

# THE THREAD OF LIFE

## SUNSHINE AND SHADE.

### CHAPTER XXI.—CLEARING THE DECKS.

Warren Relf had arranged for his mother and sister, with Elsie Challoner, to seek the friendly shelter of San Remo early in October. The sooner away from England the better. Before they went, however, to avert the chance of a disagreeable encounter, he met them on their arrival in town at Liverpool Street, and saw them safely across to the continental train at London Bridge. It chanced to be the very self same day that Hugh Massinger had posted his second forged note to poor fatherless Winifred.

Elsie dared hardly look the young painter in the face, even now, for shame and timidity; and Warren Relf, respecting her natural sensitiveness, concentrated most of his attention on his mother and Edie, scarcely allowing Elsie to notice by shy side-glances his unobtrusive preparations for her own personal comfort on the journey. But Elsie's quick eye observed them all, gratefully, none the less for that. She liked Warren; it was impossible for anybody not to like and respect the frank young painter, with his honest bronzed face, and his open, manly, out-spoken manners. Timid as she was and broken-hearted still, she could not go away from England for ever and ever—for Elsie never meant to return again—without thanking him just once in a few short words for all his kindness. As they stood on the bare and windy platform with which the South-Eastern Railway Company weaves our safes at London Bridge, she drew him aside for a moment from his mother and sister with a little hasty shrinking glance which Warren could not choose but follow. "Mr. Relf," she said, looking down at the floor and fumbling with her parasol, "I want to thank you; I can't go away without thanking you once."

He saw the effort it had cost her to say so much, and a wild lump rose sudden in his throat for gratitude and pleasure. "Miss Challoner," he answered, looking back at her with an unmistakable light in his earnest eyes, "say nothing else. I am more than sufficiently thanked already. I know you wish this episode kept secret from every one; you may rely upon me and upon my mate in the yawl. If ever in my life I can be of any service to you, remember you can command me.—If not, I shall never again intrude myself upon your memory.—Good-bye, good-bye." And taking her hand one moment in his own, he held it for a second, then let it drop again. "Now go," he said in a tremulous voice—"go back to Edie."

Elsie—one blush—went back as he bade her. "Good-bye," she said, as she glided from his side—"Good-bye, and thank you." That was all that passed between those two that day. Yet Elsie knew, with profound regret, as the train steamed off through the draughty corridors on its way to Dover, that Warren Relf had fallen in love with her; and Warren Relf, standing alone upon the dingy, gusty platform, knew with an ecstasy of delight and joy that Elsie Challoner was grateful to him and liked him. It is something, gratitude. He valued that more from Elsie Challoner than he would have valued love from any other woman.

With profound regret, for her part, Elsie saw that Warren Relf had fallen in love with her; because he was such an honest, manly, straight forward, good fellow, and because from the very first moment she had liked him. Yet what to her were love and lovers now? Her heart lay buried beneath the roots of the poplar at Whitestrand, as truly as Hugh Massinger thought it lay buried in the cheap sea-washed grave in the sand at Orfordness. She was grieved to think this brave earnest man should have fixed his heart on a hopeless object. It was well she was going to San Remo for ever. In the whirl and bustle and hurry of London life, Warren Relf would doubtless soon forget her. But some faces are not easily forgotten.

From London Bridge, Warren Relf took the Metropolitan to St. James's Park, and walked across, still flushed and hot, to Piccadilly. At the club, he glanced hastily at that morning's paper. The first paragraph on which his eye lighted was Winifred Meysey's earnest advertisement in the Agony Column. It gave him no little time for reflection. If ever Elsie saw that advertisement, it might alter and upset all her plans for the future—and all his own plans into the bargain. Already she felt profoundly the pain and shame of her false position with Winifred and the Meyseys; that much Warren Relf had learned from Edie. If only she knew how eagerly Winifred pined for news of her, she might be tempted after all to break her reserve, to abandon her concealment, and to write full tidings of her present whereabouts to her poor little frightened and distressed pupil. That would be bad; for then the whole truth must sooner or later come out before the world; and for Elsie's sake, for Winifred's sake perhaps even a wee bit for his own sake also, Warren Relf shrank unspcakably from that unhappy exposure. He couldn't bear to think that Elsie's poor broken bleeding heart should be laid open to its profoundest recesses before the eyes of society, for every daw of an envious old dowager to snap and peck at. He hoped Elsie would not see the advertisement. If she did, he feared her natural tenderness and her sense of self-respect would compel her to write the whole truth to Winifred.

She might see it at Marseilles, for they were going to run right through to the Mediterranean by the special express stopping a night to rest themselves at the Hotel du Louvre in the Rue Cannebiere. Edie would be sure to look at the "Times," and if she saw the advertisement, to show it to Elsie.

But even if she didn't, ought he not himself to call her attention to it? Was it right of him, having seen it, not to tell her of it? Should he not rather leave to Elsie herself the decision what course she thought best to take under these special circumstances? He shrank from doing it. It grieved him to the quick to strain her poor broken heart any further. She had suffered so much: why rake it all up again? And even as he thought all these things, he knew each moment with profounder certainty than ever that he loved Elsie. There is nothing on earth to excite a man's love for a beautiful woman like being compelled to take tender care for that woman's happiness—having a gentle solicitude for her most sacred feelings thrust upon one by circumstances as an absolute necessity.

—Still, Warren Relf was above all things honest and trustworthy. Not to send that advertisement straight to Elsie, even at the risk of hurting her own feelings would constitute in some sort, he felt, a breach of confidence, a construction falsehood, or at the very best a *suppression veri*; and Warren Relf was too utterly and transparently truthful to allow for a moment any paltering with essential verities.—He sighed a sigh of profound regret as he took his penknife with lingering hesitation from his waistcoat pocket. But he boldly cut out the advertisement from the Agony Column, none the less, thereby defacing the first page of the *Times*, and rendering himself liable to the censure of the committee for wanton injury to the club property; after the preparation of which heinous offence he walked gravely and soberly into the adjoining writing room and sat down to indite a hasty note intended for his sister at the Hotel du Louvre:

MY DEAR EDIE—Just after you left, I caught sight of enclosed advertisement in the second column of this morning's *Times*. Show it to her. I can't bear to read it—I can't bear to cause her any further trouble or embarrassment of any sort after all she has suffered; and yet—it would be wrong, I feel, to conceal it from her. If she takes my advice, she will not answer it. Better let things remain as they are. To write one line would be to upset all. For heaven's sake, don't show her this letter.—With love to you both and kind regards to her, Your affectionate brother, W. R.

He addressed the letter, "Miss Relf, Hotel du Louvre, Marseilles," and went over with it to the box on the mantel-shelf, where Hugh Massinger's letter was already lying.

When Edie Relf received that letter next evening at the hotel in the Rue Cannebiere she looked at it once and glanced over at Elsie. She looked at it twice and glanced over at Elsie. She looked at it a third time—and then, with a woman's sudden resolve, she did exactly what Warren himself had told her not to do—she handed it across the table to Elsie.

Hugh's plot trembled indeed in the balance that moment; for if only Elsie wrote to Winifred, ignoring of course his last forged letter, then lying on the hall table at Whitestrand, all would have been up with him. His lie would have come home to him straight as a lie. The two letters would in all probability not have coincided. Winifred would have known him from that day forth for just what he was—a liar—and a forger.

And yet if, by that simple and natural coincidence, Elsie had sent a letter from Marseilles merely assuring Winifred of her safety and answering the advertisement, it would have fallen in completely with Hugh's plot, and rendered Winifred's assurance doubly certain. Elsie had sailed to Australia by way of Marseilles, then. In a novel, that coincidence would surely have occurred. In real life, it might easily have done so, but as a matter of fact it didn't; for Elsie read the letter slowly first, and then the advertisement.

"Poor fellow!" she said as she passed the letter back again to Edie. "It was very kind of him; and he did quite right.—I think I shall take his advice, after all.—It's terribly difficult to know what one ought to do. But I don't think I shall write to Winifred."

Not for herself. She could bear the exposure, if it was to save Winifred. But for Winifred's sake, for poor dear Winifred's. She couldn't deprive her of her new lover.

Ought she to let Winifred marry him? What trouble might not yet be in store for Winifred?—No, no. Hugh would surely be kinder to her. He had sacrificed one loving heart for her sake; he was not likely now to break another.

How little we all can judge for the best. It would have been better for Elsie and better for Winifred, if Elsie had done as Warren Relf did, and not as he said—if she had written the truth, and the whole truth at once to Winifred, allowing her to be her own judge in the matter. But Elsie had not the heart to crush Winifred's dream; and very naturally. No one can blame a woman for refusing to act with more than human devotion and foresight.

Hugh Massinger had left the headquarters of Bohemia for twenty minutes at the exact moment when Warren Relf entered the Cheyne Row Club. He had gone to telegraph his respectful condolences to Winifred and Mrs. Meysey at Invertnar Castle, on their sad loss, with conventional politeness. When he came back he found to his surprise, the copy of the *Times*, still lying open on the smoking-room table; but Winifred's advertisement was out clean out of the Agony Column with a sharp penknife. In a moment he said to himself, agast: "Some enemy hath done this thing." It must have been Relf! Nobody else in the club knew anything. Such espionage was intolerable, unendurable, not to be permitted. For three days he had been trembling and chafing at the horrid fact that Relf knew all and might denounce and ruin him. That alone was bad enough. But that Relf should be plotting and intriguing against him! That Relf should use his sinister knowledge for some evil end! That Relf should go spying and eavesdropping and squirming about like a common detective! The idea was fairly part endurance. Among gentlemen such things were not to be permitted. Hugh Massinger was prepared not to permit them.

He passed a day and night of inexpressible annoyance. This situation was getting too much for him. He was fighting in the dark: he didn't understand Warren Relf's silence. If the fellow meant to crush him, for what was he waiting? Hugh could not hold all the threads in his mind together. He felt as though Warren Relf was going to make, not only the Cheyne Row Club, but all London altogether too hot for him. To have drowned Elsie, to be jilted by Winifred, and to be baffled after all by that creature Relf—this, this was the hideous and ignominious future he saw looming now visibly before him!

It was with a heavy heart that next evening at seven he dropped into the club dining-room. Would Relf be there? He wondered silently. And if so, what course would Relf adopt towards him? Yes, Relf was there, at a corner table, as good luck would have it, with his back turned to him safely as he entered; and that fellow Potts, the

other mudbank artist—they hung their wretched daubs of flat Suffolk seaboard side by side fraternally on the walls of the Institute—was dining with him and concocting mischief no doubt, for the house of Massinger. Hugh half determined to turn and flee: then all that was manly and genuine within him revolted at once against that last disgrace. He would not run from this creature Relf. He would not be turned out of his own club—he was a member of the Committee and a founder of the society. He would face it out and dine in spite of him.

But not before the fellow's very eyes; that was more than in his present perturbed condition Hugh Massinger could manage to stand. He skulked quietly round, unseen by Relf, into the side alcove—a recess cut off by an arched doorway—where he gave his order in a very low voice to Martin, the obsequious waiter. Martin was surprised at so much reserve. Mr. Massinger, he was generally the very freest and loudest-spoken gentleman in the whole house of 'em. He always talked, he did, as if the club and the kitchen and the servants all belonged to him.

From the alcove, by a special interposition of fate, Hugh could hear distinctly what Relf was saying. Strange—incredible—a singular stroke of luck; he had indeed caught the man in the very act and moment of conspiring.—They were talking of Elsie! Their conversation came to him distinct, though low. Unnatural excitement had quickened his senses to a strange degree. He heard it all—every sound—every syllable.

"Then you promise, on your word of honour as a gentleman, you'll never breathe a word of this or of any part of Miss Challoner's affair to anybody anywhere?"

"My dear boy, I promise, that's enough.—I see the necessity as you do.—So you've actually got the letter, have you?"

"I've got the letter. If you like, I'll read it to you. It's hear in my pocket. I have to restore it by the time Mr. Meysey returns to-morrow."

Mr. Meysey! Restore it! Then, for all his plotting, Relf didn't know that Mr. Meysey was dead, and that his funeral was fixed to take place at Whitestrand on Monday or Tuesday!

There was a short pause. *What letter?* he wondered. Then Relf began reading in a low tone: "My darling Winifred, I can hardly make up my mind to write you this letter; and yet I must; I can no longer avoid it."

Great heavens, it was his own forged letter to Winifred! How on earth had it ever come into Relf's possession!

Plot, plot—plot and counterplot! Dirty, underhand, hole-and-corner spy-business! Relf had wheedled it out of Meysey's some how, to help him to track down and confront his enemy! Or else he had suborned one of the Whitestrand servants to steal or copy their Master's correspondence!

He heard it through to the last word, "Ever your affectionate but heart broken Elsie."

What were they going to say next?—Nothing. Potts just drew a long breath of surprise, and then whistled shortly and loudly. "The man's a blackguard to have broken the poor girl's heart," he observed at last, let alone this. He's a blackguard, Relf.—I'm very sorry for her.—And what's become of Miss Challoner now, if it isn't indiscreet to ask the question?"

"Well, Potts, I've only taken any other man into my confidence at all in this matter, because you knew more than half already, and it was impossible, without telling you the other half, fully to make you feel the necessity for keeping the strictest silence about it. I'd rather not tell either you or anybody exactly where Miss Challoner's gone now. But at the present moment, if you want to know the precise truth, I've no doubt she's at Marseilles, on her way abroad to a farther destination which I prefer on her account not to mention. More than that it's better not to say. But she wishes it kept a profound secret, and she intends never to return to England."

As Hugh Massinger heard those words, those reassuring words, a sense of freedom and lightness burst instantly upon him in a wild rush of reaction. Aha! aha! poor feeble enemy! Was this all? Then Relf knew really nothing! That mysterious "Yes" of his was a fraud, a pretense, a mistake, a delusion! He was all wrong, all wrong and in error. Instead of knowing that Elsie was dead—dead and buried in her nameless grave at Orfordness—he fancied she was still alive and in hiding! The man was a windbag. To think that he should be terrified—he, Hugh Massinger—by such a mere empty boastful eavesdropper!—Why, Relf, after all, was himself deceived by the forged letters he had so cleverly palmed off upon them. The special information he pretended to possess was only the special information derived from Hugh Massinger's own careful and admirable forgeries. He hugged himself in a perfect transport of delight. The load was lifted as if by magic from his breast. There was nothing on earth for him, after all, to be afraid of!

He saw it all at a glance now.—Relf was in league with the servants at the Meyseys'. Some prying lady's maid or dishonest flunkey must have sent him the first letter to Winifred, or at least a copy of it: may more; he or she must have intercepted the second one, which arrived while Winifred was on her way to Scotland—else how could Relf have heard this last newly fledged fiction about the journey abroad—the stoppage at Marseilles—the determination never to return to England?—And how greedily and eagerly the man swallowed it all—his nasty second-hand servants' hall information! Hugh positively despised him in his own mind for his ready credulity and his mean duplicity. How glibly he retailed the plausible story, with nods and hints and additions of his own: "At the present moment, I've no doubt she's at Marseilles, on her way abroad to a farther destination which I prefer on her account not to mention." What airs and graces and what comic importance the fellow put on, on the strength of his familiarity with this supposed mystery! Any other man with a straightforward mind would have said outright plainly, "to Australia;" but this pretentious jockanapes with his stolen information must make up a little mystification all of his own, to give himself importance in the eyes of his greedy gobemouche of a companion. It was too grotesque! too utterly ridiculous! And this was the man of whom he had been so afraid! His own duped! the ready fool who allowed at second-hand such idle tattle of the servants' hall, and employed an undertrapper or a pretty *subrette* to open other people's letters for his own information! From that moment forth, Hugh might cordially hate him, Hugh might freely

despise him; but he would, never, never, never, be afraid of him.

One only idea left some slight suspicion of uneasiness on his enlightened mind. He hoped the lady's maid—that hypothetical lady's maid—had sent on the forged letter—after reading it—so Winifred would have time to think much about Elsie at present, in the midst of this sudden and unexpected bereavement: she would be too full of her own dead father, no doubt, to pay any great attention to her governess's misfortunes. But still, one doesn't like one's private letters to be so vulgarly tampered with. And the worst of it was, he could hardly ask her whether she had received the note. He could hardly get at the bottom of this low conspiracy. It was his policy now to let sleeping dogs lie. The less said about Elsie the better.

Yet in his heart he despised Warren Relf for his meanness. He might forge himself: nothing low or ungentlemanly or degrading in forgery. Dishonest, if you like; dishonest, not vulgar. But to open other people's letters—pah!—the disgusting smallness and lowness and vulgarity of it! A sort of under-footmanish type of criminality. "Pecca fortiter, if you will, of course, but don't be a cad and a disgrace to your breeding."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### "I'm Hurried, Child."

"O mother, look! I've found a butterfly fluttering on a leaf. Do tell me why there was no butter! Oh, do see its wings! I never saw such pretty things—All streaked and striped with blue and brown; and gold—Where is its house, when all the days are cold?"

"Yes, yes," she said, in accents mild, "I'm hurried, child."

"Last night my dolly quite forgot her prayers; And when she thought you'd gone down stairs Then dolly was afraid, and so I said: 'Just never mind, but say ten in the bed, Because I think that God is just as near.' When dolls are 'fraid, do you s'pose He can hear?' The mother spoke from out the ruffles she led; 'I'm hurried, child.'"

"Oh, come and see the flowers in the sky—The sun has left, and won't you by-and-by. Dear mother, take me in your arms, and tell Me all about the pussy in the well! And then perhaps, about 'Red Riding Hood?' 'Too much to do! Hush, hush! you drive me wild; I'm hurried, child.'"

The little one grew very quiet now, And grieved and puzzled was the childish brow; And then it queried: "Mother, do you know The reason 'cause you must be hurried so? I quite see the hours are little than I, So I will take my penicils and will buy A big clock! Oh, as big as it can be! For you and me."

The mother now has leisure infinite; She sits with lotus hands, and face as white As winter. In her heart she thinks of all, She sits at leisure, questioning God's will. "My child has ceased to breathe, and all is night! Is Heaven so dark that Thou dost grieve me light? The time drags by."

O, mother sweet! If cares must ever fall, Pray, do not make them stones to build a wall Between thee and thy own; and miss the right To blessedness, as swift to take its flight! While answering baby questions you are But entertaining angels unaware; The richest gifts are gathered by the way For darkest day.

### Fainthearted.

I stand where two roads part; Lord! art thou with me in the shadows here? I cannot lift my eyes to see. Speak to me if thou art! I tremble, and my heart is cold with fear: Dark is the way thou hast appointed me.

From the bright face of day It winds far down a valley dark as death, And shards and thorns await my shrinking feet; An joy mist and red, and the path is grey. Comes to me, chilling me with awful breath; How canst thou say thy yoke is light and sweet?

Nav, these pale who go Down the grey shadows; each one tired, and worn, Bearing a cross that galleth him full sore; And lo! of this path's folk, And that one's pallid brows are raved with thorn, And eyes are blind with weeping evermore.

Still they press onward fast, And the shades compass them; now, far away, I see a cross hill shaped like Calvary; Will they come there at last? A reflex from some far fair perfect day Touches the high clear faces gaily.

Ah! consider path is fair, And musical with many singing birds, Large golden fruit and rainbow-colored flowers: The wayside branches bear; The air is murmurous with sweet love-words, And hearts are singing through the happy hours.

Nay, I shall look no more. Take thou my hands between thy firm fair hands And still their trembling, and I shall not weep. Some day, the journey o'er, My feet shall tread the still safe evening lands, And to the coast give to thy beloved, sleep.

And though thou dost not speak, And the mist hides thee, now I know thy feet: Will tread the path my feet walk wearily; Some day the mist will break, And sudden looking up, mine eyes shall meet Thine eyes, and lo! I thine arms shall gather me.

### To the Singer.

Sister, the soul that waxes in thee Hath in it something of the spring. What time the sunny breezes swing The daffodil beneath the tree; I seem to sit beside the sea, And hear a spirit in thee sing.

Thy voice makes many a pleasant place To rest in, many a fragrant spot; Blue eyes of the forget-me-not, The charm of wistful maiden ways, Bring back a hundred yesterdays Of song, that may not be forgot.

If at an hour when storm-winds away The clouds through heaven from pole to pole, The passion in thee seems to roll In music to the far-away, Listen within thyself, and say: 'It is the soul, it is the soul.'

### Shifting Shadows.

Zenith past, the sun is stooping In the Occidental sky; Parched with drought, field-flowers are drooping. Earth and grass are bleached and dry. Down the lane and through the meadows Quietly cast from shrub and tree, Strife and war my pathway shadows, Shifting, lengthening change-fall.

Just outside the straggling village, Where the brooklets drone is heard, 'Tis there that fleet-winged robbers pillage Livestock and cut from the vineyard. Close beside me, longer growing, Till it intermingles mine, Moves an imagined figure, showing An semblance—dearest, thine!

Old Lady (to elderly bride on wedding trip)—That young man who just went into the smokin' car seems very fond of you ma'am. Elderly Bride—Ah, yes, John loves me most dearly. Old Lady—It does my old heart good to see such affection these days. Is he the only son ye got, ma'am?

### PERSONAL.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Vanderbilt are now engaged in superintending the erection of their new house in the Isle of Wight.

Some writings of Kaiser Frederick's show that he left his memoranda to his wife as her private property, and his diary is now again in her hands.

Mr. Austin Chamberlain, a son of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, has been made the Parliamentary candidate of the Liberal Unionists for Selkirkshire.

The Empress Victoria has promised that no biography of Kaiser Fritz shall be published for five years. There is no dread of a scandal therefore at present.

Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt has rented Lansdowne House for use next season. Lord Rosebery has recently lived there, and it is one of the finest houses in London.

Mrs. Sarah Bernhardt has christened an old liquor with a new name. She told an interviewer lately that she invariably took a little absinthe before going on the stage, to steady her nerves. It turned out that this absinthe was the primeval Scotch whiskey.

The Prince of Wales has been installed grand prior of the order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem. Bishop Quintard, of Tennessee, a member, was present at the installation ceremonies. The order maintains an ophthalmic hospital at Jerusalem.

The survivors of the terrible Chacabworth disaster, which resulted in the death of over eighty passengers, on the Toledo, Peoria, and Western Railway, have formed an organization, with Dr. O. B. Will president. The members propose to meet once a year on the anniversary of the accident if practicable, and also to help any of the number who need pecuniary aid.

Dr. George MacDonald, the preacher and novelist, is a tall man with a finely shaped head, which is crowned with gray hair parted in the middle. His beard and mustache of iron grey are long and silken. He appears to great advantage in the pulpit, for he preaches with earnestness, and in a voice of melodious quality made attractive by an unmistakable Scotch "burr."

Mr. Gladstone's study at Hawarden Castle holds 15,000 volumes, which are ranged on shelves jutting out into the room. There is not a book that Mr. Gladstone cannot lay his hand upon the moment he wants it. There are three writing-desks in this room, one of which is for the exclusive use of Mrs. Gladstone. The ex-Premier breakfasts at seven and dines at eight, breaking his fast by a light luncheon at two o'clock.

Mrs. J. B. Faggin, wife of the California millionaire, has in her possession a ruby given by King Louis of Bavaria to Lola Montez. At a sale of Lola Montez's effects this ruby brought \$1,000, but it is now valued at \$10,000. M. B. Curtis, the actor, who made a fortune by his impersonation of Sam'l of Posen owns a pigeon-blood ruby for which he is said to have paid \$7,000. Rubies, when they reach a certain size, are more valuable than diamonds.

James A. McNeill Whistler, an American artist who has made his home and reputation in England, was recently married in London to Mrs. Beatrice Godwin, daughter of John Birnie, the sculptor. Mr. Whistler as groom was dressed in a well-fitting blue frock-coat, and carried a brand-new broad-brimmed high hat under his arm. A pair of ivory-colored gloves brightened his costume. The bride was dressed in a suit of blue with a hat to match.

Mrs. Belva Lockwood taught school for fifteen years before she went into the law. She found teaching very hard work and very poor pay, and as she had a family to support—her husband, since dead, being then an invalid—she studied law and was admitted to the bar, and now she never makes less than \$3,000 a year. Mrs. Lockwood says that she can do housework as well as any woman, but that it is cheaper for her to employ her talents in other directions. Although her ambitions run in the line of a public and political life, she dresses about as other women do, and finds delight in lace and diamonds.

Dwight L. Moody, the evangelist, is very much opposed to having his photograph taken. He sat to a photographer only once, and that was just before he left England, because he wanted to leave his portrait with a few friends; but he broke the negative with his own hands, so that no more impressions could be taken. Mr. Moody makes his home at Northfield, Massachusetts, where his mother, now eighty-three, still lives, and where he has his co-worker, Ira D. Sankey, for a near neighbor.

A gentleman who has recently visited Willie Collins at his home in Wimpole St., London, says that the novelist is looking old, and that his hard work has left its mark on him. He is thin and stoops very much, but his eyes, though near-sighted, are bright and sparkling. Mr. Collins is a hard worker, and when busy with a novel, usually works night and day until it is finished. It is quite common for him to work fifteen hours at a stretch, eating scarcely anything and drinking only a little champagne during that time. He gets very much excited over his stories, and walks about the room reciting the speeches of his characters in a most dramatic manner.

Capt. Wiggins in his ship Labrador, well laden with all sorts of English merchandise, has safely reached the mouth of the Yenesei River, and transferred his cargo to the steamer Phoenix, which will take it 2,000 miles up the river to the towns in southern Siberia. It remains to be seen whether Capt. Wiggins will fight his way safely back through the ice of the Kara Sea with the cargo of Siberian produce he has taken on board. At all events his voyage to the Yenesei this year has been a brilliant success, and he seems in a fair way to prove that a sailor who knows all the ins and outs of ice navigation can in most years carry on traffic by water between the ports of the Western world and southern Siberia, a practical discovery of much importance.

### Huge Plan for Water Supply.

The stupendous plan for supplying the city of Liverpool with water involves the removal of a whole Welsh village, including woods, cottages, churches, etc., this immense space to be devoted to a reservoir four and one-half miles long by half a mile broad, and eighty feet deep. There are to be three lines of pipe each sixty-eight miles long, with filtering beds and secondary reservoirs, and the cost of the aqueduct alone is estimated at \$15,000,000.