# CHRISTMAS COLUMN

THE MISTLETOE KISS.

A CHRISTMAS SONG.

Winter is weary ! and winter 's drear ! Consin Annette, do you think it's true? There isn't a month in the long, long year But sings when I'm summoned away to von!

Though yellowing leaves in the path are sad. And mournfully echo our travelling feet: Still something says to my heart, be glad ! For love is an evergreen-plant, my sweet !

Cousin Annette, do you think so? There's nothing so drear as the dreary scheme Of winter's serrow and winter's snow. Let fanciful poets indulge in grief, And every woe in the world repeat; But love has been at his tricks, the thief! And stolen a heart, and regret, my sweet !

Dull December's a mournful theme!

Berries on holly proclaim 'tis cold ! Cousin Annette, I am warmer thus; A hand and a waist if my arms enfold, The hand and waist will be cozy, puss! For here we can sit and defy the wind, Though panes are rattled with blinding

And happily one of us thus may flud That winter is best for us both, my sweet! Mistletoe grows on the oak, they say!

Cousin Annette !- she is fast asleep, But this is a dangerous game to play, For wandering rogues may on tiptoe creep. The mistletoe's beckoning over her head, My fluttering heart, you must cease to beat Sleep soft! while over the floor I tread-And wake at the touch of my lips, my

Winter is bringing the travellers home! Cousin Annette, have I cause to fear Lest one loved better than I may come To claim the hand that is resting here? The falsest women are fair as you, And lips as pretty have sworn deceit; But on my honor I'd swear you true-As true as the rose at your breast, my

Winter is long! ay, winter's long! Cousin Annette, is it time to go? Perchance the lover and love-sick song May melt forever with winter's snow? The degrest thoughts in the heart lie deep Through snows of winter and rose-time heat.

But if your memory tries to sleep, Remember the mistletoe kiss, my sweet!

## LAYING THE GHOST.

AN ENGLISH CHRISTMAS STORY.

This is the story of two or three connected incidents, not quite every day, which befell me, Hugh Livesay, a few years ago. Or, in more concise words-and ghost stories being the

proper thing at Christmas—this is the story of the laying the ghost of—a difficulty.

At the time I introduce myself to you, I, Hugh Livesay, son and heir of Henry Livesay, Esq., of Holber Holt, Leicestershire, was an undergraduate of Christchurch, of three years' stand-ing, spending his 'long' with his uncle, his mother's brother, Mr. Smith Pentland, solicitor, The Close, Southwich, I had many grander relatives, especially on my father's side; none other who had so much of my respect as this provincial lawyer with more than a provincial reputation. I don't boast of it, for I have not seen many men who could afford to look down upon Smith Pentland; I have seen as few who upon Smith Pentland; I have seen as few who ventured to do it. To bring one proof of his superiority—he had to meet the clever man's supreme difficulty of bearing with incompetency, and he subdued it thoroughly.

Nevertheless, where he saw youth, and health, and intellect-it was his theory that opportunity should be measured apartnot easy to satisfy: the idle found him a hard taskmaster. In these respects my uncle was fairly content with me, but he was one of those who love to resort to argument for the sake of discovering what their opponent is made of. am saving nothing for or against the practice, that he followed it, Aud a course with him was to challenge us university 'The question is, are not you specialties?' he

said, one day over our after-dinner wine. You may picture my uncle a fine old figure, with great ridges of brows below an abundance of white hair, refined, almost gentle eyes, but marked caustic mouth, with somewhat large lips. There were those who went in fear of my uncle's sarcasm, but they did not fare best with him. 'The question is, are not you specialties?' 'Now you have put a hard case, sir,' said I. Because, although it is not the truth, it is next to it. To my mind no man is more capable than your better sort of Oxford mau.' That is, put your Oxford man into an unganal

and difficult position, he will come out of it more creditably than your ordinary man?' I think so, sir.'

It is contrary to the received notions, Hugh. But I do think it.' It was one pleasaut feature in my uncle's iutercourse with young men, that he treated them as possibly his equals in intelligence, if not in judgment. And this without at all risking his lignity. The consequence was that young men tried to talk up to him.

Seriously, don't you think you are too finished an article for common uses? I have my doubts of you, Hugh, although my own boy is just going to Cambridge.

'I wish you could put one of us on his trial,' I said, not consenting to his opinion. 'Me, since 'I'il take you at your word, Hugh,' said my

uncle, suddenly. 'Mand-ife you don't wish to do what I ask, say so: I shall respect your I want you to go to a gentleman's house in the neighborhood-it is just the case you desire, that I should make a real use of you premises.

and take an inventory of the property on his There is no doubt I was a great deal dismaved my uncle's unusual and difficult position had certainly not taken this form to my mind.

'He is in a degree a friend of mine; but what more influences me, he is a great friend of great friends of mine. One of these will advance him money for present necessities, but requires a bill of sale on his furniture and horses and carriages as security. It is to be arranged for as early and privately as possibly. Now there is not a clerk in my office I can trust as I ought to be able to trust you. My clerks contract a habit of reticence, I know, but they are as likely as not to beirny that their errand is something sinister and unusual in their very effort not to do so. In fact, if a gentleman were to be found for such work, he is what is wanted. And you say Oxford men are so capable: my uncle pushing back his chair, and looking sharply at me as

You would like me to undertake it?! said I.

'If you would, you see me out of a difficulty. However, if you at all object, there's an end, I'm thinking for the ladies of Mr. Guest's family mostly. You wouldn't, you know, want mention your relationship to me or anything of that sort: you may not even see any of the family—although, honestly, I think you will.'
In spite of what he said about there being an end to it if I objected, yet, as he went on enume rating the fors and againsts, I saw which way his wishes tended. Besides, it struck me half the trial might be in seeing whether I could overcome my reluctance. So I made up my

Well. I will do my best, str. To-morrow do you say? I suppose it's chairs and tables I'm and I laughed without much satisfaction; 'or whether they be worth shillings or pounds?"

'As to called them,' said my uncle, looking pleased, 'there'll be a list there ready for you. Your aunt and Flo might initiate you into prices -an evening's amusement provided for you all !

That seemed likely to be the only agreeable item in the account. Florence kindly took a great deal of the burden off her mother, and we two made famous progress-considering s chronic flirtstion between us of some years standing.

However, next morning, when fairly started behind a good borse for my twelve miles drive to Cullerton House, affairs took a different complexion. The business itself did not trouble me much; what I did not know I could arrive at by audacious guessing, and reference to Florence on my return. For the rest, was I not to demon-strate the capability of the Oxford man by the very fact of my tutored ability to carry off awkward circumstances? On my arrival at Culler-ton House, a place of some pretensions, I sent in my card and a note my uncle had written, speaking of me as a gentleman whom he em-ployed confidentially. Waiting in a well-lined library for further directions, with a new sense of strangeness to such a place. I smilingly re-eurred to my uncle's advice not to go quite as for a morning cail. By-aud-by Mr. Guest made

'Mr. Livesay, I believe,' referring to my card, which he held in his hand. 'Come upon—ah—Mr. Smith Pentland's business.' I bowed. How would it do to begin here at once? went on to say, with the air of a man screwing up his courses to taking the first uncomicriable seader, but only equal as yet to dabbling in the water. 'It may be as well to-exercise a little artifice. You are waiting for me here, you-ah-understand. And if the servants come

There is occupation for some minutes of There is occupation for some minutes of waiting on these shelves, sir,' said I, gravely.

'Exactly, Mr. Livesay. Then here is a list for your guidance. I will return in a few minutes,' And to get himself out of the room so quickly appeared an almost astounding relief to him. Completely beaten though he was by the present completely center though he was by the present humiliating situation, one could see that by nature he was arrogant and somewhat overbearing. I could well understand what my uncle speke of as Mr. Guest's perfect hability to keep within his income; for to him the small but very necessary economies of life would probably seem paltry and degrading. However, he had bought a contrary experience, and was now

we young fellows are more apt at detecting the absurdities than the hardships of such situations, and only behave well about them because, as men of the world, we do not, in our phraseology, go in for the embarrassing. But in rather an odd way was I to feel the pathos also. In going through the list prepared for me, I could not fail to perceive here and there a blotch of ink, hinting very sensibly at tears spent in the writing. It was the work of a lady—one of the guests themselves, probably. Should I see her? and how would she take it? Was anything to be made out from her work-manship? I set myself to examine it, but whether or not I have small penetration into character, it told me little. There was clear arrangement certainly, and completeness, if that went any way-and it did, when one thought also of the blurred ink spets.

Voices outside warned me to put an end to my speculations, and made haste to be ready for Mr. Guest's return, which was only a degree less flurried than his first entrance. 'I think, Mr. Livesay, if you would follow a plan—' Which plan, untolded with much hesitation and diffusiveness, had evidently been prepared for him

It was that luncheon should be ready in an hour in the dining-room. Mr. Guest was meanwhile to conduct me upstars, as it for a little attention to my tollet after my journey. 'And the rest you can carry to your mind as you pass through. A very handsome bird, as you remark, and well stuffed.' We were now in the hall and a servant was passing. 'John, are the ladies in the breakfast-room?' Come, and be introduced to my daughters, Mr. Lavesay.' I could see that this, done the more effectually to mystify the servant, was bitterer work than

any. He betrayed it by the very sharpness of tone, momentary as it was, in which he immediately after furnished me with certain information-as if to warn me not to presume upon an introduction that could not be avoided, but which went for nothing in the ordinary sense. I date say the cautious, almost say circuit my eyes made of the room and its inmates was ascribed by Mr. Guest to my sufficient sense of Miss Alice Guest, the younger of the two ladies of the family, was sitting in a spirit-less attitude by the fire: Miss Guest herself, a girl of about twenty, was writing at the table. And, although there were traces of tears on her face, and she could not help looking downcast, yet she was sufficiently composed to think for the best, and try to be conciliatory, as the most politic course. She was not quite pretty, but altogether nice; had nice soft, gentle wayswhich did not in the least prevent her, as I was not long in finding out, from being the ruling power in the house. Indeed, with no one el-e did there seem to remain any judgment or en-I felt for her very keenly when, upon her father appealing to her for the explanation of something in the inventory not quite clear either of us, she came across to us and pointed out what we required quite patiently and intelligently, although all the while her poor hand trembled so she could scarce turn over the leaves. I very much liked the kind honest eyes that met mine in a momentary glance; I very much wished they had been less

And I decidedly wished myself well out of the room long before I had finished. The father was querulous, yet deprecatory; the girls sat on in an awkward silence. A young fellow of about eighteen looked in at the door; his father's introduction drew from him a stiff hostile bow; turning on his heel he went out, ctosing the door with a bang; there was a dull anger shown towards me by all-by all except Miss Guest. I grew to feel almost as if the aggression was mine; I said within myself that whiist my uncle had undoubtedly acted wisely and kingly by the Guests, he had not shown much consideration for me. True, he had professed to make it entirely optional, but

Going through with Mr. Guest's programme, I reached the dining-room and luncheon.
'Now do, Dick, do,' I heard Miss Gnest say, from outside the door. 'He is very well, indeed he is. It can't burt you to sit down to luuchson with him. It's because of the servants, you know. Do it to please me. Dick. I don't want you to talk if you can't, she added coaxingly—coming in as she : poke; Dick treating me to his anathemas pretty freely as he followed her.

The color flew into her face at sight of me, for certainly she had not meant me to be of her audience. I was sorely tempted to carry it with a high hand towards Mr. Diok, but I kept before me the especial reason of my uncle's choice, and recovered myself in time. I readily forgave him when I heard, as I did afterwards, that he was expecting his commission, when this unfor tunate crisis in his father's affairs put off his expectations indefinitely, even if worse did not follow. It was natural he should confound me with this misfortune. The younger sister did not show hersely. 'Alice has the headache, paps, said Miss Guest, in snewer to her father, as he too joined us. I guessed that I had as much to do with ner absence as any indisposi-

But we had not taken our seats when a carriage rolled up the drive. 'Miss Balley, papa!' Miss Guest exclaimed 'She will have been into Lorton, and of course has come on here knowing it to be our luncheon bour.'

I quite understood their involuntary glances at me, and felt it meambent on me to offer to I offered to do so in so many wor is, without any preamble or reason alleged other

'Certainly no!, she said, with the essential politeness of a kind nature. 'We could not think of it.' I still professed my willingness. 'It would be rude, and it would not be pre-ferable even, she replied, smiling a little, her straightforwardness equal to my own. Well, it is the irresistible tendency, where it is young men and women who are concerned, for these

things to become directly personal. True, there are the servants,' said Mr. Guest, with an irritable glauce in survey of me, fretting his hands nervously one within the other. 'And Miss Bailey won't see much in our having a-s ranger to luncheon.' Words that could not have been beeter framed to lack genuineness and spontaneousness of his

Miss Guest's first alarmed exclamation was justified. Miss Bailey had calculated upon the luncheon hour, and besides developing a very fair appetite for the material visues set before us, also developed a quite remarkable craving af er what ladies term 'news.' 'Well, Frances, what's the news?" was nearly ner first ques-

Miss Guest colored as she professed her ignorance, probably thinking, it struck me, what the answer to-morrow might well be. So Miss Balley proceeded herself to impart sundry intelligence, in which Miss Guest, carrying off her secret trouble bravely (she could not keep back a preoccupied sigh now and then), feigned much interest; satisfied so that her father was not called upon. We appeared to be successfully tiding over the mai apropos visit, until, as luck would have it, the lady's inquisitiveness was directed towards me. Then I quite laid for

everything to come to grief.

'Ah, I suppose, Mr. Livesay, you are a stranger to this part of the country?' saidishe, catching quickly at words that implied as much. She was what I call a dreadful woman; well preserved, fifty or so, with a face placid, yet shrewish; amiling benevolently on you with her eyes, but her mouth in contradiction, I waid I did not know much of the country. But perhaps you mean to get acquainted with It? Perhaps you are thinking to settle down

I said I was simply on a visit, and Miss Guest contrived to get the conversation into a different channel—but not for long.

'You find the air keen here, don't you, Mr. Livesay?' said Miss Bailey, upon a discussion of he weather giving her an opening. 'I'm sure I did. But then I'm a native of Devonshire, and you may come from northward. I wished Devonshire had kept her as I said that, on the contrary, I had always lived more

In London, perhaps? 'Bless the woman!' I thought. 'I'lt try the truth-if that will stop her.' Hesitating a moment between Leicestershire and Oxford, I chose the latter. As it turned out, an unfortu-

nate choice. 'At the university? Ah! At which college would it be? Christchurch? ah! She had a nephew, such a dearfellow, but he was at Brase-nose. Did I know him?—Dawson, Frank Dawson? No, I didn't? Well, perhaps she night be able to bring about an acquaintance. Oh, Frances!' turning to Miss Guest, 'Alice Dawson has had the sweetest pho'ograph taken.' 'Has she?' said Miss Guest, with the slightest

drooping of the eyelids.
'Oh, the most charming portrait!' blandly beaming on us all. 'You have not seen my niece, Mr. Livesay—my niece, Alice Dawson, dear Frank's sister? Shelwas staving at Southwich a month ago. If you were riding or driving Harford way, and looked in on my little snuggery, I might, now, be able to give you an

Through all this questioning and my corresponding answers—for, once brought to book, I bad plunged boldly in medias res, and talked Oxford to any extent, as deeming the truth safest, from being least open to suspicion on either side—as it went on from one assertion to another, Miss Guest's eyes had opened wider and wider, and even young Dick was roused from his moodiness. For all their caution, I caught them signalling their amazement at my audacity to each other with their eyes -and, I thought, also the relief my ingenuity, playing on Miss Balley's credulity, brought them. But when it came to the proffered introduction, accompanied by all Miss Balley's reserve of blandness, I thought they certainly must have exploded with laughter; the better I kept my countenance the more I tried their gravity. As for Mr. Guest, he looked the reverse of amiable all over at what he took to be my effrontery. At length Miss Bailey proposed departure. They all accompanied her to the carriage, but whilst Mr. Guest remained for a parting word or two. Miss Guest and Dick made a speedy escape back into the hall. Chancing to be near the door. I

'Oh! Dick!' said she. 'Oh! Fanny!' and they went off into suppressed laughter, one against the other.
'Did you ever hear a chap cram like him?' said Dick, suspending his laughter only for the words.

had the fortune a second time to overhear them

'Dear Frank!' said she, as soon as she could get breath. 'And dear Frank's sister! But don't let us be stopping here.' And giving themselves a minute to recover themselves the

I purposely caught Dick's eye, and be walked to the window as the sole resource against a second explosion; for being, as you will have observed, a young fellow quick to stand upon his dignity, of course he could not willingly demean himself to exchange mirth with a com mon clerk! But kind, thoughtful Miss Guest quick to believe that kindness was meant, could not let it pass without an acknowledgment of my good nature and promptness to avoid embarrassment for them. And she knew well, none better, how to thank without admitting too nuch. I telt it some return for the inevitable disagreeables of my work only to have had it in my power to put her in so much better spirits; this was just what her fine jusight taught her, and by what she emphasized her thanks. She seked if she could be of any assistance quite cheerfully, and even conversed upon general topics a little. She only ventured on a passing allusion to my daring inventions—for as such she wholly regarded them—I was half sorry to know it-from beginning to end-over the luncheon-table, and that of the demurest.

You appear, Mr. Livesay, to be quite familiar with Oxford; even more so than with South-wich.' And in spite of berself, a smile lurked somewhere about her pleasant face. 'I-I-in fact, Miss Guest, I-I was appren-

ticed at Oxford." (When I came to this point in telling the day's proceedings to my uncle, he laughed ten minutes off, and then admitted that I had extinguished him. 'As of course I should,' I affirmed. 'Merely from the result of a high-class education -which would, as a plain fact capable of being argued, be a recurrence to first principles and the simplest tactics.' When my uncle informed me my assurance, as he was pleased to call it,

wanted no further elaborating.)
I achieved my reply to Miss Guest in my gravest manner; but she turned away, biting her ho, and, I could see, doubted my gravity just as I had detected the arriers penses in hers. I was strongly impelled to disclose the whole truth about myself, but the fear of compromising Mr. Smith Pentland restrained me until Mr. Guest and discretion entered together.

brought my business to a and I drove away from Cutterton House and the Guests, leeling that I had also brought to a conclusion a strange experience for which nothing certainly in my life had prepared me, which brauched off from it to an odd sort of way, without any kind of connection with it other then the sugar accident of Mr. Smita Pentland's unpremeditated request, and which at once passed into the catalogue of simple remem-

Hances. True, after Illeft Southwick I once or twice made inquiries for the Guests in my letters to my uncle. But the subject was no longer inafter he wrote that there had been a revival in their fortunes-an old maiden auntsome relative or other, dying and leaving them to end of a fortune. 'And,' said my uncle, 'to see Mr. Guest was enough to know that no odor of 'mpending bankrupicy came now between the wind and his nobility' My few hours' acquaintance with the gentleman taught me all that my uncle would convey, and I was con-firmed in my first reading of his character.

Christmas came, and was, as in duty bound, spent in the home at Holber Holt. We had an excessively good time of it; such a good, jolly time that nothing short of the wedding of my great chum. Tom Stopford, and the positive necessity he laid on me of acting as his best man, could have induced me to quit home for the Stopfords' place in Sussex. Once at Hotton Park I found myself involved in festivities of a week's duration. These over, my return was still further delayed, because the good taith of Tem's brother Bob was-at least he said it was - implicated in the securing me for a grand ball that was to come off at Grill Hall—the restlence some new comers to that part of the county whose favor Bob evidently sought. They had only not been of the company at Hetton because they were from home at the time. From what I heard on different sides, the Masons were city people, very rich, and without colldren. But the altraction for Bob, and o hers of the fellows as well, was certain two fair nieces whom they had met at Grill during the shooting season,

and who were again the Masons' guests. The brother had also lately joined Bob's regiment, and spent every farthing of his allowance, and

and spent every tarthing of his allowance, and probably something over.

Poor Bob was very spooney, and made me his condidant. He used to moralize frightfully, with a comic face, but not quite taking it all the same. 'I'm a younger son, Livesay, and younger sons don't go down with mammas and aunts—especially where there's money. Hang money, I say! There's Tom's wite, as jolly a little girl as ever a fellow wants to pet him and think him perfection. Would she have fallen in love with me? Not she. And yet she is: 't a bit in the me? Not she. And yet she is t't a bit in the world mercennry. She wouldn't have been allowed, my dear fellow. It is all managed for them. Oh, women are kittle cattle to deal with-And Bob's weed went out of the window, and

we sat on it a rather sentimental silence.

'So, as I said before, if you'll accept the
Masons' invitation, you do me a kindness,' he
continued, as soon as he could descend to practical matters. 'You are credited with being a catch in the matrimonial market, and we youngr sons are only looked pleasant upon when we bave bigger fish in tow, Mrs. Mason was proudly pleased when she saw a possibility of getting Mr. Hugh Livesay. She doesn't fall into ecstacies, you know-quite goes in for the refixed style of thing. But she's the deuce and all to come at. It was grand, I assure you, quite grand, to see how she manegavred for Frank Carpenter, the swell who married old Muson's niece. These girts belong to her own people. Come, say you will go! Seeing that a trost had set in, to the probable toppage of all hunting for some days, and that

I had still a fortnight of my vacation before me, I said that I would do the obliging, and stay for the ball. Only he wasn't to make a fool of Don't you, tuat's all, exclaimed the wildly grateful dragoon. But I say, do any amount of

How am I to know which is Alice? They don't so about labelled, do they?
'She's the younger. Besides, she's—oh, she's 'Very well, then; if I--

irting with all or any, only don't cut me out

'Shut up, now, will you?' said he, fetching me a tremendous blow in the back, in appre-

hension of my chaff. We were late in reaching Grill on the night of the ball, and dancing had commenced. When Bob took me up to Mrs. Muson, I felt convinced I must have seen that lady before, so familiar to me seemed her well-formed features and stately carriage. As Bon had predicted, she was very gracious, and kept me in conversation until the conclusion of the dance in progress, when we sutered, and she offered to find me partners. And if there was mancevring in it at all, it was very skilful, for she was very careful to intro-duce me to three or four of the prettiest girls in the room, and only finished with her eldest

Radiant for trouble unburdened from her though she was, bright and beautiful as, say what you can, good fortune will make people, yet I knew her on the instant. The broad fore-head, the good honest eyes, the sonsie face, I could not mistake; although there were levels now in the fair hair, and every circumstance

was so contrasted. And she knew me.

'Mr. Livesay—Miss Guest— Mr. Mason called
his wife's attention from us, and so, pernaps tortunately, the surprise of recognition on Guest's side and the surprise and confusion on mine escaped berinotice.

In a sort of desperation of embarrassment I asked for the next quadrille, and she, in equal bewilderment, assented. But as the minutes gave her a better comprehension, she clearly came quite to expect me to withdraw from the position. However, I stood my ground doggedly, half resenting it, although she, of course, could only think me guilty of an unwarrantable breach of privilege. The impression ou her mind would be that I had used my remarkable powers of invention and a sufficiently gentle-manly exterior to obtain admittance into society for which by condition I was not quali-fied. She, however, must submit to go through the dance with me, but she did so in a manner so cold and constrained as to show that she could be her father's daugnter in spite of the aweetness of her disposition.

I took it as most decidedly a matter of course that I should be believed, but yet, as you can well think, it was so difficult a subject to approach that not for some minutes could I satisfy myself how to begin. 'Miss Guest,' I said, all possible solicitude in my voice, 'I am aware appearances are against me.' Certainly by her manner she showed no intention of contradicting me. 'I beg of you to suspend judgment until I have been heard in explanation.' 'Most decidedly some explanation is required.'

she replied, locking haughtily down, and being at no pains to conceal her annogance. 'If I may be allowed to take you to Mrs Mason when this set is over, I am sure I can satisfy—you,' I was going to say, but substituted 'her.' She made no reply: I could not tell whether I had at all shaken her in her bad im-

pression of me.
'l assure you I have done nothing a gentleman might not do. I wish you could think I am speaking truth,' I had waited for a favorable interval in which to say it, growing more and more eager for what she might answer. looked up at me quickly, with one of those sudden relentings, half-capricious and wholly sweet and kind.

can't quite know yet. I think you are.' Thank you, I replied, warmly. I esteem myself already more than compensated for this momentary misconstruction. Apparently she noticed nothing of my exceeding earnestness, looking straight before her with grave eyes and

I was not quite to escape a scene, however, Opposite us I saw Mr. Guest, regarding us with the greatest astonishment. To confirm himself he had to resort to his eye-glass, and upon what he saw, went hurriedly and with a face of extreme displeasure to where Mrs. Mason sat. was tervently thankful, as much for his sake as my own, to see that he had sufficient command over his indignation and disgust to reserve his accusation until he had drawn her from the crowded ball-room. The dance over, I was just going to suggest a search for him when he touched nie on the arm and peremptorily desired

a word with me. 'And it you will allow me,' he added, with freezing politeness, 'I should prefer to have Miss Guest under my own care.' Taking, his naughter en his arm, he stalked out of the room. I tollowing, half-angry; also, such is the force d attendent circumstances, with something of the air of a culprit. In a small room at the back was Mrs. Mason, looking-anything but 'proudly pleased.' 'Comfort yoursel', my dear woman,' I thought; 'it is me, We'll soon have it right. And then—we'll see.' By Jove, though, it began hot, and I came out in a character in which I hardly knew myself; something new it was to hear patiently such words as were now addressed to me by Mr. Guest.

'So, sir, perhaps you will explain by what imposition you have contrived to obtain admittance into Mrs. Mason's house?' He was so arrogant, that really if it had been any one but Miss Guest's father I must have taken my revenge in

'I might well take offense at your tone, Mr. I simply wish to know, before I ask you to

relieve as of your presence, how you obtained admittance into my sister's house?" the express invitation of Mrs. Mason herself,? I replied, as temperately as it was in human nature to reply to a question worded so insultingly. 'As a triend of Mr. Robert Stop-ford's, of whose family I am now a guest,' that is no soswer at all. How am I to tell how and where you made Mr. Stopford's acquaintance? I have had a sample of your in-

genuity before, Mr. Livesay, if that's really your name. It is my opinion you are nothing more then an adventurer, sir; a low adventurer. He was rapidly talking himself into a rage, and I confess to a considerable degree of heat in my own answer to this. I drew myself up with avgry contempt.
'My name is Livesay, I beg to inform you—I am not in the habit of assuming false names.

My father is a gentleman of standing in Leices-tershire. With my uncle, Mr. Smith Pentland, believe you are well acquainted. I was staying at his house when I made a call upon you, I admit in a rather singular character. But it was at Mr. Pentland's request, and solely because none of his people of business whom he could send on an affair so private were at liberty. 'Ah! I quite understand you. You will hold no threats over me, though. A gentleman need

although it might be convenient at the time to keep it quiet. You won't threa'en me. I coat! not get a word of disclaimer in edgeways, so wrathful was he. 'to is more than ever my opinion that you are nothing but an adventure.' I saw something of your inventive powers tuen, remember!

"There was no invention about it, Mr. Guest, I was, and an still, studying at Ox ord.'
Miss Guest's face had been entreating her
father this long while. 'I tuink Mr. Livesay is
to be believed, paps,' she half-timidly inter-

'Frances, I am surprised you should have so little sense of propriety.'
Miss Guest, wincing under her father's se verity, and reddening violently, made a minute study of her bouquet. I meant after this to exact a price for the affront put upon me, and so again recovered my temper, and strove for a peaceful solution. With what will you be satisfied, Mr. Guest?

With Mr. Stopford's word?'
'I don't youch for all Mr. Bobert Stopford's acquaintances.' Poor Bob! if he had only

I made a gesture of impatience,
'ls there no one from your neighborhood here,
Mr. Liveray?' asked Mrs. Mason, who would be only too pleased to have me verified, and yet retained her caution. 'My brother is naturally desireus of proof; you need not take it as a personal matter. There is Lady Duncan Knox? 'Lady Dunesn? Oh I am quite ready to be confronted with Lady Dunean Knox.' A little scorn ul I allowed myself to be, now that I saw my way out of the mucdle. 'Vil go into the ball-room, if you please, and you separate yourself from me- it shall all be plain now-and call Lady Duncan's attention to me. I think you will be satisfied, Mr. Guest.

Of course the proof tendered was unimpeachable; and seeing me so confident, Mr. Guest cooled down with rather ludicrous rapidity, and indeed was altogether nonplussed. Like n greatmany people, who mostly and themselves in the end in a predictment because of it, he had determined, with or against reason, that a certain thing was to be. He had decided that I was an impostor; and now that it appeared more than doubtful, he was not very com-

'It is so difficult to know whom to believe,' he said, almost apologetically, as he led the way. Miss Guest, with Mrs. Msson, followed us at a abort interval. I caught a side-glimpse of her, talking with, for her, unusual impetuosity to her aunt. Once in the room the proceeding showed itself to Mr. Guest yet more equivocal. 'Really, we might. I think, dispetuse with any test,' said he, condescendingly,

'I prefer that Lady Duncan should be spoken

to. I insist upon it, indeed.' I hadn't half done with Mr. Guest, you see. I might want him again.

At once more assured and more uncomfortable, he went across to my lady; I standing alone for some minutes, outwardly with an air of unconcern, inwardly with an absurd sense of being surveyed. Soon I became aware that Mr. Guest was guiding the lady through the crowd to where I stood.

'How do you do, Mr. Livesay?' said she, coming up with extended hand, 'how do you do? Mr. Guest happened to mention your name, and I begged him to escort me to you. We are only just from Rome, and I am dying for home news. Is Mr. Norris going to stand for the county? Lady Duncan Knox was a merry voluble woman of five-and-thirty or so; very friendly with my mother, and a relative of my father's

'I con't think Mr. Norris will stand.' 'Then your father, perhaps?' said she, with immense interest.

'No, I think not. My father prefers his pre-sent seat for the borough.' 'And when shall I see my dear Mrs. Livesny in town? Not before the House sits, I fear?' I suppose not; my mother is not foud of town, you know. They are arranging the sets; may I have the pleasure of this dance with your lady ship?'
'Me?-I'm engaged-five deep. Perhaps a

later one. And she moved away.
I looked hastily over my shoulder to where I knew Frances Guest was, and upon impulse she smiled back her pleasure. I was ma towards her when her father detained me, 'Mr. Livesny, I don't know how to frame my excuses to you for my rudeness. It is little atonement I can make except in the way of

words. 'None is needed, sir,' I answered promptly; because, of course, I wasn't going to make it a quarrel now. And indeed he hadn't spoken We are all liable to slight mistakes, Mr.

'I can't forgive myself so easily; I am afraid was too much annoyed to be just. We do hear of such deceptions nowadays that really I tock the alarm too quickly. It seems almost an insult after what has passed, but if at any time you are down at Southwich, and you like to call at Culierton House, you will be sure of a welcome, and—you will do me a favor.'

I thanked him heartily, and proved my sincerity by escaping to Miss Guest as soon as politeness allowed. I found it would be late before the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but he in the could give me a darge but a darge bu

before she could give me a dance, but, half in pique, I stood out until my turn came 'You are not dancing much to-night,' she said.

as we took our places. 'Sometimes I like the other thing best,' 'I'm afraid,' said she, in a tone of vexation. 'it's because the evening has been so disagree able for you.' 'L's very good for you to distress yourself

about me. But it has not been altogether disagreeable, indeed. could not belp speaking significantly; somehow, the tone had got into my voice, and could not get it out.
What you did, Mr. Livesay, you did in kind-

'But I do take some blame to myself. You see, Miss Guest, it is not right for a man to put himself in a false position. At least-wellgon't know, I'm sure. I once argued with my ncle, and we left off precisely where we began But you did it in the kindest way, and with the kindest intention '

Well, you know, it becomes really pleasant to accuse oneself when one has so charming an advecate, self-enlisted. I said some foolish words of the sort. She blushed, but she had such a staid, demure way of listening to gallant speeches that readly one was tempted on to words more and more meaning.
'I say, weren't you firting last night, Livesay?'
said Bob next morning, striving to organize cer-

tain piecemeal recoilections.

I put him off with some light speech, for you may be sure I should not make his confidence reciprocal. But I don't mind admitting now that I left the Masons' ball with a very gravely damaged anatomy. I must have been hit deeply for the frost broke up, and I still preferred Sussex for the remainder of the vacation. However, it is reassuring to know that I could take interest in the furtherance and enjoyment of the d'fierent social courtesies between Hetton and On the next occasion of seeing Mr. Smith Pentland I expresse such pleasant remembrances of my last autumn's visit that he invited me to repeat it coming one. But I am almost ashamed to say that, once at Southwich, I still more adroitly contrived to be invited on to Cullerton itself For the partridge-shooting, my host said-my

you that the Christmas saw me at Grill Hall, the accepted and approved suitor of sweet, dear Frances Guest. Ah well, that is five years ago. My wife sits by my hearthside to-day, with sweeter, dearer ways than ever, I think.

You won't say I sped badly, though, when I

own object I did not talk much about then,

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