THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

MISS HALCOMBE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

JULY 5th. I remained leaning on the windowsill for nearly a quarter of an hour, looking out absentmindedly into the black darkness, and hearing nothing, except now and then, the voices of the servants, or the distant sound of a closing door, in the lower part of the house.

Just as I was turning away wearily from the window, to go back to the bedroom, and make a second attempt to complete the unfinished entry in my journal, I smelt the odour of tobacco-smoke, stealing towards me on the heavy night air. The next moment I saw a tiny red spark advancing from the farther end of the house in the pitch darkness. I heard no footsteps, and I could see nothing but the spark. It travelled along in the night; passed the window at which I was standing; and stopped opposite my bedroom window, inside which I had left the light burning on the dressing-table.

The spark remained stationary, for a moment, then moved back again in the direction from which it had advanced. As I followed its progress, I saw a second red spark, larger than the first, approaching from the distance. The two met together in the darkness. Remembering who smoked cigarettes, and who smoked cigars, I inferred, immediately, that the Count had come out first to look and listen, under my window, and that Sir Percival had afterwards joined him. They must both have been walking on the lawn—or I should certainly have heard Sir Percival’s heavy footfall, though the Count’s soft step might have escaped me, even on the gravel walk.

I waited quietly at the window, certain that they could neither of them see me, in the darkness of the room.

"What's the matter?" I heard Sir Percival say, in a low voice. "Why don't you come in and sit down?"

"I want to see the light out of that window," replied the Count, softly.

"What harm does the light do?"

"It shows she is not in bed yet. She is sharp enough to suspect something, and bold enough to come down stairs and listen, if she can get the chance. Patience, Percival—patience."

"Humbug! You're always talking of patience."

"I shall talk of something else presently. My good friend, you are on the edge of your domestic precipice; and if I let you give the women one other chance, on my sacred word of honour, they will push you over it!"

"What the devil do you mean?"

"We will come to our explanations, Percival, when the light is out of that window, and when I have had one little look at the rooms on each side of the library, and a peep at the staircase as well."

They slowly moved away; and the rest of the conversation between them (which had been conducted, throughout, in the same low tones) ceased to be audible. It was no matter. I had heard enough to determine me on justifying the Count’s opinion of my sharpness and my courage. Before the red sparks were out of sight in the darkness, I had made up my mind that there should be a listener when those two men sat down to their talk—and that the listener, in spite of all the Count’s precautions to the contrary, should be myself. I wanted but one motive to sanction the act to my own conscience, and to give me courage enough for performing it; and that motive I had. Laura’s happiness—Laura’s life itself—might depend on my quick ears, and my faithful memory, to-night.

I had heard the Count say that he meant to examine the rooms on each side of the library, and the staircase as well, before he entered on any explanations with Sir Percival. This expression of his intentions was necessarily sufficient to inform me that the library was the room in which he proposed that the conversation should take place. The one moment of time which was long enough to bring me to that conclusion, was also the moment which showed me a means of baffling his precautions—or, in other words, of hearing what he and Sir Percival said to each other, without the risk of descending at all into the lower regions of the house.

In speaking of the rooms on the ground floor, I have mentioned incidentally the verandah outside them, on which they all opened by means of French windows, extending from the cornice to the floor. The top of this verandah was flat; the rain-water being carried off from it, by pipes, into tanks which helped to supply the house. On the narrow leaden roof, which ran along past the bedrooms, and which was rather less, I should think, than three feet below the sills of the windows, a row of flower-
pots was ranged, with wide intervals between each pot; the whole being protected from falling, in high winds, by an ornamental iron railing along the edge of the roof.

The plan which had now occurred to me was to get out, at my sitting-room window, on to this roof; to creep along noiselessly, till I reached that part of it which was immediately over the library window; and to crouch down between the flower-pots, with my ear against the outer raling. If Sir Percival and the Count sat and smoked to-night, as I had seen them sitting and smoking many nights before, with their chairs close at the open window, and their feet stretched on the zinc garden seats which were placed under the verandah, every word they said to each other above a whisper (and no long conversation, as we all know by experience, can be carried on as a whisper) must inevitably reach my ears. If, on the other hand, they chose, to-night, to sit far back inside the room, then the chanced sound that I should hear little or nothing; and, in that case, I must run the far more serious risk of trying to outwit them down stairs.

Strongly as I was fortified in my resolution by the desperate nature of our situation, I hoped most fervently that I might escape this last emergency. My courage was only a woman’s courage, after all; and it was very near to failing me, when I thought of trusting myself on the ground floor, at the dead of night, within reach of Sir Percival and the Count.

I went softly back to my bedroom, to try the safer experiment of the verandah roof, first.

A complete change in my dress was imperatively necessary, for many reasons. I took off my silk gown to begin with, because the slightest noise from it, on that still night, might have betrayed me. I next removed the white and cumbersome parts of my underclothing, and replaced them by a petticoat of dark flannel. Over this, I put my black travelling cloak, and pulled the hood up to my head. In my ordinary evening costume, I took up the room of three men at least. In my present dress, when it was held close about me, no man could have passed through the narrowest spaces more easily than I. The little breadth left on the roof of the verandah, between the flower-pots on one side, and the wall and windows of the house on the other, made this a serious consideration. If I knocked anything down, if I made the least noise, who could say what the consequences might be?

I only waited to put the matches near the candle, before I extinguished it, and groped my way back into the sitting-room. I locked that door, as I had locked my bedroom door—then quietly got out of the window, and cautiously set my feet on the leaden roof of the verandah. My two rooms were at the inner extremity of the new wing of the house in which we all lived; and I had five windows to pass, before I could reach the position it was necessary to take up immediately over the library. The first window belonged to a spare room, which was empty. The second and third windows belonged to Laura’s room. The fourth window belonged to Sir Percival’s room. The fifth, belonged to the Countess’s room. The others, by which it was not necessary for me to pass, were the windows of the Count’s dressing-room, of the bath-room, and of the second empty spare-room.

No sound reached my ears—the black blinding darkness of the night was all round me when I first stood on the verandah, except at that part of it which Madame Fosco’s window overlooked. There, at the very place above the library, to which my course was directed—there, I saw a gleam of light! The Countess was not yet in bed.

It was too late to draw back; it was no time to wait. I determined to go on at all hazards; and trust for security to my own caution and to the darkness of the night. “For Laura’s sake!” I thought to myself, as I took the first step forward on the roof, with one hand holding my cloak close round me, and the other groping against the wall of the house. It was better to brush close by the wall, than to risk striking my feet against the flower-pots within a few inches of me, on the other side.

I passed the dark window of the spare-room, trying the leaden roof, at each step, with my foot, before I risked resting my weight on it. I passed the dark windows of Laura’s room (“God bless her and keep her to-night!”). I passed the dark window of Sir Percival’s room. Then, I waited a moment, knelt down, with my hands to support me; and so crept to my position, under the protection of the low wall between the bottom of the lighted window and the verandah roof.

When I ventured to look up at the window itself, I found that the top of it only was open, and that the blind inside was drawn down. While I was looking, I saw the shadow of Madame Fosco pass across the white field of the blind—then pass slowly back again. Thus far, she could not have heard—or the shadow would surely have stopped at the blind, even if she had wanted courage enough to open the window, and look out?

I placed myself sideways against the railing of the verandah; first ascertaining, by touching them, the position of the flower-pots on either side of me. There was room enough for me to sit between them, and no more. The sweet-scented leaves of the flower on my left hand, just brushed my cheek as I lightly rested my head against the railing.

The first sounds that reached me from below were caused by the opening or closing (most probably the latter) of three doors in succession—the doors, no doubt, leading into the hall, and into the rooms on each side of the library, which the Count had pledged himself to examine. The first door closed, and I saw the red spark again travelling out into the night, from under the verandah; moving away towards my window; waiting a moment; and then returning to the place from which it had set out.

“The devil take your restlessness! When do you mean to sit down?” growled Sir Percival’s voice beneath me. “Out! how hot it is!” said the Count, sighing and puffing wearily.
His exclamation was followed by the scraping of the garden chairs on the tiled pavement under the verandah—the welcome sound which told me they were going to sit close at the window as usual. So far, the chance was mine. The clock in the turret struck the quarter to twelve as they settled themselves in their chairs. I heard Madame Fosco through the open window, yawning; and saw her shadow pass once more across the white field of the blind.

Meanwhile, Sir Percival and the Count began talking together below; now and then dropping their voices a little lower than usual, but never sinking them to a whisper. The strangeness and peril of my situation, the dread, which I could not master, of Madame Fosco's lighted window, made it difficult, almost impossible for me, at first, to keep my presence of mind, and to fix my attention solely on the conversation beneath. For some minutes, I could only succeed in gathering the general substance of it. I understood the Count to say that the one window might be his wife's; that the ground floor of the house was quite clear; and that they might now speak to each other, without fear of accidents. Sir Percival merely answered by upholding his friend with having unjustifiably slighted his wishes and neglected his interests, all through the day. The Count, thereupon, defended himself by declaring that he had been beset by certain troubles and anxieties which had absorbed all his attention, and that the only safe time to come to an explanation, was a time when they could feel certain of being neither interrupted nor overheard. "We are at a serious crisis in our affairs, Percival," he said; "and if we are to decide on the future at all, we must decide secretly to-night."

That sentence of the Count's was the first which my attention was ready enough to master, exactly as it was spoken. From this point, with certain breaks and interruptions, my whole interest fixed breathlessly on the conversation; and I followed it word for word.

"Out it short! I wanted some thousands, and you some hundreds—and, without the money, we were both in a fair way to go to the dogs together. There's the situation. Make what you can of it. Go on."

"Well, Percival, in your own solid English words, you wanted some thousands and I wanted some hundreds; and the only way of getting them was for you to raise the money for your own necessity (with a small margin, beyond, for my poor little hundreds), by the help of your wife. What did I tell you about your wife on our way to England? and what did I tell you again, when we had come here, and when I had seen for myself the sort of woman Miss Halcombe was?"

"How should I know? You talked nineteen to the dozen, I suppose, just as usual."

"I said this: Human ingenuity, my friend, has hitherto only discovered two ways in which a man can manage a woman. One way is to knock her down—a method largely adopted by the brutal lower orders of the people, but utterly abhorrent to the refined and educated classes above them. The other way (much longer, no doubt, and much more difficult, but, in the end, not less certain) is never to accept a provocation at a woman's hands. It holds with animals, it holds with children, and it holds with women, who are nothing but children grown up. Quiet resolution is the one quality the animals, the children, and the women all fail in. If they can once shackle this superior quality in their master, they get the better of him. If they can never succeed in disturbing it, he gets the better of them. I said to you, Remember that plain truth, when you want your wife to help you to the money. I said, Remember it doubly and trebly, in the presence of your wife's sister, Miss Halcombe. Have you remembered it? Not once, in all the complications that have twisted themselves about us in this house. Every provocation that your wife, and her sister, could offer to you, you instantly accepted from them. Your malice and you temper lost the signature to the deed, lost the ready money, set Miss Halcombe writing to the lawyer, for the first time—"

"First time? what do you mean?"

"This. Miss Halcombe has written to the lawyer for the second time, to-day."

A chair fell on the pavement of the verandah—fell with a crash, as if it had been struck, or kicked down. It was well for me that the Count's revelation roused Sir Percival's anger, as it did. On hearing that I had been again discovered, my self-control failed me at the critical moment; and I started so that the railing, against which I leaned, cracked again. How, in the name of Heaven, had he found me out? The letters had never left my own possession, till I placed them in Fanny's hands at the inn."

"Thank your lucky star," I heard the Count say next, "that you have me in the house, to undo the harm, as fast as you do it. Thank your lucky star that I said, No, when you were mad enough to talk of turning the key to-day on Miss Halcombe, as you turned it, in your mis-
chievous folly, on your wife. Where are your eyes? Can you look at Miss Halcombe, and not see that she has the foresight and the resolution of a man? With that woman for my friend, I would snap these fingers of mine at the world. With that woman for my enemy, I, with all my brains and experience—I, Fosco, cunning as the devil himself, as you have told me a hundred times—I walk, in your English phrase, upon egg-shells! And this grand creature—I drink her health in my sugar and water—this grand creature, who stands in the strength of her love and her courage, firm as a rock between us two, and that poor flimsy pretty blonde wife of yours—this magnificent woman, whom I admire with all my soul, though I oppose her in your interests and in mine, you drive to extremities, as if she was no sharper and no bolder than the rest of her sex. Percival! Percival! you deserve to fail, and you have failed."

There was a pause. I write the villain's words about myself, because I mean to remember them, because I hope yet for the day when I may speak out, once for all in his presence, and cast them back, one by one, in his teeth.

Sir Percival was the first to break the silence again.

"Yes, yes; bully and bluster as much as you like," he said, sulkily; "the difficulty about the money is not the only difficulty. You would be for taking strong measures with the women, yourself—if you knew as much as I do."

"We will come to that second difficulty, all in good time," rejoined the Count. "You may confuse yourself, Percival, as much as you please, but you shall not confuse me. Let the question of the money be settled first. Have I convinced your obstinacy? Have I shown you that your temper will not let you help yourself?—Or must I go back, and (as you put it in your dear straightforward English) bully and bluster a little more?"

"Pooh! It's easy enough to grumble at me. Say what is to be done—that's a little harder."

"Is it? Bah! This is what is to be done: You give up all direction in the business from to-night; you leave it, for the future, in my hands only. I am talking to a Practical British Man—ha? Well, Practical, will that do for you?"

"What do you propose, if you leave it all to you?"

"Answer me first. Is it to be in my hands or not?"

"Say it is in your hands—what then?"

"A few questions, Percival, to begin with. I must wait a little, yet, to let circumstances guide me; and I must know, in every possible way, what those circumstances are likely to be. There is no time to lose. I have told you already that Miss Halcombe has written to the lawyer to-day, for the second time."

"How did you find it out? What did she say?"

"If I told you, Percival, we should only come back to the end to where we are now. Enough! That I have found out—and the finding has caused that trouble and anxiety which made me so inaccessible to you all through to-day. Now, to refresh my memory about your affairs—it is some time since I talked them over with you. The money has been raised, in the absence of your wife's signature, by means of bills at three months—raised at a cost that makes my poverty-stricken foreign hair stand on end to think of it! When the bills are due, is there really and truly no earthly way of paying them but by the help of your wife?"

"None."

"What! You have no money at the banker's?"

"A few hundreds, when I want as many thousands."

"Have you no other security to borrow upon?"

"No."

"What have you actually got with your wife, at the present moment?"

"Nothing, but the interest of her twenty thousand pounds—barely enough to pay our daily expenses."

"What do you expect from your wife?"

"Three thousand a year, when her uncle dies."

"A fine fortune, Percival. What sort of a man is this uncle? Old?"

"No—neither old nor young."

"A good-tempered, freely-living man? Married? No. I think my wife told me, not married."

"Of course not. If he was married, and had a son, Lady Glyde would not be next heir to the property. I'll tell you what he is. He's a mandarin, twaddling, selfish fool, and bores everybody who comes near him about the state of his health."

"Men of that sort, Percival, five long, and marry malevolently when you least expect it. I don't give you much, my friend, for your chance of the three thousand a year. Is there nothing more that comes to you from your wife?"

"Nothing."

"Absolutely nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing—except in case of her death."

"Aha? in the case of her death."

There was another pause. The Count moved from the verandah to the gravel walk outside. I knew that he had moved, by his voice. "The rain has come at last," I heard him say. "It had come. The state of my cloak showed that it had been falling thickly for some little time."

The Count went back under the verandah—I heard the chair creak beneath his weight as he sat down in it again.

"Well, Percival," he said; "and, in the case of Lady Glyde's death, what do you get then?"

"If she leaves no children."

"Which she is likely to do?"

"Which she is not in the least likely to do—"

"Yes?"

"Why, then I get her twenty thousand pounds."

"Paid down?"

"Paid down."

They were silent once more. As their voices
ceased, Madame Fosco's shadow darkened the blind again. Instead of passing this time, it remained, for a moment, quite still. I saw her fingers steal round the corner of the blind, and draw it on one side. The dim white outline of her face, looking out straight over me, appeared behind the window. I kept quite still, shrouded from head to foot in my black cloak. The rain, which was fast wetting me, dripped over the glass, blotted it, and prevented her from seeing anything. "More rain!" I heard her say to herself. She dropped the blind—and I breathed again freely.

The talk went on below me; the Count resuming it, this time.

"Pereval! do you care about your wife?"

"Fosco! that's rather a downright question."

"I am a downright man; and I repeat it."

"Why the devil do you look at me in that way?"

"You won't answer me? Well, then; let us say your wife dies before the summer is out."

"Drop it, Fosco!"

"Let us say your wife dies—"

"Drop it, I tell you!"

"In that case, you would gain twenty thousand pounds; and you would lose—"

"I should lose the chance of three thousand a year."

"The remote chance, Pereval—the remote chance only. And you want money, at once. In your position, the gain is certain—the loss doubtful."

"Speak for yourself as well as for me. Some of the money I want has been borrowed for you. And if you come to gain, my wife's death would be ten thousand pounds in your wife's pocket. Sharp as you are, you seem to have conveniently forgotten Madame Fosco's legacy. Don't look at me in that way! I won't have it: What with your looks and your questions, upon my soul, you make my flesh creep!"

"Your flesh? Does flesh mean conscience in English? I speak of your wife's death, as I speak of a possibility. Why not? The respectable lawyers who scribble-scrabble your deeds and your wills, look the deaths of living people in the face. Do lawyers make your flesh creep? Why should I? It is my business to-night, to clear up your position beyond the possibility of mistake—and I have now done it. Here is your position. If your wife lives, you pay those bills with her signature to the parchments. If your wife dies, you pay them with her death."

As he spoke, the light in Madame Fosco's room was extinguished; and the whole second floor of the house was now sunk in darkness.

"Talk! talk!" grumbled Sir Pereval. "One would think, to hear you, that my wife's signature to the deed was got already."

"You have left the matter in my hands," retorted the Count; "and I have more than two months before me to turn round in. Say no more about it, if you please, for the present. When the bills are due, you will see for yourself if my 'talk! talk!' is worth something, or if it is not. And now, Pereval, having done with the money-matters, for to-night, I can place my attention at your disposal. If you wish to consult me on that second difficulty, which has mixed itself up with our little embarrassments, and which has so altered you for the worse, that I hardly know you again. Speak, my friend—and pardon me if I shock your fiery national tastes by mixing myself a second glass of sugar-and-water."

"It's very well to say speak," replied Sir Pereval, in a far more quiet and more polite tone than he had yet adopted; "but it's not so easy to know how to begin."

"Shall I help you?" suggested the Count.

"Shall I give this private difficulty of yours a name? What, if I call it—Anne Cathieck?"

"Look here, Fosco, you and I have known each other for a long time; and, if you have helped me out of one or two scrapes before this, I have done the best I could to help you in your return, as you say. My memory will go. We have made as many friendly sacrifices, on both sides, as men could; but we have had our secrets from each other, of course—haven't we?"

"You have had a secret from me, Pereval. There is a skeleton in your cupboard here at Blackwater Park, that has peeped out, in these last few days, at other people besides yourself."

"Well, suppose it has. If it doesn't concern you, you needn't be curious about it, need you?"

"Do I look curious about it?"

"Yes, you do."

"So! so! my face speaks the truth, then? What an immense foundation of good there must be in the nature of a man who arrives at my age, and whose face has not yet lost the habit of speaking the truth!—Come, Glyde! let us be candid one with the other. This secret of yours has sought me: I have not sought it. Let us say the matter, if you ask me, as your old friend, to respect your secret, and to leave it, once for all, in your own keeping?"

"Yes—that's just what I do ask."

"Then my curiosity is at an end. It dies in me, from this moment."

"Do you really mean that?"

"What makes you doubt me?"

"I have had some experience, Fosco, of your roundabout ways; and I am not so sure that you won't worm it out of me, after all."

The chair below suddenly creaked again—I felt the trellis-work pillar under me shake from top to bottom. The Count had started to his feet and struck it with his hand, in indignation.

"Pereval! Pereval!" he cried, passionately, "do you know me no better than that? Has all your experience shown you nothing of my character yet? I am a man of the antique type! I am capable of the most exalted acts of virtue when I have the chance of performing them. It has been the misfortune of my life that I have had few chances. My conception of friendship is sublime! Is it my fault that your skeleton has peeped out at me? Why do I confess my curiosity? You poor superficial Englishman, it is to magnify my own self-control. I could
draw your secret out of you, if I liked, as I

draw this finger out of the palm of my hand

you know I could! But you have appealed to

my friendship; and the duties of friendship are

sacred to me. See! I trample my base curiosity

under my feet. My excited sentiments lift me

above it. Recognise them, Percival! imitate

them, Percival!—Shake hands—I forgive you!"—

His voice faltered over the last words—
faltering, as if he was actually shedding tears!

Sir Percival confusedly attempted to excuse

himself. But the Count was too magnanimous

to listen to him.

"No!" he said. "When my friend has

wounded me, I can pardon him without apolo-
gies. Tell me, in plain words, do you want my

help?"

"Yes, badly enough."

"And you can ask for it without compromising

yourself?"

"I can try, at any rate."

"Try, then."

"Well, this is how it stands—I told you, to-
day, that I had done my best to find Anne

Catherick, and failed."

"Yes; you did."

"Fosco! I'm a lost man, if I don't find her."

"Ha! Is it so serious as that?"

A little stream of light travelled out under

the verandah, and fell over the gravel-walk.
The Count had taken the lamp from the inner

part of the room, to see his friend clearly by the

light of it.

"Yes?" he said. "Your face speaks the truth
this time. Serious, indeed—as serious as the

money matters themselves."

"More serious. As true as I sit here, more

serious!"

The light disappeared again, and the talk went

on.

"I showed you the letter to my wife that
Anne Catherick hid in the sand," Sir Percival

continued. "There's no boasting in that letter,

Fosco—she does know the Secret."

"Say as little as possible, Percival, in my pre-

sence, of the Secret. Does she know it from

you?"

"No; from her mother."

"Two women in possession of your private

mind—bad, bad, bad, my friend! One question

here, before we go any farther. The motive of

your shutting up the daughter in the asylum, is

now plain enough to me—but the manner of her

escape is not quite so clear. Do you suspect

the people in charge of her of closing their eyes

purposely, at the instance of some enemy, who

could afford to make it worth their while?"

"No; she was the best-behaved patient they

had—and, like fools, they trusted her. She's

just mad enough to be shut up, and just sane

enough to run me when she's at large—if you

understand that?"

"I do understand it. Now, Percival, come

at once to the point; and then I shall know what
to do. Where is the danger of your position at

the present moment?"

"Anne Catherick is in this neighbourhood,

and in communication with Lady Glyde—there's
the danger, plain enough. Who can read the

letter she hid in the sand, and not see that my

wife is in possession of the secret, deny it as

she may?"

"One moment, Percival. If Lady Glyde does

know the secret, she must know also that it is a

compromising secret for you. As your wife,
surely it is her interest to keep it?"

"Is it? I'm coming to that. It might be

her interest if she cared two straws about me.

But I happen to be an encumbrance in the way

of another man. She was in love with him

before she married me—she's in love with him

now—an infamously vagabond of a drawing-master,

named Hartright."

"My dear friend! what is there extraordinary

in that? They are all in love with some other

man. Who gets the first of a woman's heart? In

all my experience I have never yet met with the

man who was Number One. Number Two, some-
times. Number Three, Four, Five, often.

Number One, never! He exists, of course—but,

I have not met with him."

"Wait! I haven't done yet. Who do you

think helped Anne Catherick to get the start,

when the people from the madhouse were after

her? Hartright. Who do you think saw her

again in Cumberland? Hartright. Both times,

he spoke to her alone. Stop! don't interrupt

me. The second's as sweet on my wife, as

she is on him. He knows the secret, and she

knows the secret. Once let them both get

together again, and it's her interest and his

interest to turn their information against me."

"Gently, Percival—gently! Are you insen-
sible to the virtue of Lady Glyde?"

"That for the virtue of Lady Glyde! I be-

lieve in nothing about her but her money.

Don't you see how the case stands? She might

be harmless enough by herself; but if she and

that vagabond Hartright——"

"Yes, yes, I see. Where is Mr. Har-

tright?"

"Out of the country. If he means to keep

a whole skin on his bones, I recommend him not
to come back in a hurry."

"Are you sure he is out of the country?"

"Certain. I had him watched from the time

he left Cumberland to the time he sailed. Oh,

I've been careful, I can tell you! Anne Cath-

erick lived with some people at a farm-house

near Limmeridge. I went there, myself, after

she had given me the slip, and made sure that

they knew nothing. I gave her mother a form

of letter to write to Miss Halcombe, exonerat-

ing me from any bad motive in putting her

under restraint. I've spent, I'm afraid to say

how much, in trying to trace her. And, in

spite of it all, she turns up here, and escapes

me on my own property! How do I know who

else may see her, who else may speak to her?

That being sounded, Hartright, may come back

without my knowing it, and may make use of

her to-morrow."

"Not, Percival! While I am on the spot,

and while that woman is in the neighbourhood,
The clock struck the quarter past one, when I laid my hands on the window-sill of my own room. I had seen nothing and heard nothing which could lead me to suppose that my retreat had been discovered.

BEYOND GOOD HOPE.

On the south-eastern coast of Africa, about eight hundred miles from the Cape of Good Hope, is Vasco de Gama’s “Land of the Nativity,” that green, mild, tempting land which he and his discovered on the twenty-fifth of December, fourteen hundred and ninety-seven; just ten years after Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Stormy Cape, known since as “of Good Hope.” Vasco de Gama called the land Terra Natalis, in honour of the day of its discovery; also Terra de Fumo, because of the dense clouds of smoke perpetually hanging over the table-lands, from the burning of the coarse IXia grass growing there. It is the Land of Smoke to the present day, and from the same cause; much to the discomfort of astronomers and star-gazers, who might as well attempt to make observations through the atmosphere of a London fog, as through the smoke-clouds which for ever darken the brilliancy of those summer skies.

The Land of the Nativity, or Natal, as we English call it, is in a chaotic geological condition. The ground has been so upheaved and split open, so jumbled together and sanded, that no one can say what lies uppermost and what beneath; or judge, from position, of priority of formation. Granite and gneiss, slate, trap, and sandstone are tumbled together, as if they had been flung down anyhow out of a Titan’s hod, and left to lie where they fell; everywhere are evidences of convolution and wreck, and of new conditions created on the ruins of the old. The great peculiarity, though, of the