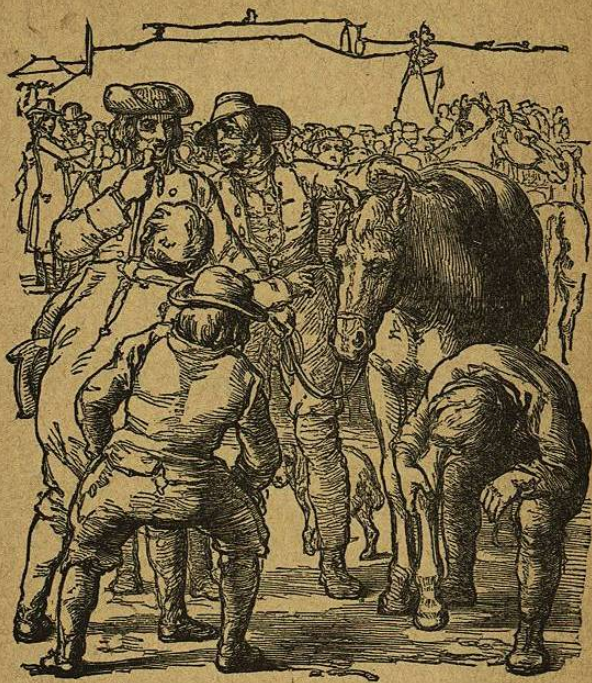


music; they can do up small clothes, work upon catgut; my eldest can cut paper, and my youngest has a very pretty manner of telling fortunes upon the cards." *Fudge!*

When she had delivered this pretty piece of eloquence, the two ladies looked at each other a few minutes in silence, with an air of doubt and importance. At last, Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs condescended to observe, that the young ladies, from the opinion she could form of them from so slight an acquaintance, seemed very fit for such employments. "But a thing of this kind, Madam," cried she, addressing my spouse, "requires a thorough examination into characters, and a more perfect knowledge of each other. Not, Madam," continued she, "that I in the least suspect the young ladies' virtue, prudence, and discretion; but there is a form in these things, Madam, there is a form."

My wife approved her suspicions very much, observing, that she was very apt to be suspicious herself; but referred her to all the neighbors for a character; but this our Peeress declined as unnecessary, alleging that her cousin Thornhill's recommendation would be sufficient, and upon this we rested our petition.



—By this time I began to have a most hearty contempt for the poor animal myself, and was almost ashamed at the approach of every customer.  
—Page 87.

## CHAPTER XII.

WHEN we were returned home, the night was dedicated to schemes of future conquest. Deborah exerted much sagacity in conjecturing which of the two girls was likely to have the best place, and

most opportunities of seeing good company. The only obstacle to our preferment was in obtaining the 'Squire's recommendation; but he had already shown us too many instances of his friendship to doubt of it now. Even in bed my wife kept up the usual theme: "Well, faith, my dear Charles, between ourselves, I think we have made an excellent day's work of it."—"Pretty well," cried I, not knowing what to say.—"What, only pretty well!" returned she; "I think it is very well. Suppose the girls should come to make acquaintances of taste in town! This I am assured of, that London is the only place in the world for all manner of husbands. Besides, my dear, stranger things happen every day: and as ladies of quality are so taken with my daughters, what will not men of quality be! Entre nous, I protest I like my Lady Blarney vastly; so very obliging. However, Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs has my warm heart. But yet when they came to talk of places in town, you saw at once how I nailed them. Tell me, my dear, don't you think I did for my children there?"—"Ay," returned I, not knowing well what to think of the matter; "Heaven grant they may be both the better for it this day three months!" This was one of those observations I usually made to impress my wife with an opinion of my sagacity; for if the girls succeeded, then it was a pious wish fulfilled; but if anything unfortunate ensued, then it might be looked upon as a prophecy. All this conversation, however, was only preparatory to another scheme, and indeed I dreaded as much.

This was nothing less than, that as we were now to hold up our heads a little higher in the world, it would be proper to sell the colt, which was grown old, at a neighboring fair, and buy us a horse that would carry single or double upon an occasion, and make a pretty appearance at church or upon a visit. This at first I opposed stoutly; but it was as stoutly defended. However, as I weakened, my antagonists gained strength, till at last it was resolved to part with him.

As the fair happened on the following day, I had intentions of going myself; but my wife persuaded me that I had got a cold, and nothing could prevail upon her to permit me from home. "No, my dear," said she, "our son Moses is a discreet boy, and can buy and sell to very good advantage; you know all our great bargains are of his purchasing. He always stands out and higgles, and actually tires them till he gets a bargain."

As I had some opinion of my son's prudence, I was willing enough to entrust him with this commission; and the next morning I perceived his sisters mighty busy in fitting out Moses for the fair; trimming his hair, brushing his buckles, and cocking his hat with pins. The business of the toilet being over, we had at last the satisfaction of seeing him mounted upon the colt, with a deal box before him to bring home groceries in. He had on a coat made of that cloth they call thunder-and-lightning, which, though grown too short, was much too good to be thrown away. His waistcoat was of gosling green, and his sisters had tied his hair with a

broad black ribbon. We all followed him several paces from the door, bawling after him, "Good luck! good luck!" till we could see him no longer.

He was scarcely gone, when Mr. Thornhill's butler came to congratulate us upon our good fortune, saying, that he overheard his young master mention our names with great commendation.

Good fortune seems resolved not to come alone. Another footman from the same family followed, with a card for my two daughters, importing, that the two ladies had received such pleasing accounts from Mr. Thornhill of us all, that, after a few previous inquiries, they hoped to be perfectly satisfied. "Ay," cried my wife, "I now see it is no easy matter to get into the families of the great; but when one once gets in, then, as Moses says, one may go to sleep." To this piece of humor, for she intended it for wit, my daughters assented with a loud laugh of pleasure. In short, such was her satisfaction at this message, that she actually put her hand in her pocket, and gave the messenger seven-pence halfpenny.

This was to be our visiting day. The next that came was Mr. Burchell, who had been at the fair. He brought my little ones a pennyworth of gingerbread each, which my wife undertook to keep for them, and give them by letters at a time. He brought my daughters also a couple of boxes, in which they might keep wafers, snuff, patches, or even money, when they got it. My wife was usually fond of a weasel-skin purse, as being the most lucky; but this by the bye. We had still a

regard for Mr. Burchell, though his late rude behavior was in some measure displeasing; nor could we now avoid communicating our happiness to him, and asking his advice: although we seldom followed advice, we were all ready enough to ask it. When he read the note from the two ladies, he shook his head, and observed, that an affair of this sort demanded the utmost circumspection.—This air of diffidence highly displeased my wife. "I never doubted, Sir," cried she, "your readiness to be against my daughters and me. You have more circumspection than is wanted. However, I fancy when we come to ask advice, we shall apply to those who seem to have made use of it themselves."—"Whatever my own conduct may have been, Madam," replied he, "is not the present question; though as I have made no use of advice myself, I should in conscience give it to those that will." As I was apprehensive this answer might draw on a repartee, making up by abuse what it wanted in wit, I changed the subject, by seeming to wonder what could keep our son so long at the fair, as it was now almost night-fall.—"Never mind our son," cried my wife; "depend upon it he knows what he is about. I'll warrant we'll never see him sell his hen on a rainy day. I have seen him buy such bargains as would amaze one. I'll tell you a good story about that, that will make you split your sides with laughing.—But as I live, yonder comes Moses, without a horse, and the box at his back."

As she spoke, Moses came slowly on foot, and sweating under the deal box which he had strapped

round his shoulders like a peddler.—“Welcome, welcome, Moses: well, my boy, what have you brought us from the fair?”—“I have brought you myself,” cried Moses, with a sly look, and resting the box on the dresser. “Ay, Moses,” cried my wife, “that we know, but where is the horse?”—“I have sold him,” cried Moses, “for three pounds five shillings and two-pence.”—“Well done, my good boy,” returned she, “I knew you would touch them off. Between ourselves, three pounds five shillings and two-pence is no bad day’s work. Come, let us have it, then.”—“I have brought back no money,” cried Moses again, “I have laid it all out in a bargain, and here it is,” pulling out a bundle from his breast: “here they are; a gross of green spectacles, with silver rims and shagreen cases.”—“A gross of green spectacles!” repeated my wife in a faint voice. “And you have parted with the colt, and brought us back nothing but a gross of green paltry spectacles!”—“Dear mother,” cried the boy, “why won’t you listen to reason? I had them a dead bargain, or I should not have brought them. The silver rims alone will sell for double the money.”—“A fig for the silver rims!” cried my wife, in a passion: “I dare swear they won’t sell for above half the money at the rate of broken silver, five shillings an ounce.”—“You need be under no uneasiness,” cried I, “about selling the rims; for they are not worth sixpence, for I perceive they are only copper varnished over.”—“What!” cried my wife, “not silver, the rims not silver!”—“No,” cried I, “no more silver than

your saucepan.”—“And so,” returned she, “we have parted with the colt, and have only got a gross of green spectacles with copper rims and shagreen cases! A murrain take such trumpery! The block-head has been imposed upon, and should have known his company better.”—“There, my dear,” cried I, “you are wrong, he should not have known them at all.”—“Marry, hang the idiot!” returned she, to bring me such stuff; if I had them, I would throw them into the fire!”—“There again, you are wrong, my dear,” cried I; “for though they be copper, we will keep them by us, as copper spectacles, you know, are better than nothing.”

By this time, the unfortunate Moses was undeceived. He now saw that he had indeed been imposed upon by a prowling sharper, who, observing his figure, had marked him for an easy prey. I therefore asked the circumstances of his deception. He sold the horse, it seems, and walked the fair in search of another. A reverend-looking man brought him to a tent, under pretence of having one to sell. “Here,” continued Moses, “we met another man, very well dressed, who desired to borrow twenty pounds upon these, saying, that he wanted money, and would dispose of them for a third of the value. The first gentleman, who pretended to be my friend, whispered me to buy them, and cautioned me not to let so good an offer pass. I sent for Mr. Flamborough, and they talked him up as finely as they did me, and so at last we were persuaded to buy the two gross between us.”



—There seemed, indeed, something applicable to both sides in this letter, and its censures might as well be referred to those to whom it was written, as to us; but the malicious meaning was obvious, and we went no farther.—Page 96.

### CHAPTER XIII.

OUR family had now made several attempts to be fine; but some unforeseen disaster demolished each as soon as projected. I endeavored to take the advantage of every disappointment, to improve their good sense in proportion as they were frustrated in ambition. “You see, my children,” cried I,

“how little is to be got by attempts to impose upon the world, in coping with our betters. Such as are poor and will associate with none but the rich, are hated by those they avoid, and despised by those they follow. Unequal combinations are always disadvantageous to the weaker side: the rich having the pleasure, and the poor the inconveniences that result from them. But come, Dick, my boy, and repeat the fable that you were reading to-day, for the good of the company.”

“Once upon a time,” cried the child, “a Giant and a Dwarf were friends, and kept together. They made a bargain that they would never forsake each other, but go seek adventures. The first battle they fought was with two Saracens; and the Dwarf, who was very courageous, dealt one of the champions a most angry blow. It did the Saracen very little injury, who lifting up his sword, fairly struck off the poor Dwarf’s arm. He was now in a woful plight; but the Giant coming to his assistance, in a short time left the two Saracens dead on the plain; and the Dwarf cut off the dead man’s head out of spite. They then travelled on to another adventure. This was against three bloody-minded Satyrs, who were carrying away a damsel in distress. The Dwarf was not quite so fierce now as before; but for all that struck the first blow, which was returned by another, that knocked out his eye; but the Giant was soon up with them, and had they not fled would certainly have killed them every one. They were all very joyful for this victory, and the damsel who was relieved, fell in

love with the Giant and married him. They now travelled far, and farther than I can tell, till they met with a company of robbers. The Giant, for the first time, was foremost now; but the Dwarf was not far behind. The battle was stout and long. Wherever the Giant came all fell before him; but the Dwarf had liked to have been killed more than once. At last the victory declared for the two adventurers; but the Dwarf lost his leg. The Dwarf was now without an arm, a leg, and an eye, while the Giant was without a single wound. Upon which he cried out to his little companion, My little hero, this is glorious sport; let us get one victory more, and then we shall have honor for ever! No, cries the Dwarf, who was by this time grown wiser, no, I declare off; I'll fight no more; for I find in every battle that you get all the honor and rewards, but all the blows fall upon me."

I was going to moralize this fable when our attention was called off to a warm dispute between my wife and Mr. Burchell, upon my daughters' intended expedition to town. My wife very strenuously insisted upon the advantages that would result from it. Mr. Burchell, on the contrary, dissuaded her with great ardor, and I stood neuter. His present dissuasions seemed but the second part of those which were received with so ill a grace in the morning. The dispute grew high, while poor Deborah, instead of reasoning stronger, talked louder, and at last was obliged to take shelter from a defeat in clamor. The conclusion of her harangue, however, was highly displeasing to us

all: she knew, she said, of some who had their own secret reasons for what they advised; but, for her part, she wished such to stay away from her house for the future. "Madam," cried Burchell, with looks of great composure, which tended to inflame her the more, "as for secret reasons, your are right: I have secret reasons, which I forbear to mention, because you are not able to answer those of which I make no secret: but I find my visits here are become troublesome; I'll take my leave therefore now, and perhaps come once more to take a final farewell when I am quitting the country." Thus saying, he took up his hat, nor could the attempts of Sophia, whose looks seemed to upbraid his precipitancy, prevent his going.

When gone, we all regarded each other for some minutes with confusion. My wife, who knew herself to be the cause, strove hard to hide her concern with a forced smile, and an air of assurance, which I was willing to reprove: "How, woman!" cried I to her, "is it thus we treat strangers? Is it thus we return their kindness? Be assured, my dear, that these were the harshest words, and to me the most displeasing that ever escaped your lips!"—"Why would he provoke me then?" replied she; "but I know the motives of his advice perfectly well. He would prevent my girls from going to town, that he may have the pleasure of my youngest daughter's company here at home. But whatever happens, she shall choose better company than such low-lived fellows as he."—"Low-lived, my dear, do you call him?" cried I; "it is very possible we

may mistake this man's character; for he seems upon some occasions the most finished gentleman I ever knew. Tell me, Sophia, my girl, has he ever given you any secret instances of his attachment?"—"His conversation with me, Sir," replied my daughter, "has ever been sensible, modest, and pleasing. As to aught else, no, never. Once, indeed, I remember to have heard him say, he never knew a woman who could find merit in a man that seemed poor."—"Such, my dear," cried I, "is the common cant of all the unfortunate or idle. But I hope you have been taught to judge properly of such men, and that it would be even madness to expect happiness from one who has been so very bad an economist of his own. Your mother and I have now better prospects for you. The next winter, which you will probably spend in town, will give you opportunities of making a more prudent choice."

What Sophia's reflections were upon this occasion I can't pretend to determine; but I was not displeased at the bottom that we were rid of a guest from whom I had much to fear. Our breach of hospitality went to my conscience a little; but I quickly silenced that monitor by two or three specious reasons, which served to satisfy and reconcile me to myself. The pain which conscience gives the man who has already done wrong, is soon got over. Conscience is a coward, and those faults it has not strength enough to prevent, it seldom has justice enough to accuse.



—Then the poor woman would sometimes tell the 'Squire that she thought him and Olivia extremely of a size and would bid both stand up to see which was tallest.—Page 102.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

THE journey of my daughters to town was now resolved upon, Mr. Thornhill having kindly promised to inspect their conduct himself, and inform us by letter of their behavior. But it was thought indispensably necessary that their appearance should