and before I was aware of his intention, struck me smartly on the right cheek. Would to God I could blot out from the record of my life and memory the scene which followed! The blow from the stick caused a stinging pain in my cheek, and left a mark which I shall carry to my grave, and the blow roused all my worst passions. In a moment I had drawn the revolver from my pocket—although up to this time I had almost forgotten it was there—and presented it at Francis Dixon's head. I solemnly swear now, as I hope for forgiveness, that I had no intention in that instant of using the weapon otherwise than to intimidate him, but in my state of nervous excitement my finger pressed involuntarily on the trigger. I heard the report of the pistol, and saw Mr Dixon fall, as I imagined, dead at my feet. Horrified at what I had done, I rushed like a madman from the spot, throwing the pistol from me as I ran, and heard it fall with a splash in the lake near by. For miles and miles I seemed to have run that night, but as daylight dawned I found that, instead of being thirty or forty miles from Finchley, I had in my excitement only been describing circles in my wanderings, and was within about twelve miles of the fatal spot where I had taken a fellow-creature's life. I called at a small roadside inn, and asked the landlady to give me a drink of something warm, and then I hurried on again with redoubled speed. I wanted to get back to London, but was afraid to take the train. However, after getting a good many miles on the road, I found myself at last in the vicinity of a railway station, and in answer to an inquiry of mine, the porter civilly informed me that a train would leave in a few minutes for London. I took the train, and in due course arrived safe at home. My wife, who had just returned from a visit to her friends, started with amazement when she saw how ill I was looking, but wrongly attributed my altered appearance to the fact that I was leaving my country with disgrace hanging over my head, consequent on my dismissal from my uncle's establishment.

When the daily papers came out that morning I procured a copy and eagerly scanned its columns, dreading to see an account of the discovery of Mr Dixon's body. I failed to find any notice in the morning's paper, but in the first edition of an evening paper my eyes encountered the dread words 'Suspected murder at Finchley. Gentleman found shot through the temple, etc., etc. £100 reward offered for the apprehension and conviction of the murderer.' On reading it carefully through I could gather no information as to whether the police had any clue or otherwise. My great fear was that, should the pistol be missed or found, suspicion would rest upon my father, then fear for personal safety overpowered every other sensation, and I began to wonder whether, when my father should miss the revolver from his room, my mother would tell him of my visit. If she should do so suspicion might point to me, and I knew only too well what the result of that suspicion would mean, and if anyone at Finchley should know that the dead man and I had been acquainted with each other, and should also know of the quarrel which had taken place, my chances of escape would be very limited. Two days after this terrible event my wife and I sailed for Australia, and nearly five months elapsed before I had an opportunity of seeing a home paper, and there read that Mr Gerald Olphert, a barrister residing at Finchley, had been arrested on suspicion, charged with the murder of Mr Dixon, and had been tried and acquitted. I knew the gentleman mentioned, having met him on several occasions in the grounds of Oakfield Grange when I had been visiting my parents, and was surprised to learn that by one of those singular coincidences—which so often lead to a miscarriage of justice—the circumstantial evidence brought forward at the trial actually pointed, almost conclusively, to him as the real criminal.

After we had been in the colony a few months my wife and I proceeded to Sydney, where I managed to secure profitable employment; but the unhappy secret which I carried was preying upon my mind and undermining my health, so that I could not rest long in one place, but was continually changing our quarters. We eventually came to Melbourne, and when I was out walking one day I saw a gentleman whom I at once recognised as Mr Gerald Olphert. My first impulse was to escape from the place, believing that he must have come to Melbourne with the intention of tracking me down. Instead of running from him, however, I stepped into a shop to make a purchase of some article, and when he passed by I came out and followed him to a certain hotel, where, as I afterwards learned, he was in the habit of staying. I also ascertained that he had entered into partnership with another gentleman, and that they were engaged in the legal profession in Melbourne. The next day I wrote out this confession, and decided to forward it to Mr Olphert, in the meantime removing my wife to some other part of the colony. Having enclosed the manuscript in an envelope, I sealed it, and placed it carefully away in the box where you found it. On the following day I was unable to rise from my bed, and for weeks after I lay there tossing and moaning, a victim to typhoid fever. When at length I managed to crawl about again I was but a shadow of my former self, and the fever had so undermined my nervous system that it was many a long weary week before I was fit to resume my usual avocations, and by this time my place was filled by another, and I was compelled to look for employment elsewhere. Never can I forget the utter wretchedness, the grinding poverty, the bitter, blank despair of that time. From eight o'clock in the morning till five o'clock at night did I tramp the streets of Melbourne in search of work, only to return to our humble abode each night utterly worn out in body, and feeling as if my brain was on fire. Numberless were the advertisements I answered, rarely receiving any response. I was willing enough to work, and necessity would have made me glad to welcome *any* kind of employment, but in the fierce, maddening struggle for existence which was incessantly going on, I found the problem of living becoming more and more difficult to solve, and as our funds lessened it soon became obviously necessary to part with some of our furniture in order that we might be enabled to keep body and soul together. Bit by bit our little home was broken up, until at last my wife and I were compelled to remove to a cheaper locality, and when at length a neighbouring tailor—almost as poor and wretched as ourselves—suggested that my wife should apply to his employer for work to do at home, my wife caught at the suggestion with an eagerness which nothing but extreme poverty could have ever generated; and I myself had become so prostrated by frequent attacks of illness and insufficient food that I was not in a position to offer any objection to the scheme. What we suffered during that period none can understand but those who have passed through the fiery ordeal themselves. To eke out a bare existence my wife has been obliged to toil from daylight to midnight, and her life during that time has been a living martyrdom; but enough of our own troubles. I have written this confession with the hope that by its aid Mr Gerald Olphert may, on his return to his native land, clear his name from all suspicion. I have never told my wife the secret, nor from anything which she has said could I gather that I had unwittingly parted with it in the deliriums of fever, and as we sank lower and lower in the social scale I hadn't the heart to add to her burdens by disclosing my secret. My last request—the request of a dying man—is that Mr Olphert will, as he hopes for forgiveness himself, try and forgive me for the great wrong which I have inflicted upon him. God knows I too have suffered, and I pray that I may soon be at rest. My life has been a long series of mistakes and follies, and if I could only know that my wife was placed in a position to return to her friends in the old country, I should be content to lay the burden down.

I do hereby certify that the within written confession is the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as God is my witness.

(Signed) . JOHN ALFRED FENTON.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

As the lawyer laid down the manuscript an ominous gurgling sound issuing from the lips of the invalid on the bed caused both himself and the other inmates of the room to rush towards the unhappy man, and as Mrs Fenton with a sobbing cry threw herself on her knees by the bedside, a spasm of pain passed over her husband's features, and in another moment John Fenton had passed to the shadow-land 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'

* * * * * * *

It was with very mingled feelings that Gerald Olphert had listened to the confession of the gamekeeper's son, but the tragic conclusion drove from his breast every other feeling but that of intense pity for the misguided man and his unfortunate wife. After defraying all expenses in connection with the funeral, Gerald's next step was to book a passage for Mrs Fenton in one of the homeward-bound vessels, and not many weeks afterwards he himself bade farewell to Australian shores, and before the year had closed there was a quiet wedding at Finchley, at which Gerald Olphert and Constance Oakfield figured as the principal performers. Needless to add that the Squire, when he learned the truth about Gerald, was only too pleased to give his consent to his daughter's marriage, and amongst other guests who witnessed the ceremony, were Gerald's old friends Stanley Grahame, Major Stuart, and the celebrated London physician, Dr. Wm. Oakfield, and his charming wife.

Poor Mrs Fenton, the mother of John Fenton, never lived to hear the full particulars of her son's confession, as she died a few days prior to Gerald's arrival from Australia. As for her husband, when he learned the extent of his son's guilt he requested Squire Oakfield to allow him to resign his position at Finchley, as he intended to leave the neighbourhood. The Squire granted his request, conditionally that he would accept a position on an estate belonging to him (the Squire) which was situated in another county.

Constance Oakfield had felt keenly the separation from her lover, and the experience through which she had been called to pass during those two years had imparted to her character a strength which could have come only through personal suffering. During that time of ordeal Constance had devoted a considerable portion of her leisure to the study of that strata of humanity to be found in and around Finchley, and recognized under the general heading of the 'working class,' and the exercise had made a deep impression on her character. Educated to believe in the divine right of wealth and rank to the worship and service of its less favoured brethren, Constance noted, with ever-increasing wonderment, the domestic tragedies, the heroic acts of self-sacrifice, the daily and hourly renouncement of personal gratification for the sake of a loved child, or for an impecunious neighbour, and the thousand and one acts of charity which occurred amongst her father's tenants, and in the homes of the factory folk at Finchley; and the more she pondered over these things the greater seemed her own sense of responsibility, and Gerald declares that he will be forced to take his wife to Australia or New Zealand, where her democratic notions will be more appreciated than amongst the élite of fashionable Finchley.

(THE END.)

THE SABBATH'S MUSIC.

How softly on the evening air
Come the sweet chimes of distant bells,
Uprising from the house of prayer,
In music's soft and solemn swells.

The sound seemed to my boyhood's ears
Some symphony from seraph hands,
Or the sweet music of the spheres,
As heard by earth's enraptured bands.

How often at the twilight hour,
When solemn stillness reigned around,
My heart has felt the wondrous power
Of their sweet, softly soothing sound.

The air seems tremulous with tones
Of melody almost divine;
Like that the wondrous statue owns,
Whene'er her God smiles on the shrine.

And Echo's myriaid voiced deep choir,
Enthroned among these ancient hills,
Takes up the strain—an answering lyre—
And all the air with music fills.

And as the shadows fall apace,
And darkness o'er the landscape flings,
Fond Fancy fills the vibrant space
With rustling soft of angels' wings.

W. W. MALOTT.

CONCERNING THE SHOPGIRL.

DOUBTLESS it is the proud prerogative of the female sex to cover the male with confusion and shamefacedness whenever it seems desirable so to do. No man that ever lived, whether a potentate, a priest, or a gay Lothario, could keep his countenance in serene dignity if a woman—a real, bright saucy woman—determined to disconcert him. Some women do not know this. It is a dispensation of merciful Providence that they do not all realize their power. But no shopgirl that ever trod shoe leather or wore a patent folding-chair under her skirts, was ever known to be ignorant of her power. The calm suavity with which a pert, black-eyed minx behind the counter can make a man buy gloves four sizes too small for him, and blush for having asked for the size he really wanted, would be ample stock in trade for a candidate for Congress.

When a man is misguided enough to go into one of the shops where shopgirls work, no matter how simple his errand he will be willing to swear, when he comes out, that there are at least seventy-five girls in that particular place. Moreover, the one that waited on him across the counter is the 'cussedest' one of the lot. So much he knows positively. He will come out humbled and abashed, weeping in agony and entirely willing to be arrested by the nearest policeman.

Now, no man could think of a simpler thing in the world to do than to go into a store and buy a large darning needle for a cent. That is, no man that hasn't tried it could. Just let him try it. The lady who rules over my household asked me to do it once, and I tried it. By actual count I went into seven stores where cloth and feminine undergarments and all sorts of fancy goods were displayed in the window before I could find a place where darning needles were sold. And the contumelious scorn which the shopgirls in those seven places threw into their politely worded answers was enough to drive St. John to drink. And when I found the right place, and one of the fairies had wrapped the needle in paper and given me my change, she shot one glance at me which told me plainly enough that I was in a poor business. I was simply obliged to tell her that my wife was in the country and couldn't come to town that day, and that I was doing her—that is, my wife—a great favour by getting the needle. And she smiled (the shop girl) and I felt meaner than ever.

And the needle wasn't the right kind when I took it home.

It was a little thing, oh! my brethren, but it was typical of a most important class of events. Behind a counter a shopgirl is clothed with an awful majesty of authority, before which any mere man must crawl.

Shop girls, for some inscrutable reason, always call themselves, and insist upon being called, 'sales-ladies.' It is just as if the boatman who rows you across the river should throw you overboard because you don't speak of him as the ferry gentleman. Male clerks don't call themselves sales-gentlemen, whether they are gentlemen or not. It doesn't occur to them, and they wouldn't do it if they thought of it, but a woman will think of ungodly queer things under any circumstances, and the queerer the things are the more apt she is to do them.

But however crazy with bewilderment and rage and mortified vanity a man may be after he has been waited on by a shopgirl, his upsettedness does not approach the fury of a woman who has been shopping, and who has any words with a shopgirl. Let a shopgirl sell her the wrong shade of a ribbon, or return a pert answer to some request, no matter how unreasonable, and that woman will not only pour out the vials of her wrath on the shopgirl, and it may be complain to the floor walker and try to get the girl discharged, but she will go home and gather her family about her and sputter and explain, and repeat, add have a wholesale indignation meeting, winding up with resolutions of denunciations that would raise the hair of an anarchist.

A man doesn't do that. He can't. He feels so small that he gets away on his metaphorical hands and knees and goes to the nearest ginnery and picks a quarrel with the barkeeper so as to restore his moral tone.

And the shopgirl goes on, superbly and supremely indifferent, and sells more goods and has her wages raised a dollar a week at the end of ten years and finally marries. In the novels she always marries the proprietor, but as the laws of the land forbid even the proprietor of a dry goods store to marry all his shopgirls some of them have to select other husbands.

Long before marrying occurs, however, there is ample opportunities for a shop girl to be a heroine, and many and many a one of them does that very thing. Stand a few minutes on Sixth avenue, near some of the big stores, early on a cold morning, and watch them as they go by. It is not hard for one who knows city life to see in the throng all the infinite possibilities of romance. And the pathos that invests some of the slender, poorly clad figures that hurry past, is beyond writing.

Hundreds and thousands of them come from homes of the very humblest, where their slender pittance is a good portion of the family income—perhaps constitutes the sole reliance of one, two or three and the girl herself. She is trained to poverty and privation. She is glad to work, early and late, for a wage that is barely sufficient to buy food. She is faithful, brave, self-reliant and, above all, chaste. The priceless pearl of a spotless reputation is literally all she has of riches, and holding that firmly, she fights back with weak, slender hands the demons of want, temptation and even despair. The petty cares that assail women, more than men, are all hers, and in addition she bears the burden of a business service that would wear out strong men. The wonder is not that she is sometimes too weak and weary to be pleasant, but that she should ever smile.

Yet smile she does. The glorious heritage of youth is hers, and Nature, that plants violets in the crevices of a rock, will bring happiness into the most sterile lives. The shop girl has her joys. They may seem as poor to more fortunate people as her trials are great, but they are gleams of sunshine to her, and for her as for her richer sister, there is always a prospect of that supreme happiness of life.

What is that?

Well, she knows.

The New High Arm Davis Vertical Feed is acknowledged by experts to be the most perfect Sewing Machine the World has yet seen.—ADVT.