The street-door is open,' he cried. 'Come
on!'

But the boy's eye was as quick as her ter-

gnant tongue, and slamming back the open
doors, before he could prevent her, she threw
her whole weight against, and cried to the vil-
lains above to hasten to her help.

Mark was strong, for a boy of his years,
but he was not strong enough to bear a
woman of large size from the door for, in
comparison with his own puny frame, she was
a mountain of flesh; and one or two wel-
divered blows from her fat, stout fists, proved
that the virago was possessed of the manly
art of pugilism, as well as the accomplishment
of whistling.

Nevertheless, Mark obstinately continued
his futile efforts to wrench the ogre forcibly
from her position against the barricaded door,
unassisted by a torrent of abuse from the en-
tranced beldame, who did not desist from
her repeated loud calls to the villains who were
hurrying to her aid.

In another moment the men were upon
him, and now the boy had quite a different
expression to make.

Before he was well aware of their coming,
the lid was set upon from behind and thrown
down.

Scarcely a dozen words passed between the
ogress and her tools; she flung open the door
which she had so obstinately endeavored to
keep closed, and making one bound to the side
of the young woman Lizzie, who was faint
with terror, grief and despair, she held her
by the shoulder with a grasp of a tiger, to
prevent the escape of the wretched girl; while
the men, seizing upon the boy, tossed him
forcibly out into the open street.

Mark rose, severely bruised, in time to hear
the street-door bolted upon him; and having
first made sure that none of his bones were
broken, he next satisfied himself that the
purse, with its contents, was equally safe.

And with it, said Clinton, as the boy
climbing his tale, 'you came to me? Was it
not so?'

Exactly,' said the boy, 'I believed she
had one friend left, beside myself, and so I
came here. But why I did not come sooner,
was he—'

Before he could finish, the door of Clinton's
chamber opened suddenly, and Gumbo, ex-
hibiting signs of great perturbation, burst into
the room.

Francis Clinton started up abruptly, de-
nouncing the cause of the intrusion. But it
was at least full three minutes before the
uttering and breathless African could give an
intelligible explanation.

The sight of Mrs. Mathews had taken an
unfavourable turn, and was increasing
to an alarming extent; and the minister's
wife had requested that the family physician
might be instantly summoned.

'Worse! still worse! Is it possible?' ejac-
ulated Clinton, and seizing his hat he rushed
from the room, exclaiming,—

'A physician! I will go for him, myself,
immediately!'

The next moment Mark was alone in the
chamber.

CHAPTER VI.
AN ALARMING DISCOVERY.

OPREHENDING very little of Clinton's
reasons for his pre-
cipitation, Mark, not
withstanding, felt toler-
ably satisfied that the young gentleman,
in all probability,
would wish him to await his return, though
he had not stopped to stay so.

Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes elapsed, with-
out his coming back; and Mark, who was
naturally of a most grave turn of mind, look-
ed round for something to employ his own at-
tention, in the meanwhile.

'There was the confusion and noise of a
considerable battle about the house, and
Mark, who delighted in bustle of any kind,
got to the door of the chamber and peeped
out into the entry.

Servants were coming and going, in a hur-
rried manner, from the room opposite; but al-
most the first person whom his searching
eyes rested on, was the bulky figure of
the stalwart Gumbo, whose intelligence said
THE CHOLERA FEIEND.

Mark most desired to impart, and the mischievous lad did not suffer the opportunity to slip by unimproved.

"The nature of it, Gumbo? Ah!" and he shook his head, sorrowfully, "ah, I don't tell you that.

"But you must! Massa Mark," bellowed the unfortunate individual, in an agony. "Do 'tain dat—splain it to dis nigger, quick!—if you don't 'splain de cholera, p'raps me hab it, widout knowin' it.

"Rather guess you'll find out you have got it, soon enough!" chuckled the incorrigible, sotto voce.

Then the lad responded, in most lachrymose tones—

"Oh, Gumbo, Gumbo! It's a—a horrible fact, but truth must be told; and—and it's an involuntarily bonfire, inside of a spontaneous combustion of the whole human frame, kindled by eating too much clam soup and pepper-sass and of which the unfortunate victim is certain sure to die in something less than three hours and a half—if he don't survive any longer.

A tremendous bowl of horror went upon Gumbo.

"Hebbers and earth! 'FONTOMATE COMBUSTION—Clam-soup and pepper-sass,' yelled the affrighted blacker.

"Yes, poor Gumbo!" replied Mark, dolefully.

"And get up de ghost in tree bouter an' half, eh?" exclaimed the news.

"Yes, the victims seldom survive the first appearance of the disease so long," replied Mark.

"And dis nigger swallowed a whole bimming bottle of it for breakfast, dis mornin'—s'pose 'n dead nigger dis morn? Get out ob de way—get out ob de way! I hab got de cholera!"

And actually knocking down Mark, who stood in his way, the half-witted American rushed out of the room, across the entry, and down the stairs—never once stopping until he found himself in the presence of old Dinah herself.

Roaring with laughter, Mark rolled on the floor, coming more than a dozen of times within the bounds of self-mutilation.

The whimsical incident had not yet fully lost its remaining powers of amusement, when, some ten minutes after, his quack ear caught the noise of the opening street-door, and he presently saw the handsome figure of young Clinton ascending the stairs, in company with a certain grave and sober elderly personage, whom Mark set down as the family physician.

The young officer left the medical attendant at the door of the sick room, saying a few parting words to the doctor, and then crossed to his own chamber, with a slow and thoughtful step.

He started slightly on perceiving it already tenanted by no less an important individual than Mark—the boy, and his business with him, having probably passed altogether from his mind.

The young midshipman slowly seated himself and said—

"Now, my good boy, I will hear you out, if you have any more to add to what you have already told me."

Mark needed no second invitation, and replied—

"I was on the point of telling you sir, how it was that I happened to wait so long before I came to you with the purse I found, and the story.

"Well, I will listen to your explanation, now. What was the cause of the delay?" inquired Clinton.

"It was all owing to old 'Looch Quackenboss,' the bloody old sinner! He had me shut up for a month in a cellar, and a deep dark hole in a closet, with a couple of good wallopsings into the bargain, by way of something tizzy."

But what did you do to deserve such punishment?" asked Clinton.

"Being out so late, without being able to give a satisfactory 'count of myself—though, shoot me! If I could help thinking there was quite as much need of his giving an account of himself, too, after what I once seed of him."

Clinton, with some quickness, then demanded if the boy had suffered his master, the druggist, to suspect that he had been recognised, at the time and in the occurrence alluded to.

"I hope you didn't think, sir, I was green enough to do that. I had to wait till I could get out of that darnation closet, and then I came straight here, hoping—"

But hesitating, the boy paused, without saying what.

"Hoping what, my good lad? Speak up—"
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

So not be afraid," was Clinton's encouraging bidding.

This time Mark answered boldly,—

"Hoping and believing, sir, that you would do something for that poor Lizzie, and not let those precious cories coop her up there till there's nothing left of the girl, sir."

The boy spoke with feeling, and Francis Clinton, gazed at him with an approving smile, answering—

"You have not much mistaken me, then, my lad. I will have her out of the clutches of those harpies before to morrow night."

"But you will have to get help to do it, sir," said Mark, earnestly.

"Help we will have, then! I will take a policeman with us. But are you sure, and can you guide us to the house—for that I shall want you to do."

"Sure as a brick, sir. I knows the place like a book."

"So much the better; you will be useful, then. I will set out with you this very night, if nothing should prevent. That poor girl has shown a disposition to repent and reform, and God forbid that I should neglect the opportunity of procuring a brand from the burning."

"He arose and paced the chamber, and then added, earnestly,—

"I know not who she is, boy, any more than you yourself; and whatever she might have been, I think it my duty to take this course, and this course, therefore, I shall take. Come here to me, my lad—a moment."

Mark sprang to his side at the call, and Clinton, taking out his note-book, wrote a few words upon one of the blank pages, which he tore out and handed to Mark, after folding the same in the form of a billet and directing it on the outside.

"Can you read?" inquired Clinton, of the boy.

"Yes, sir."

"Then take this note to the address of the chief of Police, and bring me back his reply. I'll appoint an officer to accompany you, and do you be in readiness by ten o'clock this evening—we shall go then, or to-morrow night at the very latest."--

"I won't fail, sir—not I!" cried Mark, full of delight.

"Do not, on any account. And now hurry away with your note. That fallen but unhappy creature must and shall be rescued from the clutches of the ogress and her foul minions."

Francis Clinton continued to pace his lonely chamber, long after Mark was gone; but gradually his thoughtful tread slackened, and ceased at length altogether, before the gilded mirror which adorned the walls of his luxurious apartment. It was the portrait of his ill-fated mother,—the minister's third wife, who had died of the Cholera seventeen years before.

He was still dwelling lingeringly and sorrowfully upon it, when a light finger was upon his shoulder, and turning round, he beheld the familiar face of the family-physician, who had entered his chamber so quietly as not to disturb him in his abstracted musings upon the dead lady's picture.

But there was something in the expression of that countenance, which sent a chill to the young man's heart—and before he could utter forth the trembling inquiry which died on his lips, the pale and agitated physician had whispered, with deep emotion, these few but expressive words,—

"As sure as we stand here, Francis Clinton, poor Mrs. Mathews is stricken with the Cholera!"

BOOK FOURTH.

THE MYSTERY BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

THE VAMPIRES.

Our story, therefore, is now come when we must lift the veil from the mystery and unfold, in all their terrors, the secret deeds of dread and darkness by which the mightiest metropolis of the Continent had been, for four days, plunged into the clouds of the pitiless pestilence.

It was the night following the day on which the Rev. Newton Mathews's fourth wife had been attacked by the cholera—stricken down by the same mysterious scourge which had swept away one of her predecessors, seventeen years before.

Around one of the score of city churches, yards, one hour after midnight, three men were hurrying.

Cautiously examining the surrounding space, apparently with the view of satisfying themselves that no watchful eye was on them, two of these men began silently to climb over the wall iron-paling which enclosed the grave-yard within its wide-reaching arms, and then as quietly struck out into the enclosed area, leaving their single companion remaining on the other side, possibly for the purpose of communicating a ready alarm, in case of necessity.

Keeping close under the shadows of the drooping willows which formed the melancholy ornaments of the burial-place, the two who had thus penetrated into its solemn solitude continued to steal along, until they had gained its heart.

Not a word, not a syllable had been as yet spoken, when the two men halted, by common consent, and each fixed his glance upon the other.

The night was as dark a night as ever shrouded a slumbering city in gloom and obscurity.

All was still as dead; all, save the motionless trees, the grass, the clouds, and the sluggish stream which encircled the field in its embrace of二手房.

The dull clank of the falling metal was not all that followed Broken-back's exulting laugh, for the same instant he turned and accosted his companion.

"This makes the fourth burial ground we have visited, I believe.

The remark was more assertion than inquiry.

"The fourth! entered the other, with a deep, solemn emphasis.

"The fourth, I am sure," pursued the original speaker: "for last night our visit was to the Potter's Field—and that was the third!"

"The Potter's Field? again echoed the tall, gaunt man, with a shriveling air of truculence.

"Yes, the third was the Potter's Field."

And now we are in B— Place Cemetery, with a low laugh said the hunchback.

"I have seen all the other burial places of the city, but here we are among sculptured tombs and marble monuments, and last night, at this same hour, we were prowling about the morose swamp, where the plumless wreath and the gnarled, ancient tree met and mingled; the shadow pits and the gaping hollows, where the city buries its pauper dead, in graves one above another, as dogs are thrown when they die! (Of this is humanity?)"}

The voice of the hunchback was the voice of a mocking fiend.

The minister answered not a word. But Broken-back stooped and gathered up one of the iron implements which he had thrown to
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

That expression, seen on every man's countenance, was one of mingled determination, acrimony, and triumph. To the visages of the apothecary and the preacher there was, however, a lurking apprehensiveness, a kind of secret fear, of which there was not a single sign in the repulsive visage of Broken-Back, whose distorted features exhibited nothing save desperation and malice, and a fiendish exultation which every moment increased and became more fiercely plain.

At the termination of two hours from the time at which these three singular coadjutors commenced their mysterious task, the fastenings of a hundred tombs had been loosened; and there remained, in the burial-ground, not more than a dozen tombs which had been untouched, as yet.

In another quarter of an hour, the whistle of the hunchback resounded shrilly through the cemetery, and, at the concerted signal, his two co-operatives, abandoning their several situations, rejoined their ally and leader.

Then the ensuing brief but singular interchange of we dock took place between the three—"The principal question being the savage Broken-Back,—"It is done?"
"Is it?"
"How many locks have your keys fixed, Matthews?"
"Thirty-five."
"And all in readiness to be thrown open?"
"Every one."
"How many tomb-gates have you unhinged with your screw-driver, Quackenbos?"
"Twenty-one."
"And my own work counts fifty. That makes one hundred and sixty. There cannot be many more victims in the cemetery. Good!" said Broken-Back, excitedly. "Everything is now in train. Let us proceed to the finishing step! What do you say? Cowards! You forget you have had three nights' schooling in this. You are no novices, fools. How do you still hesitate?"
"We are ready," was the short and half-incoherent response from the apothecary and the man who was now crouching in every limb.

"Dispersed, then, to your several stations—and await the word. We must be quick—quick as serpents when they strike. Be back—there are more than a hundred tombs!"

The three men separated—taking different directions each.

The reader, as if the hunchback had suddenly become red-hot, and demanded, in a by no means-}

Not take it down?—why not?—what else did you take off the hinges for, if you didn't want it taken down?"

What a brazen fool! would you throw open the tomb gate? What is the point of all this?—that tomb once laid open to the air, do you think a single man here could finish his task?"

The doctor drew back, astonishment, apologetically—"

I did not think of that—"

You did not, indeed! It was time that I should, I thought. That door once down, and we should find it impossible to remain ten minutes longer in the cemetery.

I split and you did not think of that?—Every tomb-door in the burying-ground must be unhinged, before the first one is taken down!"

Now, at least, Quackenbos seemed fully to comprehend the hunchback's reasons for the prohibition he had imposed; and this time, at all events, he took the best method of gaining his end by simply falling under his displeasure, by closely imitating both his selection of implements and his course of operation.

Broken-Back had substituted the screw-driver for the chisel, and was rapidly un-screwing the hinges of door after door of the surrounding tombs—still exerting, in each case, the same deliberate care in grading against their fall, before the desired time—in precaution to which he seemed to attach so much importance.

As for the clergyman, he had taken a second bunch of keys from his breast, and inserting them in the locks of the twenty or so curious tombs, with more success than those of the hunchback, the heavy wards had in each instance yielded to the pressure, and the bolts rolled back; though the preacher was equally guarded in providing against the immediate opening of the iron doors.

Silently the three men worked on together.

Occasionally, one would pause to wipe the perspiration from his dripping brow, and to which the relative progress of the remainder of the trio

Sometimes, all three would desist from their work, as by one general impulse, and gazing into each other's faces, seeking to read the expression which prevailed there all, alike.

The frighted apothecary dropped his

In a suppressed voice the preacher replied

that he had no objection, if the other thought it quite safe.

The hunchback deviated from his work only long enough to cast upon the speaker a sarcastic and scornful glance, and his shrill whistle echoed through the cemetery as he attacked the last blow which divided the second hinge.

The door still remained in its place, only held by the adhesion of the lock in its socket, but the preacher's position was drawn away from the tomb to the fat figure of the little doctor, whose dim outlines were just visible in the distance, as the corpulent sentinel was seen performing the rather difficult feat of climbing the iron pailing which the others had previously surmounted.

The doctor came up at a run, and in an ex-fuse perspiration, looking, moreover, very red in the face; all of which were tolerably satisfactory proofs that he regarded his recent display of agility as a highly brilliant piece of gymnastics, if not, indeed, a decided exploit.

The first simultaneous inquiry of the hunchback and the minister, as to whether he had discovered any person hovering about in the neighborhood, produced a very gratifying negative.

And to your work, then, Vampires!"

The hunchback, giving voice to this ominous command, withdrew his chisel from the last of the several hinged doors, through with such evident care as not to cause the iron door to fall from the slight support of the bolt which still sustained it, and passed on to the next tomb.

"To your work, vampires," again he repeated.

The doctor, who had come provided with similar implements of a mysterious labor, his movements probably quickened by the stern sense of the other, hastened to select a chumbler from the variety before him, and by help of the strong lever began the task of pushing from its socket the slenderly-hanging door which the hunchback had previously deprived of its hinges.

Broken-back—himself in the act of repeating this operation upon the second tomb, foolishly turned upon the doctor, as soon as he heard the lever of the latter grating against the door.

"Idiot! what are you about?" he thundered.

"Take down that door, if you dare!"

A shudder might have been seen to pass through the frame of the clergyman, had not his companion, the hunchback, prevented himself from observing him, by bending down to reassess himself of the chisel which he had dropped.

"We must have recourse to this," he muttered, feeling its sharp edge.

As the door hung by its single remaining hinge, Broken-back, while he again raised the hammer to attack it, said to the minister, without turning his face toward him or censoring from his work.

"All seems quiet, now: suppose we call Quackenbos?"

In a suppressed voice the preacher replied
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

The harsh voices of the sick, back once more made itself heard—

"Not yet at your post, all!"

Two low whistles were the reply.

Then instantly a home-board, exultant crowd rushed frantically among the tombs—

"Let fall! let fall!"

A terror that came from three different quarters of the cemetery, followed the order thus given: It was as if some ponderous bodies had been hurled from an elevation, and fallen by their own weight to the ground, which gave back the dull, prolonged, hollow sound of a subterranean concussion.

But the whistling noise did not cease here. The same clanging roar, the same stunning clatter, continued without the least interruption to resound through the darkness-shrouded burial-ground—while the solid earth seemed to shudder beneath the incessant and tremendous blows it received, from the falling objects which inflicted these powerful shocks.

And while unceasingly the graving reports continued, as fast as shock succeeded to shock, did three gliding phantoms pass swiftly from one tomb to another—to the next, and on to the next again.

The iron doors of thirty-five vaults stood open wide—the massive tomb-gates of twice that number had rolled from their hinges to the ground.

A hundred sepulchres were yawning, open-mouthed!

What was the secret, the terrible secret of these graving vaults?—

A scene from these hundred yawning and open-jawed sepulchres, the deadly breath of the Charnel House was bursting its imprisonment, and mixing with the pure night-breeze that cooled the sleeping city, far and near! Yes, the deadly breath of the Charnel House—

Forth—forsaking the mighty town, the silent and solemn tombs, poisoning the fresh sweet air, swept the revolting exhalations of the sepulchres.

From the rumbling coffins,—forth from the hollow skulls, were stealing the poisons and bones, the shouldering bones, the bones of the osseous frame, the bones of the body, until the mind of the affectionate husband should have recovered from the stunning shock.

The minister, however, left instructions with the good physicians that he should be instantly awakened, if dangerous results should arise; directions which he repeated to the servants, who promised compliance.

The sluices of the Rev. Newton Matthews were unbroken and steady, and long continuous, for he had returned greatly overpowered with the pious watchings of the night before and the day before, and lay asleep away the entire morning, and part of the afternoon, when he found himself aroused from his fitful sleep by the loud knock of the servant.

A smile mingling with the terror of his visit, he started upexpecting the announcement of some alarming intelligence of his wife's situation; but the messenger had not come for that.

He had come to announce to the clergyman, that a gentleman had just called, desiring to see the minister himself.

With some precipitation his master demanded—

"A gentleman? who was it? Did he send up his card?"

"Yes, sir; here it is—wished to see you in private, he said.

"In private?"

And the minister, who had turned slightly pale, glanced hastily at the address; but the instant he had deciphered it, a quick, red flush suffused his countenance. He wished to see him, he said, in his study. Ask him to come here in five minutes' time, he said—and the messenger departed.

It was scarcely that brief length of time, when, from the parlor in which he had waited, the clergyman's servant was ushered into the library.

Our hero, Clinton, in the chamber of the invalid, had heard both the ring at the door, and that knock at his step-father's study; and, as he had received for answer, that the gentleman was Mr. Edward Allen, who had called upon the minister, upon an errand of whose nature he could readily conjecture, after the recent disclosures made by Alice.

But, however, was too far remote from the scene, to hear or witness anything which might confirm the story of his surmise. But the domestics, who were continually passing through the hall, looked not a little surprised and curious, when from the minister's study they heard the sound of voices in loud and angry dispute.

During many moments those angry voices continued to issue from behind the closed door of the study; but high and distinct above those of the other, the incensed tones of the preacher, though not his words, were audible.

Then, at length, the library door was heard to re-open; and the honest exquisites, Mr. Allen, issued forth with a very different air and bearing from his appearance when he entered; his cheek flushed, his look angry, with which some seeming astonishment was mingled.

The preacher himself stood in the door-way, trembling and white with rage; his eye actually glittering with the fiery glow which belongs to the untamed passions of the heart. He looked among the assembly, and seeing no sign of his daughter, he spoke to the minister.

"Show this gentleman out!"

"Sir!" said the amazed attendant, unable to believe his ears.

"Show this gentleman out; and never admit him again!"

They will be spared the trouble, sir!" broke from the indignant Allen, hastily, as he closed the street-door behind him.

The furious minister re-entered his study, and re-closed his door; but it was not to return again to his broken rest.

Backward and forward, like an enraged lion, did he stride over his life-floor. The livid whiteness did not leave his cheek, nor the passionate glare for sake his eye; but both seemed rather to increase and deepen, while he often clutched hisattenuated hands and muttered aloud—

"My consent, by Heaven! my consent he dared to ask! Give him Alice! Alice, my own, as she yet was before! In—I could have murdered him. No—neither he, nor that boy—that accursed stepson—shall have her. Mine and mine alone I will make her. There is but one stumbling-block; but one, in the way. She is already betrothed, as was another before her—and now I will complete my work. Let them deceive her, let them physic her, her days in the land of the living are numbered.

The promise was past, the preacher said. But more ominous was the calm that followed; and from such a mood, more, far more was to be feared.

Mr. Matthews sat down at his library table, but it was not to record anything. From a secret drawer in the private cabinet, he deliberately drew forth, first, a small blue envelope, and secondly from within, two colored papers: the one green, the other red,
containing, apparently, some carefully treasured powder.

"Unfolding these two papers, one after the other, he muttered, with ironic meaning—

"This time I will trust to something nearer than a narcotic. This time it shall be death, indeed, and not the semblance only.

The green parcel contained a dark-looking substance, reduced to small grains, and emitting a peculiar, rather than a strong odor.

The red paper, on the contrary, exhibited a powdery snow whiteness, and perfectly lozenge-shaped.

Upon both of these gazed the gray-headed clergyman, with something strange and fearful in the ghastly paleness of that bloodless countenance.

Presently, with a finger that trembled almost imperceptibly, the preacher proceeded to add to the snow-white powder a single grain of the dark-colored substance enclosed in the green paper.

That solitary grain, however, was first broken into innumerable small fragments, not so large as the point of a pin, and distributed carefully over the whole surface of the white preparation, which was then shaken until it had completely impregnated those minute black specks and left not a single trace visible.

Fearful, very fearful to behold, was the sad, ironical smile with which the gray-headed clergyman gazed on the mingled contents of the green and red papers, and repeated, with existing exultation, again and again to himself—

"The effects of arsenic, and the symptoms of the cholera, are precisely the same."

The minister remained in deep thought for the space of several moments after his last calm repetition of these words; then he folded up the pater, replaced it in the secret drawer, which he locked securely and cautiously upon it.

Well might the clergyman thus wary in guarding the hiding place of the most potent of known poisons—the most hideous and terrible.

A handsome mirror hung above the clergyman's head. He went to the glass to free his face and person from the traces of recent agitation, and the mutually baggage expression of his features well might have caused him to start back in terror and amazement at his own appearance.

Collecting himself, and banishing these signs of violent emotion, the preacher unlocked the door of the library and quit its walls.

With a calm, firm step he ascended to the invalid's chamber, where he found the medical attendant, Clinton, and his sister-law, Alice; the latter pale and worn with watching and weeping. The agent, who had been brought briefly explained that the sick woman had sunk into a quiet slumber, at length, after having passed through a dangerous crisis; and that unless some unhappy relapse should ensue, he entertained strong hopes of her eventual convalescence.

Mr. Mathews listened quietly, but the good physician suspected little the arch hypocrisy of the husband's murmured gratitude, as he went on to add, to the minister that he must now leave the patient for a while, but that he would return in the confident hope of soon pronouncing her "cured case of cholera."

Before he went, however, he advised both Clinton and Alice to retire for the purpose of seeking the rest and refreshment which they needed after the shock of the unexpected news; and all through that day, which, itself, was nearly spent; and as for Francis, in twenty-four hours he had not closed his weary eyes.

The minister seconded the physician's urging, promising to watch by the sick bed himself, while his stepson and sister-in-law departed to seek the requisite refreshment; and leaving the sufferer, as he believed, behind the whole town was thus long and tiring, and in one day, which, itself, was nearly spent; and as for Francis, in twenty-four hours he had not closed his weary eyes.

On a small table by the bedside was a silver cup containing a cooling drink, which the physician had left with directions that it should be administered at timed intervals.

The eyes of Mathews shone as he followed this object.

He approached and examined it. The contents was wine from the far-off isle of Madeira—he set it down again. Cold perspiration began to ooze out in thick, icy drops from his brow.

He dropped the powder into the goblet, and with his ivory penknife stirred it up. An increasing but slight tremulousness of hand, caused him to lose his hold of the pen-knife, and falling on the table, slid from thence upon the floor.

The total noise seemed louder than the thunder; and to his guilty ears he was fearful it might have disturbed the sleeper. The sleeper breathed as calmly, as peacefully, as deeply as before.

Mathews returned to his terror. For four long hours he sat and waited for the invalid to awake and drink the fatal poison from his hands. Suddenly a new idea—one of guilt's infernal suggestions, flashed through the dark gulp of his soul.

He was looking at the window of the room. But what criminal thought could the window convey? We said, with the first words of this chapter that the sky was dark and lowering, and that the city without was threatened with a thundershow.

The wind had been close and sultry all day, but the murmur of the rising wind was sighing amid far-off hills and away on the ocean's breast.

Four long hours, we said, had passed since the minister's lonely watch commenced. It was already evening when that began, and now it was deep night. And when those four hours had dragged themselves by, the minister stealthily started from his seat and looked out from those same windows upon the gathering thunderstorm, which now was sweeping down, under the cover of night and darkness, upon the sleeping city.

The wind came rushing against the rattling glass; and the dust from the now silent streets was whirled, in numbers endless, into the air.

That whirling dust the minister's eye with a gleam of joy had marked, and muttered as he marked—

"Ah! it comes from the same direction—from the yawning tombs."

The preacher raised the window at which he, stood—caused it to lift and left it open.

He went to the remaining windows, and one after the other, he threw up with a quick and determined hand. A powerful current of air rushed in and filled the room.

The sleeper was directly in the west, and the air that came through those opened windows, was the odorous atmosphere of the country, driven before the rising hurricane.

The tinted exhalations of the violated sepulchres were sweeping over an unsuspecting city, following the pure breath of Heaven, and even now penetrating to the couch of the invalid.

Full access, then, had the noxious vapors, spreading death and the cholera. Infection had been suggested, indeed, a hellish expedient.

Whether or not, it was that the poisonous effluvia which freighted the rushing wind dis
THE CHOLERA FIEND.

A deep and profound sleep almost instantly came over her—the slumber of excessive fatigue.

It was not yet evening when she went to rest, nor had the impending storm then commenced; but it was at an advanced hour of the night that she awoke, aroused by the rolling thunders which told that the gale was at its height.

Weakened, however, reassured its empire over her, and she sought to sleep again, though repeatedly wakened by the violence of the storm.

Her eyes were heavily closing for the fifth or sixth time, after a roar more loud and deafening than any that had preceded it, when, in the profoundest thoughtfulness that followed, she fancied she heard the sound of a human footfall near her.

The reclining girl raised herself on her elbow and heartened attentively. But no; some atmospheric concussion of the tempest had deceived her mistaken ear; there was not the smallest indication of the neighborhood of any one—obliteration once more over her, and she lost all consciousness.

For at least ten minutes, in that full of the external gale, the only noise within the young girl's chamber was the soft and regular breathing of the peaceful occupant of that couch of innocence. At the end of that time there was a slight rustling amid the velvet curtains which formed the rich drapery of the bed.

It ceased almost immediately and perfect stillness succeeded, as if the wind must have disturbed them had suddenly died away. If this were so, that wind soon came back again!

Presently the bed curtains recommenced their rustling, and soon became so much agitated as to separate entirely at one corner, revealing something very like a human face peering out from behind the fluttering velvet screen.

Motionless remained the gazung countenance—it was that of an old man; an old man with his darkness-piercing eye riveted upon the sleeping unconscious girl, with a strange and peculiar look, once seen, was never to be forgotten. His whole soul seemed to be in this scrutinizing and sense-wrapped gaze, with the fixed uprightness of his slender, tranquil and innocence-beseeching features—upon her ivory neck and her snowy bosom—gloatingly, gloatingly!

THE GUILTY AND THE INNOCENT.

After Alice had left the chamber, her sick sister, Hope and Happiness, lingered in her heart, but weariness in her young limbs and exhaustion in her frame, nothing occurred to prevent her from seeking rest and repose in her own room, as she had designed to do.

With a hushed and a noiseless step, a step so stealthily that it emitted no sound in its cautious passage over the carpeted floor; the secret guest and secret intruder into Beauty's sanctuary, left her on the step of that halved couch and stole around to the side of the bed.

Was it to gain a better view of the unsuspecting sleeper; was it easier to feast his eyes upon the dazzling charms which Night and Oblivion would expand to his sensual gaze? Was it to revel in unholy contemplation of maidenly Loveliness, in its voluptuousness, as well as its innocence?

And was he this strange invader of spotless Purity's most sacred retreat? Was it some youthful libertine; some gay young profligate; some professed votary of Pleasure; some boasted betrayer of Woman's virtue?

Alice,—no! we have said that it was one whose head was whitened with Age's silvery snows, whose forehead was swathed with Time's plissed gauze. It was more; it was a husband—a father—a minister.

It was the gray-haired minister; the revered clergyman; the admired and popular preacher, whose fervid eloquence made the conscience-stricken to tremble, and terrified guilt to quail. It was the pious pastor who had wept over four happy brides, and murdered two wretched wives!

Even in her wandering dreams, the guiltless girl would have blushed, with a Woman's pride and a Woman's shame, had she visioned the unknown truth.

A fearful and unknown truth! for each night by her maiden pillow, each night by her virgin couch—all unseen, all unthought of, all unsuspected—for weeks and months had the guilty husband and sensual priest, foisted his gloating eye on that voluptuous loveliness. Which only through Death's own ghastly gate he dared approach to his content.

Again and again he raised to his baleful lips the secret and long-prized key by which he had nightly gained surreptitious access to the chamber of innocence. And now, as if driven on by irresistible attraction, the libertine preacher stole his silvery head, and pressed a kiss full of compassion upon the warm, breathing lips of sleeping Voluptuousness!

Another and another of the stifled sweats he ravished—and the girl, with a cry, awoke! A cry! it was a scream of horror, as the minister was seen and recognised.

'Brother! Man!' she cried—with the agonised tones of an angel recoiling from fiendish wickedness.

The instant that she sprang half-way up from her pillow, the minister cast his arms over her neck, and drew her head devilishly to his shoulder.

'Monster—fiend—let me go!'

'Hark! I hear me, Alice! your sister is dead—'

'Dead!' shrieked Alice. 'Dead!'

'Dead, or dying. She cannot live! She is no longer a bar between us—the impediment is removed. Alice—my glorious Alice! you can now—now become my own! my-all—my—my wife!'

'My God! my God, deliver me from this wrath!' wailed the hapless girl. 'O, monster of wickedness! leave me, oh, leave me, and God Himself strikes you dead!'

With a pitiless grasp he tore away the soft, tender fingers which vainly strove to hide her unveiled loveliness, and madly imprinted his lips on that crimsoning bottom of snowy voluptuousness!

'Leave you—no, no. Let this be my nuptial chamber!—let this be our bridal bed!—this night seal our happiness!'

A groan of pain followed the words of ungoverned Passion, and the libertine priest, the licentious clergyman tossed back and fell to the floor.

By a superhuman effort of womanly despence the young girl had flung the guilty man from her, backward to the chamber-floor, which his head encountered with terrible violence.

And, before he could gain his feet, pass him, like the spring of a leaped, almost over his prostrate figure, darted the flying girl.

When he stood erect, the door had closed behind her. He darted to—gazed the handle. It did not open—it resisted—the poor girl was holding it—holding it on the outer side.

With all his strength, he strove to force open the door. Once—twice—and thrice, again.

The fourth time he felt it yield. The strength of the girl was giving out.

One more determined effort to effect his purpose—the libertine clergyman resolved it should be the last.

The last, it was. The feeble barrier gave way; it was all that separated them. But Alice had fled from the door.
and the boy, it was quite dark in the streets, and the gathering obscurity of nightfall was made yet deeper by the clouds that overhung the city.

"You feel fully convinced you shall be able, readily, to recognize the place again?" was Clinton's first inquiry. "Everything depends on that!"

"I could take you there, sir, blindfolded! It is number 8, Duane street," he distinctly replied.

The next to speak was the policeman, -

"I know that house, Mr. Clinton, and it bears a desperate name."

"A desperate name, and desperate characters," returned the young man, calmly. "They are well matched."

The policeman then remarked, -

"If I am not mistaken—and I think I am not—the place is kept by an old hag called Martel."

"The ole woman!" said Clinton. "Yes, it is the same. Is it not so, Mark?"

"Yes, sir; the old ole woman, as you call her—it's the same, as I call her. She's got paws like a polar bear, any way!" and Mark recalled his very vivid recollections of the old woman's vigorous arms, and the equally vigorous blows which they had dealt in his tussle with the vixen.

"The old woman is, indeed, little short of a hell cat, sir," said the policeman to Francis Clinton; "and she has a set of male scondelous in her pay and employ, who are every man desperate."

"You refer to her hired desperadoes?"

"Yes; they are always lying in wait, in case of necessity."

"We shall have them to encounter, I presume."

"Undoubtedly, if it is your intention or desire to make use of force in effecting your object."

Clinton looked at the policeman who had thus spoken, with the air of one listening to an unexpected remark.

"Force! I had certainly thought of no other means. But in what different way could we proceed?"

"By strategy, possibly, in place of violence."

"By strategy!" replied Clinton, as tho' he had not thought of this before. "By strategy! But why use strategy in preference to force?"

"Simply, sir, because artifice is always safer, and often more effectual than sheer force."

"Safe!" exclaimed the young man. "I do not care for its safety. I am not afraid of the danger."

"Probably not, sir. But there is one thing you may be afraid of, sir."

"Ah! what is that?"

"Of failure, sir."

"Of failure? Ah, that quite alters the case; but what makes you think that violence might be attended by that undesirable consequence?"

The experienced and cautious policeman was again at no loss for a reply—

"Merely because, Mr. Clinton, I am too well acquainted with the habits and mysteries of the people into whose dens we are going to penetrate, in quest of this unfortunate girl. These gossips of the city have always their attendant ogres, who are ever ready with steel and bullet, the bowie-knife and slug-shot.

"Never mind!" said the hot-headed youth. "We will fight them with weapons equally good."

"And get killed for our pains, in all probability," was the significant tho' respectful reply. "We wish twenty to one against us, that we should stand every chance of being quietly murdered."

"Very good, Mr. Policeman," said Clinton, coldly. "I for one, am willing to run the risk."

"Then that is more than I am," was the rejoinder, "at least when it can be better effected in another manner."

"By cunning contrivance, as you continue to think?"

"Certainly."

"But Clinton still hesitated."

"I prefer force," he said, "for the reason that it is the most natural mode of proceeding. Against tricks and traps such prove ribald sharpers would, most probably, be on their guard."

"And against open violence they certainly would. But, further," continued the policeman, perspicuously, "there is one other motive why open violence should not be resorted to. It would be dangerous, not only to ourselves, but to the very person we intend to benefit."

"How so?"

"Because, at the first hostile attempt, the unhappy girl would probably be spirited away."

"You think so?"

"Most positively. The resources of these people are infinite. At the earliest alarm, their victims are always hurried away, as if by magic. Once out of that house, all search for her would be vain."

"You have convinced me, sir. What have you, then, to propose?"

"The practised policeman did not hesitate an instant in making his reply,—

"We must make a pretended visit to the house, with the ostensible view with which visitors usually go there."

"The police officer perceived, at once, that the young man did not half like the idea."

"This, you perceive, will secure our admission," said he.

"Certainly. But how will it secure the girl's liberation?"

"That, indeed, remains to be decided."

And the policeman gave himself up to the mental consideration of the mooted point.

Clinton awaited the conclusion of the man's deliberation.

But the mental puzzle was cut short by the introduction of no less consequential a person than their companion, the boy, who suddenly spoke up,—

"Or you please, sir—I have thought of a plan."

"You!" said the interrupted policeman, with some sharpness, and a good deal of contempt.

"The imperturbable Mark took no notice of the sneer at his presumption, but persisted, with undiminished audacity.

"Egg-zackly! I've got a first rate idea by the tail, I know it."

"What in your idea, my boy?" encouragingly inquired Clinton, who had been taught to have more confidence in the lad's cleverness, than the policeman thought proper to entertain.

Mark, thus stimulated, proceeded to explain his plan; but after his own fashion,—

"Fact is, sir, this gemman showed you the way to get admitted to that 'ere house, but he didn't tell you yet how you're to get off again with yourself and the gal. It's one thing to get into a scrape, and another thing to get out of it. Fact is, it must be done by means of the cholera."

"The cholera? How so?"

"By counterfeiting it."

CHAPTER XV.

MARK'S STRATAGEM.

RANCIS, Mark, and a single policeman—

in the interim between the departure of the former from his step- father's house, and the closing scenes of the last two chapters—were meanwhile proceeding upon the somewhat singular and hazardous enterprise in which the three were engaged.

The reader will readily recollect that the evening had not yet set in, though fast drawing near, when the young midshipman thus set forth upon his novel errand; but, by the time he had been joined by the police-officer
By counterfeiting it! I don't understand you.

"It's very easy understood, sir."

And Mark forthwith addressed himself to the task of eliciting, in spite of sandy shreds of the shoulders from the disparaging policeman.

His scheme—and it must be confessed it was a shrewd one—was, in effect, this—

To proceed, in the best possible character proposed by the policeman to the house in question, in company with some medical attendant; secure access to the presence of the imprisoned women; secretly apprise his mother of their intentions and purpose; caution her to follow their directions; and then, when all was arranged, the girl was suddenly taken ill—dramatically ill, and history thus immediately pronounced, by the accompanying physician, a case of unfeared cholera.

This was the scheme: the consequences of which would be the complicity consumption of their object; for the pestilence being suppressed by the ignorant to be contagious, the depraved dwellers in the crowded den would be only too eager to free themselves from the presence of the infested.

The uncompromising policeman was forced to admit, with all due grace as possible, that the contrivance was not a bad one, and that the archin had more wit than he thought he had.

The singular subterfuge was immediately decided upon. But in order to put it into practical execution, the cooperation of the medical friend in question now became necessary.

Mark was prepared for this, however, and instantly suggested that the assistance of his master, Doctor Elihu Quackenboss, should be called in.

Clinton and the police officer unhappily succeeded to this second proposition, the former commissioning the apothecary's apprentice to offer the druggist a handsome reward for his services, leaving it to them to apprise him of the nature of the services required of him.

Mark, nevertheless, stipulated to take this duty, also, upon himself; should he find it necessary.

The first outbreak of the coming storm seemed near at hand, and the party adjourned to a hotel, there to await the return of the boy, who set off for the apothecary's shop, at his quickest pace, to procure the attendance of his master.

The boy promised to be back in fifteen minutes; but when an hour had passed, he had not yet made his appearance.

The policeman and Clinton were impatiently waiting, at the hotel, for his return.

An hour and a half—two hours—three and then a fourth crept slowly by, without the anxiously-looked-for reappearance of the messenger.

Clinton, who knew the inevitable promptitude of the boy, and his habitual slowness, was full of surprise and perplexity at the unexpected failure of Mark, and his unaccountable absence.

The policeman did not lose his patience or his coolness. In the unassailability of his patron he did not take the slightest share; for the longer Mark delayed, the more he was benefited; his pay was going on, at the rate of a dollar an hour.

But at last the patience of Clinton was completely exhausted. He dismissed the officer, with directions to come at the same hour on the following night, by which time, at least, he hoped to have heard some tidings of Mark.

We, however, must at once account to the reader for the prolonged and singular absence of the boy.

CHAPTER V.
WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MARK.

ARELY ten minutes had elapsed, in fact, after leaving Clinton and the policeman at the hotel, before Mark stood at the door of the apothecary's shop, in the already lighted windows of which was to be seen a flaming placard, setting forth, in mammoth letters, the incomparable virtues of 'Doctor Quackenboss! Justly Celebrated, Anti-mercural, Indian-vegetable Cholera Preventative, and Stomach Tincture.'

This sublime compound was represented to be the most invaluable preparation under the sun, for the cure of that formidable epidemic, concerning whose nature and philosophy the foresaid Doctor Quackenboss modestly averred himself to be the best informed and most skilful of the whole human race, living or dead—including that ubiquitous worthy, the Wandering Jew himself.

"I know to thunder! If the doctor hasn’t got up some new humbug, mister Mark, with his broadest grin, as he read at the bottom of the placard a very startling ‘Caution’ to look out for rascally impostures and worthless imitators, of which it appeared that the market was so remarkably full, that the only remaining wonder was, how on earth there was a place where I could be any place left for the ‘Genuine Original’ itself.

Whistling ruefully, the apothecary's boy entered the lighted shop.

Behind the counter was the round figure of his master; but no sooner did the worthy and amiable Doctor Quackenboss fairly get his eyes on the shrewd face of the boy, than he bounced around that counter with an agility that was over after a standing marcel to Mark — and catching his apprentice by the collar, demanded, in a terribile voice, where he had been all the afternoon, and what he had about been doing.

"In my boats—and about town," was the ographmatic response.

"In your boats, and about town! I'll—I'll shake you out of your boats, sir," roared the meek Doctor Quackenboss, flying into a towering passion.

"They're out at the toes, now, sir," with great sang-froid replied Mark, looking downwards.

"I—I'll kick you—kick you into the street, sir.

"That would be toing the Mark, with a vengeance, sir.

"Mark me! sir—roared the apothecary, about to thunder forth a furious announcement.

"Mark you, sir? Oh, no; I'm Mark— not you.

"I'd write to your parents, sir—if you had any.

"Never had any," said Mark.

The enraged doctor soared.

"Never had none, sir, pursued Mark.

"People what comes from the poor-house, never has.

"You had! I said the druggist, with a sudden scowl.

This little piece of intelligence appeared to excite a good deal of interest in the saucy Mark.

"Had I!—want to know! Supposing, old fellow, you just make me tell to 'em, and let 'em know their dutiful son is well, and waiting to hear from 'em. It's a long time since they write. Only fourteen years, and upards! Wonder if they haven't forgot how to make their Mark!"

To this last cut—which certainly was wanting in flail reverence—the doctor replied, with a good round oath, that, unless the lad's manners were mended, he would make sure mark on him, and that very vigorously, too; furthermore illustrating his meaning by a tremendous thwack in the ribs, which warned the lad to the tune of 'nuckle under,' in more senses than one.

Mark, however, did not knuckle under—at least, immediately, but managed to save breath to return—

"Oh, yes; sir; you're always a makin' unpleasant marks and remarks. I'm a regular market for both on 'em."

"You're a young villain! thundered the enraged doctor, if ever there was one."

"Oh, yes; sir; there's one before me— How much the oldest be you for?"

There was no standing this—even in the case of a man of a good deal more forbearance than Doctor Quackenboss, assuredly, homebred.

Taking Mark by both ears, in spite of his struggles and wrigglings, the little man dragged him swiftly over the shop floor, into the little back-room, and pitched him, at the immense rank of his neck, hard forenoon into the little dark closet with which Mark had previously had good reason to be acquainted, as well as the courteous reader.

It was altogether too purpose that Mark, as soon as he could assure himself of the safety of his ears, endeavoured repeatedly to make his exasperated master understand that he had gone something of importance to say to him; for the moment that he found himself alone in the closet, which the apothecary securely bolted upon him, he suddenly recollected the errand which had brought him back to the druggist's shop, and, immediately assuring how greatly his love of mischief had got the better of his prudence.

Certainly, however, he had nobody to thank for this, except himself; and moreover, by cool deliberation, the youngster could not very well help acknowledging, to himself, that
And thus Mark remained a prisoner. This was what had become of the apothecary's boy, while the intended liberators of Lizzie were anxiously awaiting his reappearance at the hotel.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OGRES AND THEIR FEAT.

TRAVELING day to Clinton was the one to which followed the night on which Mark's mishap had prevented the boy from rejoining him, and baffled the intended expedition to the ogres' den.

During its course, he had been forced to go through the painful ordeal of learning the depth of the unfortunate Mrs. Mathews; an event which his own heart had deplored; no less than his fervent sympathy for the sorrowing sister who was now left bereaved and desolate.

The unexpected relapse—the sudden death of the dead woman, created surprise, but no suspicions.

The mysterious nature of the death was so little understood; there was something too terrible, so inexplicable in the character and consequences of this dread scourgé, that its secrets laughed at calculation.

That Mrs. Mathews had perished by the omnipotent cholera—no one but the cholera-propagators! The learned physician, the experienced man of science, had recognised all the symptoms of the prevailing pestilence, and what should he suspect of arsenic.

The dread of contagion was contagious in the public mind, with the dread of cholera.—The deceased was solemnly interred the day after her solitary midnight passage from the world.

From the grave the suriving sister returned—but not to the house of the minister!

To enter again his doors—to place herself once more under his protection, she utterly, positively, pertinaciously refrained— and sought, beneath the roof of a kind relative, the home she would no longer receive from her brother-in-law.

To Clinton, only, did she breathe a whisper of the fearful reasons which actuated her—and not to him alone, was all the truth confessed, but what the young girl herself concealed, her jealous heart divined.

He heard, he understood, and went from his betrothed bride's side, that evening, with a deliberate oath on his lips and a stern resolution in his soul.

With a heavy heart, at the appointed hour, he was at the rendezvous—with a faint hope that the missing boy would make his reappearance.

He expected to find the policeman there, but did not expect to find, in his company, the absentee.

Nevertheless, both the boy Mark, and the apothecary were upon the spot and in readiness.

Mark, it appeared, after being liberated from his night's confinement, had succeeded in making the lately inceased, but now fully appeased apothecary, sensible of the very eligible opportunity he had missed; and having hunted up the policeman at the station house—prevented by the funeral from seeing Clinton himself—he had ascertainment from the police were the fresh rendezvous of that evening, and, with his master, accompanied him thither.

A brief, hurried explanation made Quackenboss thoroughly comprehend all that his appearance had wrought.

The worthy man, with an acuteness that did great credit to his humanity, readily agreed to perform his share of the deception which was to liberate the unhappy Lizzie from her helpless condition.

The policeman's previous familiarity with their questionable place of destination smoothned the necessity of Mark acting as guide, but nevertheless the boy went along, to prevent all chance of mistake, and to be the means of identifying the girl.

On the way, and when within sight of the place, Clinton took the precaution to ask the officer:

'But will they not suspect something if I appear among them in the company of one of the police?'

'By no means; I shall pass you off as a stranger, to whom I am showing the lions of the town.'

Five minutes after they reached the ogres' den.

To their admission, thanks to the police-man's precaution, there was no resistance offered. By a species of Freemasonry, in connection with a flash dialect, not a word of which Clinton understood, the officer made their pretended errand really comprehended.

Instead, therefore, of being looked on as hostile intruders, they were received as welcome guests.

As for Mark, a suit of new clothes, from head to foot, in which he had been dressed by Clinton's liberality and precaution, so completely altered his shabby appearance, that he did not even know himself when he surveyed his full-length reflection in the splendid mirror which decked the gay walls of the luxurious house of guilt.

The ogres, herself, could not recognise the ragged urchin whom her minion had flung from her door.

Both Clinton and the policeman, in pursuance of their secret scheme, were careful to address their captive companion, the little druggist, loudly and incessantly as 'the Doctor!' in order that the bag and her attendant ogres might be perfectly aware of the professional character of their friend.

The trick took: capital; for, in a very few moments, the ogres called him 'Doctor,' too.

So far all had gone well, and now the woman said:

'Nextly all the girls are engaged, but I think, young gentleman, we can suit you, without much difficulty.'

These words were addressed to Clinton, who, recollecting his part, replied with cavalier coolness:

'I do not know that my good woman. I am rather a difficult person to please.'

The blundered with a cunning look, and the young man, with something of an effort to conceal his disgust, turned to the doctor, saying to him,

'Well, Doctor, who shall be your chosen fair one?'

The doctor, who well knew his cue, did not reply directly to the last speaker, but accosted the baldman,

'Yes, who have you in store for me, old lady?'

The ogres replied that his choice must be necessarily rather limited, as all her young ladies were already engaged, with the exception of three.
They entered it. Lizzie, in a dead swoon, was stretched, motionless upon the couch.

The three, surveying the unfortunate creature in silence—Clinton with the most painful interest. Horror seemed to have frozen the blood in her veins—agony to have petrified the senseless flesh—the thunderbolt of misery, astonishment, despair, all condensed in one withering lightning-flash, to have blasted her brain to the core.

It was a terrible picture, but the gazer thanked God that she had swooned; he felt that this swoon must have saved her—perhaps her life. This young woman's name is, then Elizabeth Quackenbuss.

Elizabeth Quackenbuss! I repeated the policeman, echoing Clinton's half-unconsciously explanation.

And the apothecary's boy reiterated, with an astonished look.—

Elizabeth Quackenbuss! It is the daughter of your master, boy.

The betrayed daughter of your master, who—

The humane Francis hesitated.

Disappreare! I asked the policeman, suggestively.

No; worse than that! She was driven from his own doors—driven forth into the street.

What! with her child, too! inquired the officer.

No; nor with her babe, said Clinton, sorrowfully, shaking his head.

Ah! I understand. It had not yet seen the light.

Again Clinton answered—

The infant was born—but born dead, I have been informed. The mother never saw the child.

Ah, a still-born child! And this, then, was not long ago;

On the contrary, it was fifteen years since, I think. You probably judge from my own age, sir, of the date of that dark transaction. But I heard of it in my boyhood; for the seduced girl's father was an elder in my stepfather's congregation, in which it created so great a stir that there were even some steps taken toward the expulsion of the doctor from the church, for his unnatural severity to his poor daughter, who has never once been heard of, till this night's discovery brought her to light.

A singular disclosure, indeed, rejoined the policeman. I do not remember ever to have met with a case in which the hand of an over-ruling Providence seemed so clearly manifest. Her own father—and such a mother!" But there is one thing we all seem to have forgotten!"—

Which is? said Clinton.

This strange discovery, and the doctor's flight, have completely disarranged our well-laid plot.

And made our artifice no longer practicable—true! was the charged response of Clinton.

This disgraceful conviction had already been stealing over the young man's mind. But how was the evil to be repaired; and the threatened failure of their plans arrested? Suddenly Clinton was convinced that a happy expedient had occurred to him; and his only wondor was, that it had not struck him before.

Instantly he proposed this new idea to his ally, the policeman; but, to his surprise and great disappointment, the reply of the latter was,—

That is more hazardous. Clinton, unyielding, demanded an explanation.

The reason is clear enough, sir. To offer them money, as you propose—to suffer them not only to suspect, but certainly to know, that your pursu is so well supplied, would sign your death-warrant.

Sir, you exaggerate." Far from it. I even doubt if I have painted the risk in colors sufficiently strong. No, no, continued he, I have a better plan to propose. We must put off the rescue till to-morrow night, and to-morrow night we will come with a band of the police, sufficiently strong in numbers to overpower all opposition and bear the prisoner off. Scarcely, was he saying, but I will not again be balked! was the reluctantly acquiescent, but resolute reply. Stop! what is that old ogress says?"—

The sound of a brutal laugh, and the dull-drawn voice had caused the query so abruptly made.

Mark instantly replied—

The old woman was saying, sir, as how
and pressed the girl would come to herself by breakfast-time, at all events, if she didn’t do so herself! She never knew a young lady yet that didn’t come out of a fainting fit with a gathering apoplectic.

"Now, then, we will go to prepare for the final blow," said Clinton.

He called to the ogres. She answered the summons.

Placing two pieces of gold in her hand, he told her, that owing to what had occurred; he and his partner could not remain, as originally proposed; but would come again on the following night.

They were going now, as happily as assured her, to look after their runaway friend, the fidget doctor, and see what had become of him.

The greedy ogres accepted the gold and the excuse, which seemed natural enough to her, after what had occurred; and her gray eyes gleamed with delighted assurance that her visitors would call again, without fail, the very next night.

\chapter{The Regular Visitor to the Ogres' Den.}

\section{The Story of the Young Gentleman.}

AS we, for the present, to follow the further movements of our hero; and, losing sight of him and his little party, remain at this time longer at the ogres' den, where the hapless Elizabeth Quackenbos, the betrayed victim of the savage Brackenbrook, continued still a prisoner.

More dear than alive, not till long after morning dawned, did the ill-fated girl come forth from that terrible swoon for hours she lay, striving to still the wild beatings of her heart, and half doubting if reason remained to her, after the stunning shock her mind had sustained.

For fifteen long, weary years she had not seen her natural parent; and thus to meet with again the heartless father who had thrust her forth, like a cog, from his doors—forth from his sheltering roof, to starve, die in the open streets, or to drag out a life of shame—oh! it was too terrible, it was too degrading to dwell upon.

Second by second, and instant by instant, dwindle away the long, long day. How long?—it is time to the soul—how solemnly Time’s billows roll.

Twice during the day, the ogres brought the expiring meals—at breakfast and dinner time.

But untasted they had remained; and when the supper hour arrived, still she felt no appetite.

The third time, however, the ogre did not retire, immediately and silently, as she had done twice before; but, setting it down in the usual place, the old woman, instead of leaving her again to her solitude, crossed her bony arms over her shrunken breast, and fixed on a pair of squinting eyes upon her poor prisoner, who, not hearing the expected sound of her retreating footsteps, looked up anxiously.

Instantly upon perceiving that she had thus succeeded in attracting attention, the virago cried out.

"Oh! you’re improving. I see—improving quite fast. Well, it’s time, high time you did—for right’s sake come again, and you’ve got to prepare for your visitor, miss, and the sooner you buck up courage, ’twill be the better for you."

"My visitor!" faintly repeated Elizabeth, slightly shivering.

"To be sure! My regular customer is to be here to-night, to make you a visit for the first time. Didn’t I tell you? Yes, I did—You’re got to be cured of them ails just as quick as possible, miss; and so I’m going to let you have the honor of entertaining him, my dear."

"Mrs. Martin!—woman! I gasped Elizabeth, unconsciously interrupting her; you must—must spare me this! I will not, after the sacred vow that I have made, once more stoop to the wretched misery of those voices, the hastily asked—Who is this, then, Mrs. Martin? Oh, only the young gentleman as came with your father, last night."

"Who came with my father? Who was with him this time?" eagerly asked the ogre’s daughter.

"The policeman who is showing him the elephant, and the boy who is his servant, I suppose."

"No one else? Not a soul, my dear."

Elizabeth sighed. She had a faint hope that her unnatural parent might have taken compassion on her and returned to reclaim his daughter, whom he had so strangely met Viz, like so many others, seated on the steps of the house.

"Remember! be ready for the other gentleman, miss, when he comes."

This was said with significance, and the hated ogre retired.

For some moments the druggist’s daughter continued to hear the voices below, two of which now appeared as strangely familiar as one, in the first place, had seemed; and presently she distinguished footsteps descending from the lower floor, mingling with theuffling tread of the ogre, and passing along the door, leaving her—her father, indeed, in the room.

Aware that the ogre had locked the door, as usual, on retiring, Elizabeth started up, and running to it, placed her eye at the keyhole.

What was her astonishment on perceiving the lips of some person, at the same moment pressed to the orifice—while she distinctly heard her own name pronounced, in a soft whisper—"Lizzie! Lizzie!"

In a low whisper, equally as cautious, she replied—"What? Who is there?"

"Look down—on the floor!" was the breathless response.

Through the keyhole she now saw the figure of Mark quietly gliding away.

In utter amazement, and half in incredulity, her eyes turned to the floor, to which her attention had thus been directed. A slip of paper had been pushed stealthily under the door.

With a smothered cry she caught up the note.

Volumes it spoke, though it contained only those few words—"Courage! Caution! You have friends. They are near—they are here, ready to rescue you. Be cautious and patient! Act prudently as you would have done, had you received one encouraging word from the ogre. The ogre must not suspect—but the ogres' den is surrounded by half-a-dozen of policemen, awaiting the signal of surprise. Caution, Elizabeth!—caution!"

The druggist’s daughter drew back—sank on her knees—clasped her hands, wild with joy and gratitude. She dared to boast divine Providence for, she believed the blessings of Providence was returning to her again.

Never for an instant, during one whole hour, did she cease to pray.

At the end of that hour, the key was heard in the lock, and the door opened—the ogre had returned.
And Mathews shuddered at the wild satire of her mocking laughter—the true mockery of merriment.

"Eliz—"—and his voice was broken and husky—"have you long been here? Why have we not met before?"

"No, I have not been here three weeks, or we should have met before, since you are a regular customer."

She paused as she sardonically emphasized the biting words.

"God knows, she continued, "since the dark days when you, Newton Mathews, lost me; I was still in my house, little rest from the sole of my foot there has been. From house to house and from place to place until, at last, I am here."

The coward preacher made a strong effort to compose himself, and tremulously replied—

"You shall stop here no longer, Elizabeth; I will take you away forever; you shall leave that horrid place."

"I will not go with you, sir."

The bold, resolute answer took Mathews completely by surprise.

"Not go with me, when I propose to remove you to a comfortable home—a home you may call all your own? Elizabeth, you are mad!"

"I was mad when I first became your victim—mad, then, and only then! No, sir; I will not go with you. First, because I despise, hate, loathe, detest you!"

"Elizabeth!"

"Secondly, because I have found other and better friends; friends who have never deserted me, like the tester who drove me from his roof, like the renegade hypocrite who betrayed and ruined me."

"Other and better friends?"

"Yes, tried and proved, small claim as I have on them."

"These new friends—who are they?"

"That matters not, sir. I prefer to trust myself to them, sooner than return again to the protection of the priestly hypocrite to whom I owe all my misery. And do not think, Newton Mathews, that the poor, betrayed Elizabeth, cannot penetrate your motives."

"My motives!"

"Your selfish, base motives, sir. They are plain enough to me. You tremble at the thought of discovery; you fear to be exposed."

The preacher grew pale—the preacher started.

"Exposed!" he cried, haughtily.

The girl turned upon him her former sarcastic smile, doubly withering, and in the same cutting tone replied—

"Exposure, sir—shame and disgrace; these are what you dread. You know that I have it in my power to blast your fair character, and hurl you headlong from the pulpit which you have dishonored so long—"

"Elizabeth, stop!"

"Not yet; not till I have done. You know that it rests with me to declare one damning fact that would make you known to the earth. You know that with me it lies to declare to a startled world that you, a minister, a man of God, are the seducer of Elizabeth Quackenbush—not a miserable sea-son man, as hundreds have supposed."

"Stop! Stop! for God's sake, Elizabeth! you may be heard! Hark! what was that? he cried."

A sound, like a scuffle, was heard below, as he spoke. The noise continued for a moment; then the seeming fall of several heavy bodies was followed by a silence which was broken only by the echo of men's steps along the passageway below.

"What was that? Elizabeth! What was that? repeated the frightened minister, in his alarm.

"I know not, and care not, Newton Mathews; I would that some one coming to witness your shame was the young woman's bold reply.

"Yes, shrink and quail; well you may!—Coward, who had no manhood enough to brave the dark consequences of your own black guilt. Coward, that fixed on another, the crime you committed yourself! Coward, that saved your own reputation, by proclaiming the low-lived Jack Stendish the reaper of your parents' daughter, whom you had ruined, yourself! hypocrite!"

"Mercy! mercy!"

"Man—had you any mercy for me?—It's mercy you ask! Well, sir, I had mercy on you once—but that was when I loved you, traitor, when I loved too well to inflict disgrace; when I willingly, weakly yielded to your entreaties, and consented that the coarse sailor, the rude Jack Stendish, should think, as he ought, by all, the seducer of my father's child!"

"Your father consented to it. He, too, was
THE CHOLERA FRIEND.

A party to the— the deception, stammered the priestly betrayer.

He was, he was, do you say? exclaimed the girl— struck by an electric shock. His party to theageman he believed. confined to himself— and yet drove me forth from his roof! O God! cried the wriggled girl, striking his hands together, what a father Thou gavest me!—

Be calm, be composed, Elizabeth, cried the preacher, agitatedly I think I hear footsteps coming.

"Let them come, Newton Mathews, let them come!" exclaimed the girl— struck by the girl's gallant, confiding, confident, and yet more he forth from his roof! O God! cried the wriggled girl, striking his hands together, what a father Thou gavest me!—

Impatience of his distress, full of the most thrilling suspense, the trembling mother could wait no longer. Imperiously she demanded his answer.

White, as reluctantly he was giving it— while the voice was half broken, quick words in which it was couched— while he was yet saying,— In Murray street, in the drug-shop of his own— the door behind him opened silently, and Francis Clinton stepped noiselessly into the room, followed by Mark alone.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIFTH WIFE.

Behind his stepfather, unseen and unnoticed by him, the young man advanced into the room, the lad treading softly in his footsteps; while both overlooked the last disclosure of the guilty clergyman.

In Murray street— in the drug store of his own grandfather, the boy, Mark, is to be found.

At these words, so unexpectedly affecting himself, the apothecary's apprentice stopped with such an abrupt start as to very nearly call the attention of the two previous occupants of the room, even had he not, in the height of his amazement, given loud utterance to the astonishment.exclamation,

'Ethel Quackenboss my grandfather.'

The wonder-stricken ejaculation was, however, an unfeigned echo to a mother's ear and a mother's heart.

Elizabeth stood one moment in frantic uncer
certainty, then, with the flinty instinct
triumphant over every feeling of doubt and
disbelief, she sprang forward, caught the young lad to her heart, and with her arms tightly clasped around his neck, she sobbed aloud—

'My boy— my child— my son.'

At the same instant, the already startled clergyman felt a touch laid upon his arm.

The language could describe the confusion, the shame, the misery, the utter humiliation of that man when, turning, he beheld at his side the well-known form of his young step-sen.

'Mr. Mathews!'

The minister's face flushed painfully. It was the first time his step-son ever called him by that name.

'Mr. Mathews. I know all—understand all. I have heard every word that has passed. I have no approach to make. I do not come for the purpose of criminating or recriminating upon you. The discovery of your depravity I have made; the guilt, the remorse, the turpitude, and the atonement—yes, the atonement, exclusively your own.'

The door closed. repeated the minister.

'Do you know all the atonement, the atonement?' repeated the minis-

'ter.

'Yes, Mr. Mathews, the atonement which you have now to make— the atonement which becomes your duty to render, and mine to enforce upon you.'

The minister's face flushed painfully. It was the first time his step-son ever called him by that name.

'Mr. Mathews! I know all—understand all. I have heard every word that has passed. I have no approach to make. I do not come for the purpose of criminating or recriminating upon you. The discovery of your depravity I have made; the guilt, the remorse, the turpitude, and the atonement—yes, the atonement, exclusively your own.'

The door closed. repeated the minister.

'Do you know all the atonement, the atonement?' repeated the minis-

'ter.

'Yes, Mr. Mathews, the atonement which you have now to make— the atonement which becomes your duty to render, and mine to enforce upon you.'

'What reparation? What atonement?' stam-

merged the guilty man.

'Answer me two questions, and then I will tell you. Is it the happiness, whose soul is this the poor boy whose natural father you are? With a wild eye did the thunder-struck boy, Mark—his intellects ever quick, and now sharpened almost preternaturally—watch the effect of these interrogatories upon the face of the recanting minister—watch the very movement of his cowardly lips, as they faltered a trembling—Yes!'

'Yes, repeated the boy, with a stifled sob; mother! father!' It was all he said, but his young arms, too, were convulsively to the round neck of that mother, who, again and again, had tenderly embraced her bewildered and new-found child.

But the guilty man's step-son had not yet done.

You acknowledge them, then, for your ruined victim and your illegitimate child, Mr. Mathews?'

'I do.'

Prevarication was useless; the boasted hypocrite realized it too well.

'Then,' said Francis Clinton, slowly and deliberately, 'all that now remains for you to do, as the only means of making peace with a fully offended God, is to legitimatize that poor child and make that ruined victim your wife!'

"Marry her! acknowledge him! You can take your choice, sir; make your own election, sir! Refuse, and I expose you—expose you—your last hope is in all your hideous hypocrisy, in all your secret depravity; make you the scoff of our community, an object of scorn and contempt to all good and honorable men; hurl you, deriding, from the sacred place you have so long disgraced, and cover your grey hairs with merited infamy. Choose, sir—choose!'

'Let me think of this! let me think of this!' groaned the retribution-overset minister.

The speaker turned, ,quivering aside, and hid his face in his hands, which he pressed against his throbbing temples, as if he felt the brain slowly shutting within.

'Think of it, then! I will give you ten minutes, sir,' was the inexorable reply. 'In the meanwhile I shall send for a magistrate.'

'To arrest me!' shrieked the affrighted minister. 

Sarcastically smiled the step-son.

'No; to perform the ceremony.'

As he was leaving the room, he turned once quick glance on the minister, saying, in his firm and determined tones—

'Think of it, sir—and think of the consequences.'

But before his foot had left the threshold the guilty priest staggered forward, and groaned—

'I consent! I consent!'

'Prepare, then—awake me.'

He was gone.

To the strange group in the chamber, son, mother, father, what must have been the whirlwind of feeling, the agony of sensations, which crowded on their hearts while awaiting that eventful return.

A silence such as that of the sepulchre reigned in the crowded room; neither father, son, nor mother, dared trust themselves to speak; the minutes passed like hours, till the expected comers appeared.

The ceremony was performed
The cholera fiend.

The four times widowed minister had wedded his fifth wife—the woman he had wronged so deeply, fifteen years before.

The young stepson stood calmly by, and thought—Was not this a strange retribution?

The selfsame thought was in the heart of the minister!

And now the avenging stepson spoke again.

"Miss Elizabeth! you are the wife of Newton Mathews. Boy, you are his acknowledged son. And now, Newton Mathews, one last word to you—Reign your ministry—leave New York, and no infamy shall fall upon your name, or your guilt shall be buried in oblivion. Go!"

"Francis!"

"Go, sir! go! Beware and quit New York forever."

The crushed and confounded coward slunk silently away.

Elizabeth, with her young boy's hand in hers, approached the extraordinary young man, to whom they both owed so much, and looked up with his noble features, earnestly and inquireingly.

He replied to her silent queries by laying his hand lightly and kindly on the wondering urchin's head, and calmly added:

"I have given this boy a father and you a husband—in name, at least. Let it prove to you that an ever merciful Providence smiles, not frowns, upon the penitent and that it is never too late to turn back again to God, however you may have wandered from his blessed care.

The mother of Mark bent down to kiss the hand of her generous young benefactor,满分, with an unavailing heart.—"Noble, noble young man, we owe you a debt we can never hope to repay."

"There is one way in which you, too, can confer obligation. All I ask in return is, that this marriage which has taken place, this marriage between my step-father and your self, may remain a secret one; your own sense of propriety will inform you why."

I had already anticipated your desire, sir, replied the grateful woman, earnestly. I fully comprehend the noble feeling of justice which prompted you to this singular sacrifice—believe me sir, a secret from all the world I will ever hold it; the hidden knowledge that I am a wedded wife will be consolat

and happiness enough to me, in the society of my poor dear boy, who shall bless your name each night in his prayers. God bless you, sir."

The deeply affected Clinton could scarcely conceal his emotion, as he added—"As for you, my child, you shall never know what suffering in future, while Heaven continues the wealth I now possess. I will find a home of your own for you both. I shall not lose sight of you. In the meantime—"

"In the meantime?" repeated Mark's mother, eagerly.

"In the meantime the police have fully disposed of your enemies, and you are now free to depart from this place."

Francis Clinton, Mark, and his mother, together took their way from the room, the theatre of such strange discoveries.

"And now, sir, and our hero, after he had seen mother and son in a place of safety, now for my own dear Alice!"

Chapter XI.

Broken back.

FATAL fatal night! how much of mystery and evil does thou hide beneath the cloak of darkness!

Again the vampires were haunting the solemn scene of their dreadful labors; again the cholera-fiends were at work!

Dark, sombre, gloomy; as was the place, so was the hour. A terrible storm was raging—the lightnings were incessant—the thunder prolonged, deafening and continuous. It was a fitting time for such a scene and such an occupation.

Engaged, as once before, we have seen them, were Broken back and the quack-doctor, at work on the iron doors, with screwdriver, chisel, and keys; but, though their former co-operater, the clergyman, was present in the cemetery, he, yet, on this occasion, his employment was no longer the same.

While his two associates continued to attack the locks and hinges of the massive tombs, observing the same precautions and proceeding in the same manner as on the former occasion; the preacher, on the contrary, was occupied in a task which, though different, was yet in perfect keeping with the character of that peculiar employment.

With a long, sharp spade, the minister was digging up earth to the very depth of an old grave, and empyring the pit, as if for the purpose of disinterring the buried body which lay beneath the grass-grown sod. This he was doing, with an eagerness and an energy which, while it reminded his endeavors, promised to fatigue him greatly, if the task were not soon completed.

So intent was he upon his object, that he took no notice of the hunchback and the apothecary, who occasionally passed a moment from their own labors, to look at their companion, as he persistently piled his spade. But by a certain expression upon the face of the other two, whenever they turned to look at his progress, was plain that he was conscious of some wonder and curiosity, if not of actual surprise, to those who witnessed him.

Finally, Quenebessos, as he designated his cross-legged hunchback hine with broken off a fragment of the tool, said in a low voice to Broken back: "What is the person about? I can't understand what he is doing!"

"I don't know, sir, he should say; replied the hunchback, droll."

This answer did not exactly suit the inquirer, who rejoined: "Why, yes, that's evident enough, and no questions asked. But what he's after at the bottom of the grave, is more than I've any idea of. Do you know, Broken back, I fancy something has occurred tonight that has played the devil with the man's wit. He's not like himself, you know; in fact, I believe the fellow is mad!"

Broken back eyed the speaker ironically: "Mad! I wonder if it isn't sorrow that made him so—sorrow, perhaps, for his four dear children? You know of course, this is the burial ground where the four wives of Mathews are interred."

The druggist gave a start of recollection, and instantly answered—"True, their family vault is here. I had forgotten it. That is it yonder! and he pointed, with his crook, to one of the most stately of the marble sepulchers.

Broken back had unlocked the door of the tomb in question, by means of its skeleton keys, not fifteen minutes before. The hunchback marked its exact position, by toasting its identity in his mind; and, then, his eyes still riveted upon it, he said, sarcastically—"So, there lie Mrs. Mathews, Numbers one, two, three, and four, don't you."

"No, no, No three. Not No three—that is the mother of young Clinton—he does not lie there."

"Oh, the one that died of the Cholera in 1859. But why did not they put Air in the family vault, along with the others?"

The doctor's reply to this question was lost in a peal of thunder that echoed over their heads; and he was compelled to repeat his answer:

"Why? he reiterated with a low laugh. Why, because she, you know, was buried alive, and there was more danger of discovery of the chest, in a tomb, than in a grave. So, to a gravity coffin were appended, and Broken back, quickly: "How do you know that that grave was the very one that Mathews is digging at, there? I should think he was trying to get a sight of Air, of course.

At the rattling clap of thunder drowned any verbal response which the druggist might have made; but by the expression of the two men's eyes, as they were turned toward each other, was evident that a startling idea had struck them both, at once and the same time. Was this the grave of the murdered mother of Francis Clinton—the unfortunate lady who had been burned alive? and was the greedy hunchback now appropriating her coffin from its underground receptacle, to assure himself, after the lapse of seventeen years, that the weakened woman's fleshless bones were still the tenements of that narrow pit, to which his insatiable nature had consecrated her, long ago.

It was a wild, thrilling thought—even to those deprived spirits there, his conductors in wickedness; and both exchanging an intelligent glance, as they worked quickly, but silently and stealthily, behind the whole pre-conceived preacher; Quenebessos returning in his grasp the heavy iron crook with which he had been employed; but throwing it over his shoulder, like a soldier's musket in rest, so that it
"Broken-back" started aloud from the heavy implement, and turned to wrangle a curse on the hanging head which held it. Just as he wheeled round upon Quackenboss, who in his confusion held the offending crowbar bolt upright above his head, the most terrific crash of thunder to which the storm had yet given birth, dashed the tempest-clouds scatter, and the whole groaning firmament echoed to its awful reverberating roar.

But a long, hard, dazzling sheet of electric flame had preceded that thunderburst; a vivid flash of zig-zag file which shot down the quivering sky—overwhelmed an instant over the silent and gloomy cemetery;—then, like a serpent darting on its prey, swiftly settled on the upright point of the poised crowbar.

A single accord a ball of whitest flame gleamed on the iron apex of the heavy implement which the doomed druggist held;—there was a soul-harrowing scream—a dull, falling sound—a blood-curdling groan.

The quack-doctor had been struck by lightning—the blasted man lay a huddled, mangled object, shattered to pieces, at the feet of Broken-back.

That superhuman yell—that narrow-freezing mouth—that terrified grave-digger to turn in wild affright.

His eyes encountered the horrible sight! But another sight no less horrible he did not see.

That other, the distorted foot of the hunchback dwarf, which was suddenly interposed before him, and two outstretched arms, which darted forward backward over the open pit which yawned behind the minister-grave-digger!

The appalled preacher staggered on the brink of the gaping gulf—clutched at empty air, on the effect thrown himself, and fell headlong back into the violated grave of his murdered wife!

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOOM OF THE CHOLERA-FIEND.

ROKEN-BACK, springing astride the grave, so did the fallen dwarf, which was thrown back and deliberately commenced throwing the heaped-up earth into the excavation in which the clergyman had disappeared!

Already had he pitched three successive shovels-full of the loose, clayey soil into the narrow pit, when the face of the minister was upraised from the bottom of the hollow—his eyes staring into his pockets with amazement and stared affright.

It was but a moment that his countenance was thus visible; Broken-back heaped a fourth spade-full directly upon the minister's face.

Horror-struck, the miserable man shook the earth from his head, and glared up at the deformed aspide of the grave, like a man who believed his senses were taking leave of him; like one who thought himself the victim of a horrid nightmare.

He strove to articulate some incoherent words, but a shower of earth rained upon his head and down his throat, nearly strangling him.

He made one desperate effort to raise himself up from the depths of the pit, but the hunchback, dropping, spade-in-hand, into the grave, jumped upon his breast.

"Almighty God of Heaven!" he groaned.

"Broken-back! I do mean to bury me alive!"

A burst of infernal laughter replied to the fearful question.

"Yes; after, Newton Mathews! I do mean to bury you alive! So perished the third wife of your bosom—see perish you! A shriek came up from the depths of the grave.

"Heaven and hell! ti'ger, fiend, hunchback! what have I done to you—why do you murder me thus?"

The deformed dwarf stayed midway in its descent, the heaped shovelload which he was about to dash into the very eyes of the prostrate wretch, and hiding it suspended above the devoted head beneath, the hideous cast of his countenance assumed an expression actually demoniac as he paused to reply, in tones fearfully minister:

"Newton Mathews, you wish me to tell you why I am going to murder you thus? Newton Mathews, I love two of the best reasons in the world:—"

"Oh, God! what are they?"

"Interest and revenge! Interest—for the lightnings of heaven or the flames of hell have already rid me of one accomplice, who knew my name and could prove against me; and interest demands that I should, by my own act, remove the only other living evidence that yet remains."

"Oh, let me live! let me live! I will never, never turn against you!" groaned the wretched voice.

Still the inexorable tones replied,—

"You might—to save yourself. But infinitely stronger is my motive, the motive of revenge."

"Revenger! Oh, no: not revenge on me! What has a wretch like me ever done to provoke vengeance from such as you?"

"Hissing and hoarse the voice replied—

"I will tell you what you have done. You are the bitterest foe I ever had."

"1—I! Oh, God!"

"My worst enemy on earth. You crossed me in the only gleam of human feeling I ever possessed. You thwarted me in the only honest hope I ever formed. You came between me and the only human being I ever looked upon with anything else save hate in my heart! I furiously screamed the hunchback."

You ruined me! I had set my soul on—" you seduced the girl I loved—loved as only a hunchback can."

"1—I!—I!” shrieked the woman you loved—wildly moaned the minister.

Hitherto gleamed the hunchback's hideous eyes, as said—

"You! you, Newton Mathews, the clergyman. Body and soul you destroyed the girl, and then laid the fool guilt to my charge!—Pitiful coward, do you wonder now that I hate you to death? This is the death! This is that I will have a devil's revenge on you!"

Whirling, like a crushed worm, in his agony, the doomed wretch groaned, despairingly:

"Oh, my God! be merciful! Devil, fiend, who arc you?"

"I am—Jack Stanshine, the sailor! The hunchback howled the words. With a shrill cry the thundered, horrible hunchback dropped his upraised head—but his eyes glared wide open, with fearful, stony stare.

"Jack Stanshine, the sailor—I am he. And he it is that will murder you—no that will murder you alive!"

With the strength of a tiger he shook the suspended shovel. Its impending load of earth, and gravel descended upon the naked eyeballs of the miserable minister, blinding and agonizing him.
CHAPTER XIII.

[THE AWFUL RETRIBUTION]

EASING, then, the hunchback's mind, he rose to his feet and looked grimly around him.

The shovel fell across the lightning shattered body of the dead doctor, and the noise made him turn his eye to it.

'Ve must dispose of this, too,' he muttered. 'It will never do to leave this carcass here.'

The hunchback's terrible eye roamed round the silent cemetery—now a place of death, indeed! At length it concentrated all its intelligence upon a single object.

That object was a stone tomb; and that tomb was the familiar vault of the Mathew's race.

The key was in the wards—broken-back had left it there, when he unlocked the carpenter-house, as he had unlocked an hundred others.

The hunchback, smiling grimly, lifted the corpse of the mutilated druggist and bore it, in his distorted arms to the tomb.

He opened the iron door, with the key still in it, and, putting it partially back, carried his burden across the threshold and proceeded to deposit it on the floor of the vault, within which darkness reigned.

As he disappeared in the interior, no suspicion arose from his mind, nor was there any suspicion aroused in the mind of that which was transpiring behind his very back.

He did not see a long, trembling arm, with bony hand and quivering fingers, suddenly appear, inch by inch, above the surface of the filled-up grave.

He did not see a bleeding head, with matted gray hair and gory stains, painfully upheave the earth which covered it.

He did not see a fainting form slowly working its way through the pile of gravel and sand.

He did not see the haggard face rising out of the grave!

No, nor did he once dream that a weak and staggering, blood-stained human figure had left, like the risen phantom, its narrow pit, and, like a silent spectre, was gliding after him!

Why should he suspect that the deadly effluvia assailed him on every side, poisoning the very fountains of life. The blood in his veins swelling till they threatened to burst; his brain throbbing and reeling beneath his blistering hair, the stifling writhing staggered again to the pitiless door—not to repeat his efforts to break through its iron barrier—not to seek a second time to escape, but to press his parched lips to the key-hole of the marble vault?

Indescribably delicious was the breath of pure air he drew through the blessed crevice, sweeter than the Musemians's first night in the piri's paradise.

In this way, this way, only, could he escape from the pestilential atmosphere—to breathe which was certain death.

But, alas! for him—the unseen hand stopped up the office with clay, and the fatal key!

The pestiferous air, without an outlet, now encircled him—sicken him—madden him.

Then a species of insanity seized upon him. He tore out his hair by handfuls; beat his breast till the blood followed his blows, and rushed round the tomb's confined space, like a famishing lion in his cage.

He dashed the mangled corpse of the druggist, in a paroxysm of fury, again and again, against the iron gate; till the blood and brains were sprinkled over him.

He howled, cursed, raved, and hurled himself repeatedly against the granite walls of his deathlike prison, that loathsome charnel-house!

At length those appalling cries ceased, and in their place, only low moans and groaning sighs issued from the fatal vault.

From outside the tomb, low, exulting laughs reached the ears of the dying hunchback.

Then the merciless minister, who had now taken so fearful a vengeance, bleeding and wounded, but triumphant over his attempted assassin, dragged himself slowly from the cemetery, one of whose marble sepulchres had been the prison and grave of the only remaining human being who could prove his identity with the churl-organizer of New York.

To fly from the city; to seek perfect safety in distance and flight, was now his only object. Away, away, from the last resting-place of his four dead wives—a hypocrite preacher hastened with what speed he might, in his wounded state.

Broken-back had horribly perished by suffocation; in the same pestilential atmosphere which he had breathed, like the plagues of Egypt, upon the unsuspecting and devoted city, where raged the dread cholera in its wrath!

Inscrutable Providence! Inscrutable retribution. This miserably perished the Cholera Piend!

CHAPTER XIV.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY.

A YEAR has gone by, reader, since the date of the last chapter—and more than twelve months have rolled past, dating from that eventful first of May, on which commenced this dark tale of the Pestilence and its mysteries, this terrible ordeal of the Cholera and its Causes, in 1849.

The scourge has long since vanished from among us; but with the returning summer of 1850, it returns, also, the dread and the strange of its reappearance.

Thousands who shudder at the recollection of the horrors of the dread visitant of 1849, are looking forward with stilled apprehension to the terrible advent of the Asiatic Stranger, as he comes the present year.

Much has been suspected, but little ever really known, of the secret agency of the
fiendish propagators and propagation of the pestilence. It has been reserved for us, in the foregoing pages, to faintly shadow forth the truth.

Should the fatal traveller, however, once more cross the wide ocean which separates us from the land of his Asiatic birth, and a third time leave the fearful impress of his footsteps upon our shores and cities,—the keen-eyed ministers of the law will then, at least, turn a jealous and watchful eye upon the inhuman conspirators who conceive such infernal means to fan the flame, and add fuel to the fire!

But the reader of these pages has already been a witness of the awful retribution which had overtaken two, at least, of the horrible Cholera Fiends.

But one of the terrible trio remains, living, and at liberty.

This is the profligate priest,—the guilty clergyman, whose career of crime we have followed and marked. Compelled to fly from a deluded congregation and an outraged community, the Reverend husband of five wives seeks a refuge in distant cities for his dishonored grey-hairs: there to pursue, a little while longer, the career of hypocrisy and sin which the world now associates generally with his name, though a few infatuated followers of the fugitive minister still blindly cling to the belief of his innocence, and call him a persecuted man.

Were we writing a mere romance, for the mere romance-reader’s amusement, we might easily have found some adequate retribution to be dealt out to the hoary hypocrite, whose full punishment has yet to come.

But the Reverend Newton Mathews is too true a character—and as such will be recognized—for us to deal in fictitious refinements. The sinner is left to his God. On Earth, or in Heaven, the account must one day be settled; and then—Woe to the last of the Cholera-Fiends!

Happy is the contrast of Honor, Uprightness, Virtue, to the wickedness of this wicked world.

Clinton and Alice are married. The guilty minister’s sister-in-law is now the honored wife of his step-son. The loveliness and innocence which priestly licentiousness remorselessly coveted, are now the sole treasures of our hero.

Alice Clinton has not yet ceased to mourn her sister’s untimely fate; but it is the only cloud that rests on her happiness, and Grief is a cloud that the sun of Time ever brightens gradually.

In his own and his young wife’s happiness, Francis Clinton has not, however, forgotten that of others.

Elizabeth and her son are now residing in Boston, with a liberal allowance from their young benefactor; it having been thought best that they should remove from a city where the mother, at least, was too well known, to render her longer residence a happy one.

She has realized every hope of reform which Clinton had indulged for her; and the druggist’s daughter adds another to the proofs that even fallen Woman may not be utterly lost to seek, through Penitence, oblivion for the past, and tranquil trust in the future—Shame on the stony-hearted philosophy that in cold blood could refuse it!

As it may regard our good friend, Mark, the common offspring of Elizabeth and the clergyman, the most convincing proof of his welfare that we could possibly give, is by assuring the reader that good eating, good clothing, and good usage, and one year’s time, have wonderfully improved his condition, and converted him into a stout, well-grown boy of 15,—as mischievous and saucy as ever, and whose only matter of uneasiness and astonishment is,—

‘How old ’Lihu Quackenboss can possibly make himself out his grandfather’!

As respects Mark’s ebony acquaintance and quondam butt, Gumbo, the unlucky victim of so many direful maladies, it may be sufficient to say, by way of relieving all unnecessary apprehensions on his account, that though he miraculously recovered from his incipient attack of the ‘Cholera,’ and has not yet fallen a prey to that sanguinary tape-worm, he nevertheless religiously persists in forswearing ‘clam-soup,’ particularly when seasoned with ‘pepper-sauce,’ which no persuasion will ever prevail upon him again to have anything more to do with.

The last time we had the distinguished honor of hearing from the gentleman in question, he was very busy masticating a mess of pig’s feet, in the kitchen, along with old Ditah, and criticizing one of ‘Deacon Snowball’s’ last sermons, divided into nineteen ‘divisions,’ and one more, which makes—

THE END.