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ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

VOLUME III.

ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

Then take the Spring while it is Spring,
Live warm in Summer while it glows,
Nor wait till Winter comes as king
With crown of thorns that bear no rose.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HOW LADY MEREDITH GAVE ME GOOD ADVICE, AND I TOOK IT.

You don't know where Meredith Hall is? You can't find it on any map of Warwickshire, nor in any County History. Well! it is in my edition of Dugdale, if it isn't in yours. But then my edition of that most excellent County History differs from all others in being enriched with my own notes and additions. When I bring it out you will have little trouble in finding Meredith Hall.

Can't I tell you what it is like? Oh, yes! Meredith Hall wasn't such a very old house. Nothing to be compared with Halfacre or Mandeville Halls. It was only as old as the time of Queen Anne, in whose days it had been built by Sir John Meredith, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer—

a good berth, very much better in those days than it is now. It was an excellent house, rising up story after story, a great square, solid mass, long, and deep, and broad. A thorough John Bull of a house. A house a Bishop of the Established Church of those days, or any other man of mark and weight, might have been glad to live in. It was rather heavy in style, and had a Vanburgh look about it, though it was not built by him. Inside it was most thoroughly comfortable; the outside walls were thick and solid, and so were the inside walls and partitions. You might have been murdered in your dressing-room by a burglar, and your wife in the adjoining bedroom would never have heard your groans and cries. All secrets were safe in that house,—so far as stone, and brick, and timber, and mortar, could keep them. There were no draughts—hear this, ye modern builders! —and as for a smoky chimney, you might as well have expected to see the whole Bench of Bishops smoking in wigs and lawn sleeves in the House of Lords as to hear that a chimney had ever smoked at Meredith Hall. Nay, I should say that it was more likely that what I have said should come over the Bench of Bishops. Their wigs and their lawn sleeves are almost gone. Some of them smoke. What one does all may do. Smoking is the great innovator of the day—the most intrusive element in modern civilisation. You smell smoke, if you do not see it everywhere. Ladies smoke, and the odour is sometimes detected in their boudoirs. Yes! I should say it was much more likely to see the Bishops smoking in the House of Lords, than that there should be a smoky chimney at Meredith Hall. Oh! that I were a Turk and a Pasha, or a Sultan, and that my Pashalic were beyond Aleppo, where there are no newspapers, or that I were the Sultan of Bournoo or Ghadames; that I were Sheikh head of all the Touarick Bedouins, and that I had an architect who built me a house in which the chimneys smoked. He would come before me, crawling on his belly, and when asked why they smoked, he would say, as his brother architects say here, 'It was the wind, most illustrious Sultan.'

To which I would return the following most gracious speech:

'Chok,'—which is the Touarick for 'enough,' and more than enough. 'Where were the winds, and what were they doing, when all the houses in the world which do not smoke were built? Did not God give winds at all times? Was there ever a time when there was no wind? No! But there have been houses built which did not smoke. How, then, doth this smoke?' Then, while the wretch lay grovelling on the ground, and calling out 'Aman! Aman!' which does not mean Amen, so

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and quaintly-cut evergreens, and great avenues of limes, and, above all things, clumps of those gigantic cedars for which Warwickshire is so famous,—huge fellows, nigh two hundred years old, planted perhaps from seed brought by Pocock from the Lebanon, and reared by Tradescant in his Physick Garden at Chelsea, in the bad days of King Charles II.

This was the house in which Lady Meredith lived.

Lord Meredith was out shooting, but 'my lady' would be very glad to see me.

I put up my horse, and went into my lady's own room, all hung with old silk and with looking-glasses of Vauxhall plate, in queer, crinckly, Chinese gilt frames. Over the chimney-piece was a picture by Kneller of Sir John Meredith, K.G. and Chancellor of the Exchequer in the reign of Queen Anne.

'Very glad to see you, Mr. Halfacre. I hope you will stay to luncheon. Have you come to tell me anything?'

'No, Lady Meredith, I have nothing to tell you. That is to say, I have a good deal to tell you, only I scarce know where to begin.'

'Shall I begin for you?'

'Yes,' I said, really not knowing what to say, but feeling very miserable.

'You are come, of course, to tell me about this marriage of yours with Mary Harbury. I must say I thought you could have done better; at any rate, you might have waited longer. You know I am one of those people who don't think so much of "rounding off" estates. Land makes many of us miserable.'

'Of course I might have done better—I know that well enough!'

'Why, then, did you make advances to Miss Harbury; and, above all things, why on earth did you write her those verses?'

'I never wrote her any verses.'

'Not write her any verses? then for whom were those verses that I read, very warm and very beautiful, intended? Or were they mere imaginary, addressed, I mean, to an imaginary object?'

'They were not imaginary; they were meant for Miss Chichester.'

'I was right, then, after all. I thought I could not be mistaken after what I saw at Lady Onechicken's ball. But how could your Aunt, who is one of the most sensible women I know, fall into such a delusion? How do you explain that?'

'Aunt Mandeville,' I said, 'has so set her heart on this match, that she twists and turns everything her own way, and makes it fit into her scheme. I must own circumstances have been much against me, but I beg you to believe me, on my word of honour, dear Lady Meredith, that I have never said a word to Mary Harbury that passed the bounds of the merest civility. Let me tell you all about it; it will ease my mind.'

'Pray do; I am ready to hear it.'

So I had to tell her the whole story; how I had loved Arethusa ever so long; how she had held me off; how Aunt Mandeville had cherished in her own heart the wish to marry me to Mary Harbury, but had never said anything about it to me; how, in the blindest way, she had asked Arethusa to Mandeville Hall, never for an instant supposing that Arethusa could thwart her plans; how that happened which was likely to happen; how Mary Harbury came, and fell into the river; how I had, as a mere act of duty, to pull her out; how my Aunt saw in this an omen of success, how Arethusa and I, feeling safe for ourselves, had taken to Mary Harbury, and got up the hoax about the White Lady; how we had been foiled by the Count; how we had run away, and I had lost my beads, and the verses addressed 'To my Mistress;' how the beast Brooks had found them, and brought them to Aunt Mandeville; how Aunt Mandeville had jumped to the conclusion that they must have been meant for Mary Harbury—more because she wished me to marry her than for any other good reason; how forgiving she had been to me; how good in excusing the verses; how that provoking Mary had lost her head, and walked into my room in her sleep; in a word, I told her the whole story up to the time of her visit, and then I took breath, waiting for her to say something.

'Well, all I can say, it 's the strangest chapter of accidents I ever heard of: but we well know, or at least we ought to know, all of us, that the chapter of accidents is the bible of the fool. No one is bound to bow down before accidents, or to give way to them, but rather to withstand and defy them. Still, many a man would have married Mary Harbury, if he had been half so much thrown in her way as you have been; and that you have not been touched by her is the best proof that she is, as I have always said, a very insipid, unattractive girl. She will make some one a very good everyday wife, but she will never satisfy a noble nature. I suppose your Aunt was rather in a way when you told her that the verses were meant for Miss Chichester?'

'I know she felt it very much, poor dear Auntie; but she showed it very little. But I am quite convinced that now Arethusa Chichester is gone she thinks I shall forget her, and that then she will make me marry Mary Harbury. I know her heart is as set as ever it was on the match. At the end of three months she will expect me to say "yes;" and if I do not, I am sure I don't know what Auntie will do.'

'Poor fellow!' said Lady Meredith; 'and tell me, now, are you really so very, very fond of Arethusa Chichester?'

'If I am fond of her! "Fond" is not the word; I adore her.'

'That I call being an idolater; what a life you would lead—a man of your warm, wild feelings with Madam Harbury. You are well out of that marriage; that is, if you are out of it. Now, do you think your Aunt will ever consent to your marriage with Miss Chichester?'

'Arethusa thinks not. As for me, I know not what to think; "never," you know, Lady Meredith, is a long day.'

'Yes, but it is heart-breaking to have to wait that long day out before the desire of one's heart is fulfilled. Very much as old Lord Alderbury said when he succeeded to his title at fourscore: "Had it come when I had a feeling at my heart, an idea in my brain, and a tooth in my head, fifty thousand a-year would have been worth something; as it is, how can I enjoy it?" And so it often is with these long engagements.'

'Do you advise me to give up Arethusa?' I said in such a doleful voice that the tears started to Lady Meredith's eyes. No, spiteful critic! she did not have a main of tears always laid on in a high service to her head. Lady Meredith very seldom shed tears; it was the hardship of my case that had moved her heart, as it would yours, if you had any feeling.

'No,' said Lady Meredith. 'Besides, how can you give her up? You must do anything rather than that; but I warn you, you will have much to give up—though I know not what on earth one ought not to give up, ay, cheerfully and manfully, for the sake of a true and faithful woman's heart. What do you think of doing these three months, at the end of which we are to see which has the stronger will—you or your Aunt? It's no use your stopping here, hovering about Leamington, in hopes of catching a glimpse of Arethusa.' Then, seeing I looked rather downcast, 'I assure you I speak as a friend; you will find that a wretched, shivering existence. If the girl is fond of you, she 'll be more fond of you at the end of three months than she is now. You must go away; by so doing, you will not irritate your Aunt any more; she is very fond of you, and will long to have you back; and you will also escape her, whom you term, "that odious Mary Harbury," whom you will have often and often to see, if you stay at Mandeville Hall.'

Lost in love as I was, and ready to give up years of life for one little five minutes with Arethusa, I was not so lost that I did not see the force of what Lady Meredith said.

'And if I go, whither am I to go? I have scarcely a friend in the world out of Warwickshire.'

'High time, then, for you, the friendless knight, to go out into the world and make friends for yourself. I hate home-keeping youths. Better go out in the world in quest of adventures, like the paladins of old. It is a great mistake to suppose that the days of chivalry are over. There is plenty of chivalry—I mean plenty of adventure; but, alas! there are no knights. Now-a-days a man comes home with eyes glowing with victory. What in the world has he done, I should like to know? Killed a fox, or it may be an otter; or he stalks about a hill all day, and kills a stag, or fifty brace of grouse, or as many partridges, or a hundred pheasants and two hundred rabbits. That's what our knights have sunk to. As if there weren't wrongs to be redressed and tyrants to be tamed all over the world,—nay, under our very eyes, only we can't see them; at least, our men—our landed gentry, I mean,—can't. Keep a game-book, indeed! I would just as soon keep a diary; the one is just as demoralising as the other.

But I am running away, or, rather, my subject is running away with me, which is worse. Where were we? Yes, Edward Halfacre, you mustn't stay at home; you must be off, and the sooner the better. Why not travel abroad till Christmas?'

Yes! I thought that good advice. If I were to go away at all, and it seemed settled that I must not stay in Warwickshire, I had better be abroad. All I bargained for was that I was not to be expected to start alone. Man is a gregarious animal!

'Now,' said Lady Meredith, 'I should have thought that just what a despairing lover like you wanted was to be alone. Let me see, who is there who could go with you? There was that stupid Major Plunger over here the other day, full of trouble at the thought of having promised to go to Corfu to see his brother in the Artillery, who is stationed out there. He is rather a bore, and if you go with him you will have to take care of him, for he confesses that he does not know one word of any modern language. Is not that disgraceful? But he is a gentleman, and a good fellow. Why not go with him?'

'Why, that was the very proposition he made to me yesterday, except that I had as little thought yesterday of going with him as he had that I would go if I were asked.'

'See what your Aunt says about it, and tell her I say, under all the circumstances—you may tell her that I know them all, or not, as you choose—you had better travel. I have no doubt she will see the matter in the same light as I see it. There; so that is settled. Let us talk of something else. How do you like Count Manteuffel?'

'Very well indeed; he is very polished, and has so much to say for himself. He is a little ironical, and even now I can't make out whether his story about the White Lady was all an invention, or whether he really did fancy he had seen her. Supposing him to have been awake and watching, nothing would have been easier for him to have heard us outside, and then rushed and chased us; only, to turn the game against us; and then to excuse his pinching Mary Harbury's arm till it was black and blue, to trump up his account of the apparition. Now don't you think, considering that he did do Mary Harbury's arm so much mischief, that it is he, and not I, that ought to be made to marry Mary Harbury?'

'Ah,' said Lady Meredith, 'but if he does that, what will become of your Aunt's darling plan of rounding off the properties in a ring fence?'

'He is not bound to consider that. And now I think of it, I do wish he would marry Mary Harbury.'

'Perhaps he may; stranger things have happened in this match-making world. Time will show. I have never quite liked him; he seems so sly, and so fond of pretending to know nothing, when he is well informed about everything. How do we know, too, that he has not, as foreigners and sailors often have, another wife in his own "fatherland?" But here comes Lord Meredith. Now we must eat our luncheon in peace and charity with all men and women, and forego scandal and gossip, which are to him as shepherds to the ancient Egyptians.'

Lord Meredith came in from the chase lamenting his bad sport. In the days of Henry V., he would, like Hotspur, have lamented the badness of his bag of Scots; or had he gone to Agincourt, he would have killed, on that St. Crispin's Day, as many Frenchmen as he had shot French partridges. If Lord Meredith lived for anything, it was for sport. For sport he refused to sit for the shire in the first reformed parliament. He was an Irish peer; that's why he could sit in the House of Commons. If I had any time to spare from my own love and wrongs, I could tell you some very amusing things of that election. For sport, he always rushed off to Norway in June; for sport, he rushed from Norway to Scotland on the 12th of August; for sport, he bought a deer-forest—the deer-forest of Ben Mac something — and, turning out men, who went away to Canada, he brought in red deer; for sport, he quarrelled with his tenants; for sport he preserved pheasants and prosecuted poachers; for sport, he allowed the irrepressible rabbit to lay waste one of the finest parks in England, and make their burrows under his ancestral oaks; for sport, in a word, he lived, and moved, and had his being. Nothing pleased him so much as to get an unwary guest to go out with him when the north-east wind was blowing, in January or February, to take up trimmers for pike in an India-rubber boat on the lake. Once his attorney came down — a man who always wore a thick comforter, and who had never been known to sit in a carriage with both windows down, for fear of the draught. Well, the cruel Meredith decoyed this wretched man into the India-rubber boat, and made him sit down in the stern. 'Mind, don't stir, else it will upset. Keep quite still, and I will row. As we come to the trimmers, take them up one by one, very carefully.' Trimmer after trimmer did that poor solicitor take up for three mortal hours, his hands stiff with cold, his eyes and nose watering, the hooks getting into his flesh, and each pike, as it was drawn up, grinning and gaping at him. 'What fun!' said Meredith: 'this is something like sport. Take care of that hook, or it will be into your thigh; mind that big fellow at the bottom of the boat, or he'll make his teeth meet in your calf.' By this time the bottom of the boat was filled with gasping pike, all strong, and flapping about between the attorney's legs. When they came to land, Lord Meredith said he had never had a better day with the trimmers. Cold! He was as warm as a toast, and so he well might be, as he had been rowing all the time; but his legal adviser, who couldn't row, and who had to sit there shivering, he did not think it either such fun or so warm. Next day he went back to Lincoln's Inn Fields; and if he ever went down to Meredith Hall again, I feel sure it must have been in the summer.

Such was Lord Meredith, one of those idle apprentices whom Providence sends into the world to show how needless it is for some people to do any work at all. He had fine natural parts, and would have been a much better Prime Minister than some I have known; but he was too idle. Of him one might parody the words of the poet, and talk of him as one

> 'Who to sporting gave up what was meant for mankind.'

For the rest he was the most generous, hospitable man in the world, and except for this craze of sport would have lived in peace and charity with all men.

'Glad to see you, Mr. Halfacre. Not seen you a long while. How have your birds been this year? As for my pheasants I don't believe we shall have two hundred. My man isn't at all lucky in raising them.'

'We have had plenty of partridges; but ours, you know, is some of the best partridge land in the country. As for pheasants there seem to be lots of them, but we shan't be able to tell till the 1st of October.

'Ah, by that time the poachers from Coventry will have got into the coverts and cleared them out. I'm sure I don't know what's to be done with the poachers. The law is strong enough, but the magistrates won't enforce it. If I were in Parliament I'd bring in a Bill to make them do their duty.'

So he went on, dilating on the wrongs that game-preservers suffered at the hands of poachers, quite forgetting that he made poachers every year by the same process that his housekeeper made jam—by preserving. Now let none of you suppose I am one of those silly people who talk of 'God's game,' and of the inherent right—the divine right they might as well say—of every man to kill his neighbour's game. I do not agree with the

Warwickshire Anti-Game Law Association as to the game question in general, nor with the Muntz in particular as to rabbits. I hold it, on the contrary, that a man's game, his pheasants before all game, are as much his own to kill as his cocks and hens. That is what I call an inherent right of property, the right divine that all of us have to do what we like with our own, so long as we do not break the law. I think there is no harm, but rather good, in a man preserving game in moderation. It is over-preserving, sacrificing everything to game, keeping it in such quantities that it eats up whole fields of grass or grain,—that is what I object to; and I think that a landlord who does so is guilty of the sin of cutting off two blades of grass or wheat where four grew before, and of throwing such temptation to his poor neighbour as turns every hedge-stake into a bludgeon, and sends many an honest lad to prison for egg-stealing or night-poaching, only to come out a thorough reprobate—a recruit to the great army of the dangerous classes. Here, too, the sin lies in excess. No one but a sour demagogue can object either to shooting or hunting in moderation.

Luncheon came to an end, I ordered my horse, thanked Lady Meredith for her good advice, and rode back to Mandeville Hall.

'What did Lady Meredith say?' asked Aunt Mandeville. 'I suppose you told her everything, as she knew so much before?'

'Yes, I did. She says she thinks I am not at all bound to marry Mary Harbury, though we were thrown so much together accidentally, that she does not wonder at your mistake as to my affections. She thinks that no man is bound to marry a girl by accident. She thinks change will do me good, and advises me to travel for a month or two.'

'Very good advice,' said Aunt Mandeville. 'Just like her. She always takes a right view of things. That's why she has no enemies. She is so just to both sides.'

The fact was that Auntie saw at once that it was the safest thing for me to do from her point of view. It would keep me out of Arethusa's way, and, to her, Arethusa's way was harm's way.

'And when and whither, Edward, do you think of going?'

'That I'm sure, Auntie, I can't tell. I am not in such a hurry to go at all.'

'Ah, but you must go!' she said, eagerly; 'you must take Lady Meredith's advice. Such good counsel is too precious to be wasted.'

'The only tour I have thought of, or ever heard of, would be to go to the Ionian Islands with

Major Plunger, who is going on leave to Corfu to see his brother. What do you think of that plan?'

'Well, I daresay he would be a good traveller. He sleeps well, if he does nothing else; and if you like your own thoughts, he will not trouble you with much conversation.'

'I must have some one as a companion: I can't go alone. As to conversation he won't be so dumb as a dog, and yet some people think dogs better company than men.'

'A good dog is far better company than a bad man, Edward; but I don't think the Major is a bad man. He will, at any rate, be as good company as a dog, except that you can't beat him if he misbehaves.'

'What says the proverb, Auntie—"None but a bad master beats his dog."'

'Very true, no doubt it is all the master's fault. Do you think you would have been a better nephew to me now, Edward, if I had beaten you when you were a child?'

'I can't tell. But am I so bad now, Auntie?'

'Yes,' said Aunt Mandeville, bitterly; 'when you don't and won't do what I wish.'

We talked no more of my foreign travel that day. All that evening we were like two beasts in the same pitfall, very much afraid of one another.

My only consolation was that Mary Harbury was not there with her sampler. No! she was safe at home, eating bread-and-butter with her most virtuous and most angular mother. Madam Harbury was so square that there was not a round hole on earth that she would fit. No! her place was somewhere else. Perhaps even in heaven she has found, or may find, that there is no place that she can fill. Square here and square there; round here and round there; so it will be, I suppose. I don't think I can say anything worse of the Harbury establishment than to tell you they dined regularly in the middle of the day; that is only another way of saying that they never had any dinner at all, only tea. Fancy life without dinner, and your inner man incessantly deluged with hot water, mingled with the juice of a plant which at once attacks your nerves and your liver. I don't deny the virtue of a cup of tea in season, but to dine on tea! If you ask me to agree to that, I say savagely, much in the same spirit as the man made his famous declaration against church-going, that more lives are ruined and more nerves shattered by tea than by ardent spirits.

As you are a constant church-goer, you ask eagerly who the man was who declared against church-going, and what it was he said. The man was a wise man, but if I told you his name you would pursue and persecute him, all you churchgoers. He shall be, therefore, anonymous; but you may call him John Smith or Thomas Brown, and then abuse him as much as ever you like. What he said was this: 'More lives are lost than souls saved by going to church.' An awful fact, if true; but then it could be true only of a very damp church, as Mandeville Church was before we restored it. After that both it and Mr. St. Faith's sermons were dry enough.

But to return, Mary Harbury was safe at Harbury, and Auntie and I were at Mandeville Hall. I really believe that the only things Aunt Mandeville had much at heart were my marriage with the Harbury estate and the White Lady; both equally impossible subjects; both incapable of solution. As Mary Harbury was now a forbidden subject, Aunt Mandeville turned to the other. She did so very much want to know the truth of the matter about the Count's midnight visitor. Was it all a dream, or a coincidence, or was it all an invention of the Count's?

'So odd,' she said, after we had twisted and turned the question upside down, and fairly worn it threadbare by discussion. 'So odd that it should have appeared, if it did appear, to one of the family.'

'I don't think, Auntie, so far as we can make out, that the White Lady, who really gives us, or rather you, more trouble than she is worth, and who, I must say, is behaving infamously to you, seeing you saved her picture from the garret, and so rescued her from oblivion—I don't think it is plain that she feels bound to appear only to members of the family. I suppose Mr. Blogg does not claim kin to the Mandevilles, and she showed herself to him. Do you call Count Manteuffel one of the family?'

'Certainly I do, my dear. You heard what he said as soon as ever he entered the house. Manteuffel is only Mandeville misspelt, and he has the same arms. Yes,' she added, as though thinking aloud, 'I do certainly consider him a Mandeville.'

'Perhaps, Auntie, if he invented the story of the White Lady, he also invented the story of his relationship. Who can tell? But I really do not think it much matters.' There we stopped; but I went to bed, feeling sure that Aunt Mandeville, at least, believed the Count's story, and both his stories, and that she felt the one—that of the White Lady's apparition—was a proof of the other. She thought it was the White Lady's way of acknowledging the connexion — a way that ghosts have in their uncomfortable customs of showing that blood is stronger than water, even in the gloomy regions beyond the grave.

'Shall I go with Major Plunger?' That was the question I put to myself after dismissing the Count's claim as ridiculous. Shall I go to the Ionian Islands with that worthy imitator of the Seven Sleepers? I made up my mind to go; but for the silliest reason in the world; for the most absurd romance; for the same feeling which led myriads, and tens of myriads, to perish in the Crusades; for an idea. I really believe that I went to the Ionian Islands, because somewhere in those parts were those Acroceraunian Mountains, down which the poets tell us the Fountain of Arethusa dashes so delightfully. There! if that is not the romance of love, and if going all the way to the Ionian Islands for the sake of an imaginary fountain on the Albanian coast, be not a sacrifice of self for the mere name of the beloved object,—if that be not only very silly, but very like a lover, I am sure your hearts must be hard as the nether millstone, and that you are one and all incapable of true sympathy. Love is like the sun, I tell you. It takes up the meanest object, clothes it in glory, till it dazzles all beholders—a bit of broken glass, a grain of sand, a pool of stagnant water, and when love is deceived, when the sun sinks, the true heart and the glowing luminary are surprised to find that the source of all this radiance, of this brilliancy surpassing gems of purest water, was in itself; that what it saw in those mean things and in the loved object, was but a reflection of itself. So it was with me and the Fountain of Arethusa. It was a name, and nothing more. But it decided me which way to turn in my travels; for was I not full of faith in my own Arethusa?

When I came down the next morning I told Aunt Mandeville I was quite ready to go with Major Plunger.

CHAPTER II.

HOW I PARTED FROM AUNT MANDEVILLE.

I WAS to have gone over that afternoon to Warwick to tell the Major that I had found a fellow-traveller for him in myself if he would have me; but he saved me the trouble, for he came over himself to pay a formal visit of thanks to Aunt Mandeville for her hospitality, and with him, much to my surprise, came Count Manteuffel.

'Why, Count,' said my Aunt, 'I thought you had been hundreds of miles away in Yorkshire. Did you not say you must go in that direction?'

'Very true,' said the lemon-haired claimant to Mandeville kinship. It was only in one or two words, and by a very slight accent, that you could detect him, and 'very,' which he pronounced 'veray,' was one of them. 'Very true; but man proposes and diplomatists dispose, and instead of going to Yorkshire, I had to run up to town for a day to see my chief at the Prussian Legation. Now I am back again, and going to Yorkshire to-morrow. I thought I could not do better than come over with the Major, and pay you a visit of thanks.'

'Very happy to see you at all times,' said my Aunt. 'Our party is quite broken up, and I shall soon be left here all alone. Edward is thinking of going away.'

'Going away!' said the Count, with just a little start; 'and where is he going to?'

'Abroad. To tell the truth, Major Plunger, we think of asking you to take him with you to Corfu.'

'Just the very thing I should like,' said the Major. 'I asked Twentyman to go with me. He always goes with me wherever I go; but I should much prefer Mr. Halfacre. He knows foreign languages, while Twentyman hardly knows his own, to judge by the extreme difficulty of getting him to speak it.'

'Well,' said Aunt Mandeville, with something like pride, 'Edward does know French and Italian pretty well. So if you take him he will be some help to you.'

'Nothing would give him greater pleasure.' These words were as much a stock phrase with Major Plunger as with Colonel Chichester, and so the end of it was that in two minutes it was settled that I was to go abroad with that gallant officer.

'You must be ready to start at once,' said the Major. 'Leave is like wine: it runs away when it is tapped, unless you drink it.'

'As soon as you please.' Idiot that I was! my heart was set on seeing those Acroceraunian Mountains.

While all this was going on, the Count sat there, and said nothing. Perhaps he was thinking all the more. When it was all settled, even to the start for town the day after to-morrow, he took up his parable, and said:

'Corfu is a garden of delight. I know it well. I know all the Ionian Islands. My sister is married to a Greek, who is Prussian consul for the Septinsular Republic. They live in Corfu. What would I not give to revisit those gardens—that Elysium of the old Phæacians?' Here Major Plunger gave me a look which meant: 'I 'm quite out of my depth. Are you?' If Twentyman had been there he would have asked who were the Phæacians? but as he wasn't, we all looked as wise as the owls of Minerva, and the Count went on: 'Those Islands of the Blessed, with their groves of olive, orange, cypress, and myrtle, always remind me of our own Goethe's—

"Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühn?"

or of your Byron's—

"Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?"

'Yes, if there was ever a land "where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine," it is Greece, and, above all parts of Greece, the Ionian Islands.'

Here we ought to have interrupted him, and said: 'The Ionian Islands were not then, at least, parts of Greece Proper.' He might have retorted that they were parts of Greece Improper, which would have been the truth, but no one interrupted him, and he went on: 'How lucky are you, Major Plunger, how still more lucky is Mr. Halfacre, with all his fresh feelings and aspirations, in being able for the first time to visit a Paradise which I, alas! shall never re-visit.'

Major Plunger had now swallowed as much of this gushing rhapsody as he could manage. He thought it time to stop it, and did so by recalling the Count to earth, and asking him:

'As you know some one out there among the natives, you might give us some letters of introduction.'

'With all my heart,' said the Count, who was now the military agent he professed to be. 'For Mr. Halfacre, in particular, I shall be able to find some "veray" nice letters of introduction. When he does present them, he will forget even the charms of Miss Harbury.'

This was treading on dangerous ground; Auntie looked a little black, and the Count recovered himself by saying: 'I only meant I would give him a letter to a very charming Greek family. As for the Major, he will need no introductions. Is he not a British officer, and are there not seven British regiments in the Ionian Islands?'

When the Count and Major Plunger took their leave, and they did not take it till it had been finally arranged that we were to start to London the next day but one, Aunt Mandeville took a turn or two up and down the hall, and then she said:

'How poetical the Count was about Greece and the Ionian Islands! Something must have happened to him there. I wonder what it was? He must have travelled a great deal.'

'Perhaps he was in love out there, Auntie, and been jilted, or something of the sort. But then he would have said something about "the loves of the turtle," which Byron brings into that introduction to "The Bride of Abydos," who was no bride by the way, but only about to be one.'

'Who can tell?' said Aunt Mandeville; 'there is something very odd, and I must say very taking about him. He seems to know everything, and to have been everywhere. Don't you think him very clever?'

'Very, Auntie,' and then I fell into a brown study, and thought how very clever he would be if he thought himself able to win my Arethusa away from me, and how impertinent it was of him to 'rave' about her to the Heavies.

My Aunt roused me up by saying: 'You 'll have to make haste with your packing, Edward; luckily you don't take so much time about it as women. I wonder if you will want any warm clothing? Do they wear flannel waistcoats in Greece?'

No one in the house could solve this knotty question, so a compromise was made, and my portmanteau was filled with a mixture of clothes for January and June,—I would have said May, which has generally been supposed to be the opposite of January, from the days of Chaucer downwards; but I am not going to pay the worst month in the year for weather the compliment of calling it, even by implication, the best. No! of all the months in the year for frosts by night and fickleness by day, commend me to the merry month of May. If the poets had done nothing more to merit the epithet of 'liars,' with which that great father St. Crosspatch branded them, than call May a merry month, and a month of flowers and sunshine, the appellation would have been richly deserved. No! so far as my experience goes, May clothing is winter clothing—there is no difference between them.

That very evening all my packing was over.

How Brooks puffed as he tried to lock the portmanteau! and how cleverly he contrived to mislay the key, which was not found till the next day.

All that night I dreamt of Arethusa and her fountain. Methought I had scaled the precipices of the Acroceraunian Mountains, and was just on the very edge of the rock basin out of which the fountain sprang, when lo! I slid down again, down, down, down, to the very bottom of the hill. Then all my labour was lost, and I had to toil up the precipices again, and to reach the edge of the basin only to slide down again to the bottom. So it went on all through the night, and I woke as weary as though I had really scaled the Matterhorn.

Next morning I rode over to Warwick to look up the Major, and of course I met him and Twentyman in the street.

'Twentyman's coming,' was all that the Major said. 'He has got some leave, too.'

So we were all three to go, and indeed they were both so full of the cares of packing, and so very silent, that this fact was all that I carried back for my pains in riding over. 'Twentyman is going too' was all the information I was able to give Aunt Mandeville.

'Well! I'm glad of it,' said Auntie. 'He is big enough and strong enough to put to the rout a whole army of foreigners. But you will have a deal of trouble in talking for them, Edward. However, it will amuse you, and divert your attention from unpleasant thoughts.'

How did I spend that afternoon? I knew Aunt Mandeville would have given a good deal had I offered to go over to Harbury. But I had had more than enough of riding over to Harbury. Auntie had not the heart to propose it, and it was not in human nature that I should offer to do so. Thank heaven I should soon be far away, never to hear for three months of the ring fence. I quite resolved that if the Major or Twentyman dared to say anything about it, all the time I was with them, I would run away and leave them in the lurch to speak for themselves. If they starved it would be entirely their own fault. Who was it that used to say when he gave a dinner, and made a point of introducing each guest as he came to all those who had already arrived: 'And now, gentlemen, if any one's grandfather has been hanged, and any one else talks about it, his talk be on his own head?' So I say if Major Plunger or Twentyman misbehaved, as I have said, their starvation must rest on their own heads. They had been warned over and over again that I would have nothing to do with Mary Harbury.

But how did I spend that afternoon? First, I wandered all over the house and tried to stand just where she had stood, and I recalled all that she had said when I showed her over the house. Every inch on which her feet had rested was holy ground, and I fell down and worshipped at it. 'Very silly!' Yes, very silly, but so natural. If you have ever been in love, you will know what I mean. Then I went out into the park; down to the river, to the pool where we were fishing when Arethusa and Mary came down, and Mary fell in. Did I worship in Mary's footsteps? Did I track her down to the brink of the bank where she tumbled in? Not at all. Those footsteps to me were not holy, not more holy than those slips and slides which the kine had made with their unwieldy hoofs as they floundered down the bank to drink. No! But where Arethusa had stood, like Diana laughing at Mary, as she tried to jump, and then across the wooden bridge over which she flew like Atalanta, until she reached the mill-dam breathless, just as I had brought Mary Harbury out. Yes, I knew the very spot on which she had stood, and I recalled her words—'Well done, and bravely done!' What a comfort it was to have pulled Mary out, only that Arethusa might say those glorious words. It was a sort of Legion of Honour of love granted for distinguished service in the face of the enemy. Dear me! it was all so sad, and yet so very delightful. And so it was all over the park,—under yonder great oak, beneath that gnarled and twisted Spanish chestnut, along that tall avenue of limes, and then I remembered some verses which I had made and repeated to her. Of course they were about love, and love was speaking:

'In summer when the hay is mown,
I stand beneath the linden shade,
When thick the golden dust drops down,
And side by side lie man and maid;
The bees are busy up above,
But they below are lost in love.'

Then as the shadows grew long I went back to e house. What to do? Can you ask? Of course to sit under the Passion Flower. That Passion Flower in the centre; there to sit and recall all the sweet things, and words, and looks which had passed between us two under that Holiest of Holies to our young hearts. Ah, dear me! how long it is ago, and how old our hearts are now! But then it was not so. I daresay the Passion Flower flourishes brighter than ever. No hand can have been so profane as to hew it down. But what has become of our passion and of our hearts?

But I will not be down-hearted. I was not down hearted then. It was sad, but it was sweet to think that Arethusa was gone, but that we were to be true to each other. Did I doubt her? First love never doubts, it is as brave as a raw recruit in his first action. Only old soldiers and heart-seared lovers know the risks of their position. Doubt her? my faith in her was such that it would have removed mountains, yes, the whole snowy peaks of her own Acroceraunian mountains, and hurled them into the sea—into the Pacific, if need were. Doubt her? The heart that can ask such a question has never known what love is, and deserves to be cast into outer darkness. No, I believed in her and trusted her to the uttermost. It was grief not to see her, not to be with her, not to touch her, but it was a joy and delight, a comfort to think of her and all the sweet things she had said, and to know and feel that at all moments, and at that very moment, she was hoping, trusting, and believing in me. Yes, we were one in heart and thought, and I loved her, as the Catechism says, 'with all my heart, and soul, and strength.' There! be satisfied; I have told you all that I did that last day. When the evening came I was alone with Aunt Mandeville.

This is a very dull chapter. But you must remember that life is made up of smiles and tears, of grins and groans — here a joy and there a pang. So it has been, and so it shall be. Happy he whose bread of life has the least sour leaven in it.

Yes! that evening I was alone with Aunt Mandeville. The dear, good Auntie, she had wished to ask Mr. St. Faith to come and dine and cheer us up. But as I had spent the afternoon alone with Arethusa, I wished to spend my last evening alone with Aunt Mandeville. Had she not been everything to me all these years? If I were her property, had she not put me to good use? Had she laid me like the talent in a napkin, hugging me all to herself? Had she not taken the tenderest care of me—sent me to school and to Oxford—been everything to me, and gone everywhere with me? Had she not devoted her life to me, and, in spite of this great idea of the ring fence, was she not still dearer to me than anything in life—except Arethusa? Ah! except Arethusa! Perhaps you fancy I felt remorse at behaving, as you call it, so 'undutifully' to Auntie? No, I did not. I felt nothing of the kind. I looked on my heart as my own—as my birthright. My love had made me free. I would not become a slave—no, not even for Auntie. I felt sorry,—grieved at hurting her feelings and thwarting her plans. I felt as much for her as any one could feel for any other human being. But as no human being is exactly like another human being; and as I was not Eleanor Mandeville, but Edward Halfacre, I was bound for the very sake of my own identity to thwart her wishes on a matter of such vital importance, that not to have my own will and way about it was death. I applied Descartes' rule to myself with a slight alteration suited to the need of the case. 'Amo, ergo sum,' was what I said to myself, or rather what my heart said to me; and from that hour I was not only a thinking but a loving being, and I am sure I shall have every woman who reads this book with me when I say that one loving being is worth ten thinking beings. What a pitch of perfection must it be, therefore, when you have the good luck to meet with both thought and love together, and to marry, if you are inclined to push matters so far, both a thinking and a loving being at once!

You see, I begin to talk about Aunt Mandeville, and I glide off after a few sentences into the old, old story—Love. It is late. We will send the boy to bed, and return to Aunt Mandeville.

There she sits in her easy chair, looking into the fire after dinner.

After musing awhile, she said:

'Well, Edward, we are going to part.'

'Yes, Auntie, but not for long! Three months will soon be over. I shall be back by Christmas. We will have a real, old-fashioned Christmas this year. A Merry Christmas, such as there used to be in olden times!'

'Have you never had a Merry Christmas here before, Edward?'

'Yes, Auntie—more than I can count. In fact, all our Christmases have been merry, except that one when I had the whooping-cough. *That* was anything but a merry Christmas!'

'It is strange,' Aunt Mandeville went on, in her musing way, half talking to me and half to herself; 'it is strange, but I feel as though I should never have another Merry Christmas!'

'Oh! Auntie—you are dull at parting, that is all. We shall spend many more happy hours together!'

'It may be, Edward,—it may be.' Then she went on in her musing way: 'But when one has cherished a thing for years and years, kept a thought deep-planted in one's heart,—seen it grow and thrive for a while; it gives one a shock to see it cut off and its roots torn out by the very hands one hoped would tend and protect it till it grew to be a tree. I do not say it is your fault, Edward; perhaps it is my own fault; but I did not think that it was you—you, my own foster-child—who would have been the obstacle to your marriage with Mary Harbury. Her mother might have refused to sanction the match; well and good.

From such a woman as Mrs. Harbury anything was to be expected likely to irritate and thwart. But that the blow should come from you gives it tenfold force.'

'Dear Auntie, what can I do?'

'That is just it, Edward. I do not see what you can do now, but at first you might have done a good deal. You might have told me sooner, instead of deceiving me when I asked you the question outright. Now, you see, I am committed to one love, and you to another. Do you think in three months you will have forgotten Arethusa Chichester?'

'No, Auntie, not in a thousand years!'

'Say you will forget her!' said Aunt Mandeville, with an imploring voice, much more touching than if she had stormed and scolded.

'Never, Auntie, never! It cannot be.'

'She may be false—she may forget you. Women are fickle.'

'I will never believe it. I am sure she will never forget me; and if women are fickle, though I don't know it, Arethusa will be the bright exception that proves the rule!'

I suppose Auntie saw it was no use trying to shake my faith, for she ceased to torment me, and we talked of money, of dividends, bankers' books, balances, circular notes, and crossed cheques, till my head reeled with business. Though Auntie had been so put out, and was still so bent on having her own way, she was very good about money. The transfer of her £20,000 Consols had been made, and I was now a Fundholder with that amount standing to the credit of Edward Halfacre of Mandeville Hall, Warwickshire, in the books of the Bank of England. Did it make me any happier? Not a bit. In those days I knew nothing of the value of money. I had always more than I could spend, and that was enough for me. Yes, Aunt Mandeville was very liberal.

When we had done what she called 'brought over,' in other words, accounts and business, she looked at me wistfully for a little while. Then she said:

'God bless you, Edward! In all but one thing you have been very good and dutiful to me. May God turn and not harden your heart against me! Good night, I shall be up in the morning to see you go.'

I threw my arms round her and embraced her, and she gave me a kiss. We were not at all a kissing family on either side. It was only on very great and solemn occasions that we made up our mouths and minds to give any one that token of affection. We were not like some fathers and mothers of families, always quarrelling and always rushing into one another's arms to make it up. We never quarrelled at Mandeville Hall except when there was something worth a quarrel—this marriage with Mary Harbury, for instance; and we never kissed except on great occasions like this departure of mine. Above all things, we never kissed in public before strangers. In this respect, at least, we were a bright example to this gushing generation, who kiss and quarrel, quarrel and kiss, in public and private, in season and out of season, at all hours, and on the most absurd and ridiculous grounds.

Before I went to bed that night I wrote the following letter to Colonel Chichester:

'MANDEVILLE HALL,
'*September*, 183–.

'DEAR COLONEL CHICHESTER,

'As you said you would be glad to hear from me, I write to say that I have made up my mind to go abroad for three months. My Aunt thinks it will be the best thing for me to do between this and Christmas, and I quite agree with her. While I am abroad at any rate no one can say that I am always at Harbury, and I shall escape being perpetually reminded of the "ring fence." As I hear you are coming to hunt this winter at Leamington, I hope to find you and Miss Chichester there when

I come back. Pray give my best regards to Miss Chichester, and believe me,

'Very truly yours,
'EDWARD HALFACRE.'

It was not long, but it was to the purpose, and it would keep Arethusa informed of my movements. It was not true, though, that he had said he would be glad to hear from me; but, from what Arethusa had said, I knew I might write to him as I did. After that I went to bed and slept soundly.

Next morning at seven o'clock I was to start; to be driven over to Warwick to catch the *Highflyer* for London. It was a raw cold morning, but Aunt Mandeville was up to see me off. She was as good as her word. She made the tea, she put sugar and cream into it; she handed me toast—everything. She would not let the servants do anything for me. It was not Brooks, he only showed his face just as I got into the carriage. It was too early for him. No! she had risen to see the last of me. I saw she felt my going very much, dear old Auntie! Yet she was not so very old. Quite young I should say now if you asked me her age. She said little or nothing, but looked hard at me for a little, and then at the clock. 'The time is come, Edward,' she said at last, 'the bitter hour of parting.' Again she said 'God bless you!' again we embraced. I thrust my hat over my face, and ran down the steps. 'Good-bye, Master Edward,' said Brooks, as he limped to the door. *He* was old, if you like, and the strong Mandeville ale was beginning to come out at his joints.

'Good-bye, Brooks, take care of your mistress.'

One fond look more at Auntie as I drove off, and we had parted.

CHAPTER III.

HOW I SET OFF ON MY TRAVELS WITH MAJOR PLUNGER AND MR. TWENTYMAN.

Before the 'Bear and Ragged Staff' at Warwick I met the Major and Twentyman.

'In capital time,' said the first. 'What a stepper that horse is, and how he went along the street! He'd make a famous charger.'

'We're on leave,' said Twentyman dryly. 'Don't let's hear any more of chargers till we come back. Chargers are the curse of my life. I no sooner get one to suit me than he breaks down.'

Just as the *Highflyer* was coming out of the yard, and we had not more than two minutes more before starting, I saw the long legs of the Count striding down the street. He was bent on catching the coach, and he caught it.

'What is it?' said the incorrigible Plunger. 'Can I do anything about horses for you in London or abroad?'

'No! thank you,' said the Count. 'I have only brought Mr. Halfacre the letter of introduction to my friends in Corfu, that I promised him. I had nearly forgotten it, but here it is;' and as he said that he drew out a thick letter sealed with a large red seal.

'Oh, thank you so much. How very kind!'

I did not then know what a curse letters of introduction may be, and how much better it is to have none at all, or I should not have thanked him so warmly for that letter.

'Good-bye, Major.'

'Good-bye, Count,' from the box seat, which Major Plunger had secured by giving the boots a shilling.

'Sit fast,' said the coachman. 'All right,' said the guard, and away rattled the *Highflyer* through the streets of Warwick; the guard rousing the echoes and the lazy housemaids with his horn, and the coachman just flicking the leaders with his whip.

A drive on a coach is a pleasant thing enough, for ten or twenty miles; but when you have to go a hundred or more, it is apt to get dull. I do not remember much of that journey, except that the Major and Twentyman smoked, as it seemed to me, incessantly. The coachman smoked, too; and the guard smoked. They both smoked the Major's cigars. In those days, to smoke outside a coach was almost the only outside smoking in which gentlemen indulged. How different from these reformed days, when the difficulty is to say where a man will not smoke. 'Upstairs, downstairs, and in my lady's chamber,'—are places in which the smell of smoke is found lingering. In those days, smokers were like prophets of the Lord in the days of Ahab and Jezabel. They smoked in caves, and in holes and corners of the earth; in backyards, in stables, in lofts, though there was danger of burning down the offices; in kitchens and servants' halls. They wandered about in pea-coats and dressing-gowns; they were persecuted, laughed at, derided. What are they now? They are like the prophets in the days of the good kings of Judah; like the Christians in the Roman Empire, after the days of Constantine and Helena. They worship in splendid smoking-rooms, and not content with that, they propagate their faith, by an incense of its own, all over the house, so that there is not a nook or a corner of it in which the odour of their peculiar sanctity is not plainly perceptible. True, they have had temporary persecutions just as the early Church had. Smoking has had its Julians, just as the first Christians had theirs. They have been expelled from clubs for a time, only to return under a cloud,—no, not under a cloud—under a fog of smoke. Stern fathers and mothers have forbidden their sons to smoke. But the daughters have always sided with the sons; they have converted the fathers; and the fathers, in some cases, though not very many, have converted the mothers. In many houses, before smokeless—where the practice was denounced as 'nasty,' 'filthy,' 'abominable,' and where, like all new faiths, it was practised stealthily,—it is now triumphant, and in a little while every man will have a smoking-room,—a temple to the great Goddess Nicotina; whose orgies are as those of Isis, and whose mysteries surpass those of Samothrace, where her votaries may perform their rites in peace.

But to return to our journey. We dined somewhere. I am sure I forget where,—and in this respect, the old coaches were better than your modern railway refreshment-rooms, which are often so bad, that everything in them is stale and uneatable,—where the only thing hot is the water, which you drink out of a slimy bottle. You say no railway-traveller has a right to drink water. Well! but if he is a teetotaller? You reply, teetotallers ought not to travel. I quite agree with you; but still even that unhappy class must travel sometimes; they can't remain always on a water-party of their own, cut off from the rest of the human race. But, if you like it, I will give up the water, and say the soup in such refreshment-rooms is always cold. You say it isn't;—that it is always boiling hot. Well!—and isn't that the worst fault that soup can have,—to have a minute to drink it, and find you can't swallow it without losing the skin off the roof of your mouth. No! I return to what I said: the old coach dinners, and suppers and breakfasts at the real old country inns, when provisions were cheap, and it was not the practice, as now, to seize every egg in England as soon as it was laid, and send it up to London by railway, — I say they were worth all the railway refreshment-rooms in the country. If these refreshment-rooms are bad, it is not worth going into them. If they are good, you have no time to eat anything, therefore a wise man will not go into them at all. I believe, in fact, they are only good for the idlers of the town in which they are built; for officers, if there's a regiment in the place. A great comfort it is to have a place besides the canteen,—where you can have what they call a B and S, and flirt with a pretty girl into the bargain; but for a real *bonâ fide* traveller, as they call him in Scotland, they are a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.

But we must get on, or we shall never reach London, much less across the Channel, at this rate. We reached town in ten hours—very good going. We stopped at the 'White Horse Cellar.' We had dinner. What, two dinners on one day? Forgive us, the first was only lunch. Twentyman said so, and if any one knew the difference between lunch and dinner, it was Twentyman. Then we went to the theatre; to what was then called a new theatre, 'The Lyceum.' It had just been rebuilt, after being burnt, I believe. In this theatres are like the Phœnix; after a certain time they die by fire, only to rise more glorious, with their wings as silver and their feathers as gold, out of their ashes. The first piece ever played in the New Lyceum was 'The Mountain Sylph.' I remember Phillips singing the bass part of the demon in it capitally, but that was before the Major, and I, and Twentyman went to it. That night a French play was the performance. Let me tell you French plays were not so common then in London as they are now — common in every sense of the word. We had no Grand Duchesses in those days, and no Schneiders to make them attractive. The play was 'L'Auberge des Adrets,' and Lemaitre played Robert Macaire. It was the first thieves' drama that Londoners saw, and at first we were obliged to see foreign thieves represented. When we had got accustomed to them, the Lord Chamberlain allowed us to bring our own scoundrels on the stage, and we had Jack Sheppard and all that scum of theatricals. I remember thinking whether it was good for Major Plunger and Twentyman to go and see Lemaitre play the clever thief, and I solved the difficulty by saying to myself: 'As they can't understand a word of French it will do them no harm; and if they do understand it, it will do their French good. So we went, and were all intensely amused. I understood the language and could follow the actors, and even make out some of the jokes. I remember the police-officer, who is taking Roberts '*signalement*,' and the mistake he made between *nez aquilin* and '*né à Quilan*. But though they were beyond all such niceties, both Major and Twentyman roared with laughter. The very sight of Lemaitre's costume was enough to make you laugh all night without stopping.

When I asked them what they thought of it: 'Never was so amused in my life,' said the Major; 'so different from our English acting. Tell you what, when we get abroad we must go to the play every night.'

The taciturn Twentyman assented with his 'Just what I was thinking,' and we walked home along the Strand, up Waterloo Place and Piccadilly.

We had made a long day of it, and were not sorry to get to bed.

You must remember again—in fact, you must ever keep it in your mind—that those days were not as our days. It wasn't so easy to make up your mind to travel then as it is now. You could not say, 'I will go to Paris to-day,' when you got up in the morning, and go. Not at all. You had to get a passport; and even now, if you are wise enough to go to Rome, or silly enough to go to St. Petersburg, you must get a passport. For St. Petersburg you must go to a Consulate or a Legation; and a man with a grave face and eyes that look through you,—a sort of Diplomatic Inspector Bucket,—comes out of his den and looks at you, and asks you impertinent questions as to your journey, and how old you are, and what your name is. I don't know that he doesn't ask you your father's and your mother's name, and whether you have been baptized and confirmed; but I am not as sure on those points as I am on all the rest. Then he writes it all down in a great black book—a sort of Russian Doomsday. That's your description. Then he copies it all out on a sheet of paper,—by the bye, I forgot to say he won't do it at all unless you can produce a Foreign-office passport vouching for your respectability,—and gives you the sheet of paper, and you pay ever so many shillings for it, and he tells you to go to another place. If it's at the Legation they send you to the Consulate; and if it's at the Consulate, they send you to the Legation. That's to have it *viséd*, and there you have to pay more fees; and when you have paid them, you are free to go to Russia. Only there is a fate that hangs over that sheet of paper, and it is this: you are doomed whenever you pass through a town on your way to Russia—for, thank Heaven! one can't go to Russia all at once, just as a man can't go to a certain place that shall be nameless, all at once, but by a gradual course of sin to fit him for it—yes, on your way to Russia, in your slow progress from freedom to despotism, you must show it to every Russian minister you come across; and if you don't do that, they will stop you at the frontier, and send you back to all the places to have it done. It's the law, and it's your own fault that you have neglected to fulfil the law. The officials are very sorry, but it can't be helped.

You will say, If these things be so, why go to Russia? That's just what I say. Why go to Russia when you can go anywhere else? Just as you may ask, Why go to the other place when you can go to heaven? It's all a matter of taste. For my part, I would never go to Russia.

Well, in the days that I speak of, the whole Continent was as Russia as to passports. I remember, some years after this expedition of mine with the Major, being stopped for a whole day at that beggarly port of Cuxhaven by a Hanoverian official, merely because the Hamburg steamer had been forced in there by the ice, all because I had no Hanoverian passport. I was very nearly sent back again to England, for asking leave to go up that bank of the Elbe by land. As it was I was sent ignominiously up to Hamburg in charge of the police and delivered over to the British agent there. It added insult to the injury to be told on the way that I was taken for His Serene Highness the Duke of Brunswick, with whom, I beg leave to say, I have not either morally or physically the slightest resemblance.

So we had to get our passports. French passports, and Piedmontese passports, and passports for Parma, Modena, and the Papal States, all of which we had to pass through on our way to Corfu. It would have taken us more than two days to get all those passports and to have them duly *viséd* in London. So we only got the French and Piedmontese passports, and put off getting the others till we got to Paris. You should have seen us all, and the faces the Major and Twentyman made when our *signalements* were being taken at the French Embassy, which was then in Portland Place. How astonished the puny Legation clerk was at Twentyman's huge size! I believe he thought he was a giant about to be exported for an exhibition, and that the Major was the proprietor, and I the showman of the giant. The Major, I must tell you, was rather touchy about his hair, which was beginning to go. He did know one word of French, and that was '*chauve.*' When he saw it on his passport he was in a fearful way, and wanted to have it altered.

'I am not *chauve*,' he bawled out to the clerk, who, in the blandest way, said: '*Mais que voulez-vous? Monsieur est chauve certainement.*' The Major's nose I remember was described as 'moderate,' and his figure as inclining to '*embonpoint.*' He certainly was not satisfied with his picture on paper. I do not know—except the mistake made about the rank of Twentyman, who when he gave himself out as 'Captain' was put down as '*géant*'—that either the Cornet or I had any reason to be dissatisfied with our pictures.

After we had got our passports we walked about London. London! it makes me laugh when I think of the London of those times compared with the London of these latter days. If that London were to arise from its dust and mud it would hardly know itself in the present much-improved and more-abused city. We all know London as it is, but you, rising generation, or risen generation, who were not born or thought of at the time of which I speak, try to realise, try to raise up before your mind's eye the London of 183–. In the first place, there were no Houses of Parliament, no Palace of Westminster. The old Houses had been burnt, and out of the ruins a temporary makeshift for them had been erected. Just about that time, too, though I think it was a little after, Gresham's Exchange in the City had been burnt down, and Westminster Abbey, a little before the Houses of Parliament, had nearly shared the same fate. There was no South Kensington Museum, no Crystal Palace, no National Gallery, no Nelson Column—even that pillar which commemorates the Duke of York's debts did not yet stand in Carlton Terrace. Buckingham Palace was unfinished. Half the Clubs, ay, and more than half of them, did not exist. Crockford's Hell blazed fiercely every night at the top of St. James' Street, and the Guards' Club—a modest little building, as slim as the waists of the ensigns in those distinguished regiments—stood next to that sink of iniquity. Brooks's and White's were just the same then as now; the same professed politicians at the one, and the same empty faces looking out at the bow-window of the other. The streets are often dusty and dirty now, and they will be, I suppose, till we can change London clay, and gravel, and smoke, for Paris gypsum and woodfires—not to speak of their brighter sun and sky and our damp fogs. But the streets were far dirtier then, far less frequently swept and watered. The police were not as efficient as they are now, and some specimens of the old Charley still lingered about, haunting the streets at night in the shape of private watchmen. I always thought, when I saw a bank guarded by such a keeper, fast asleep, and snoring in his box, how safe the partners must have felt, and how secure the streets must have been when burglars were scared by a snoring watchman. The gentlemen were better dressed then than now, and the women worse. In nothing is the change in the London streets more remarkable than in the utter extinction of the dandy, and in the creation of at least fifty well-dressed women for one that there used to be in old times. Are they ladies? You had better ask them. I'm sure I can't tell, because I am shy, and never speak to ladies in the street or out of it; but I have no doubt you will, as a rule, get a far more civil answer from any man or woman in the streets in 1870 than you would have got in any of the thirties from 1830 down. Yes, the women of this generation are far better dressed, setting aside a few extravagancies of costume, than their sisters forty years ago. As for the atoms of the city, the houses and the shops, they are so changed for the better, that we should not know them to be parts of the same town. The old shops and houses in the best streets, if restored, would look by the side of the new ones much as the tramps and beggars, who stream up from the provinces, look beside the hardworking London artizan. As for the parks and public gardens, they were the dark, undrained haunts of roughs and ruffians. Some people drove round them, and on Sunday there was a throng of carriages, filled with ladies, and mixed with gentlemen on horseback, between Apsley House and Oxford Street. Let me add that the Marble Arch, which I daresay some of you think has stood where it now stands ever since it was built, then stood in front of Buckingham Palace, just where the new front is now built, the Palace then consisting of three sides of a quadrangle. In those days no cabs drove through St. James's Park; any one who wanted to go in a public conveyance from Pimlico to Pall Mall had to go round by Grosvenor Place and Piccadilly, or down the Birdcage Walk to Westminster, and so round.

Let no one, therefore, complain of this modern city, in which, no doubt, many more improvements might and will be made under the æsthetic rule of Mr. Acton Smee Ayrton; if he does, let him think of the London of 1830, and thank his stars. On the river there were no steamboats; if you wanted to go on the Thames, you hired a wherry rowed by a waterman, who, though generally 'jolly,' was not the young waterman of Blackfriars Bridge, and who, so far from feathering his oars with 'skill and dexterity,' very often put you in risk of your life by getting foul of the starlings of Old London Bridge, when trying to shoot it on the ebb.

I thought I had ended this comparison, but the word bridge drives me on. I can remember the building of all the bridges across the Thames, except Waterloo Bridge. Many 's the time I 've shot old London Bridge, and a very nasty shoot it was, sheer down several feet. At the ebb in spring-tides it was a perfect cataract. I well remember old William the Fourth and Queen Adelaide going to open the New Bridge in state with all the ministers, in August, 183–. That was something like an opening; it lasted hours. It was not merely a drive through the city and back. It is a great mistake to suppose that Londoners do not like to see their sovereign. I think the feeling is that, as they pay a great deal to support the dignity of the crown, they feel they ought to have the right of a good stare at it sometimes. I don't mean at the regalia in the Tower, but at the head that wears it; and I am sure that the days are coming,—perhaps they are even at the door,—when that head would be all the more easy if its eyes had rested oftener on the people. Say ten times in the year. Ten days out of three hundred and sixty-five. Then I remember old Westminster Bridge; and a very nasty bridge it was, mounting up into the air as though the builder, who was a Frenchman, had first thought of carrying it to the moon and been thwarted in his scheme. It had no real foundations and was built on 'caissons,' as I believe they are called. Great crates and bundles of faggots thrown into the water, and courses of masonry built on them. Of course when the river, as all tidal rivers have a trick of doing, deepened its bed, which it did far more rapidly after the demolition of Old London Bridge, the caissons were washed away, the piers stood in air, hanging on only by the side arches, the masonry began to crack, and down would have come the bridge. Much the same happened with Old Blackfriars' Bridge, except that that was not built on caissons. Yes! I remember all the Bridges except Waterloo. All the railway bridges and foot bridges. As for engineering, think what English engineering is now, with its railways above and underground, and its colossal stations and hotels, its public offices and buildings of all kinds, and then remember that our great engineering effort in those days was the Thames Tunnel, which cost mints of money and took years to make; and yet a like tunnel has been made within the past year with ridiculous ease and little cost. Remember, too, that at the time I speak of there were only two little bits of railway out of London —specimens of the Great Western and London and North Western. One of them went positively as far as Slough, and the other actually to Box Moor. They bore about the same relation to those great lines as they now exist, as the bits of the Atlantic cable which you carry at your watch-chain bear to the cable itself stretching across the vast Atlantic.

Think of all those things, wretched grumbler against the present time, and confess that you might have lived in a worse decade of the century than that in which you had the honour to be born.

Were we unhappy at our own time,— disgusted, discontented? No, I don't think we grumbled so much then. Englishmen, I suspect, have always grumbled, and ever will. But not so much then as now. No one expected so much. Tastes were simpler. People did not ruin themselves with giving bad dinners to their friends, because the friends looked for less. Money, certainly, went twice as far. It was harder to make, and clutched more closely. Altogether, I think we were happier—at least, I was.

But enough of this. Of this I am sure, that we three intending travellers were very happy walking about that dusty old London at its very dullest season. It was the second week in September, recollect. We dined together, and went to bed early, for we had to be up betimes in the morning.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW WE THREE SET OFF FOR CORFU.

We were to start by a Dover coach next morning, and as the road was hilly we were to think ourselves lucky if we got down to that famous port much before dinner. Then it would be too late to cross. We must sleep at the 'Ship,' and cross in the morning.

This programme we faithfully carried out. The Major and Twentyman were very sorry to leave London. Indeed, could they have done it with any decency, they would have thrown up their foreign trip altogether and stayed in town. But such treachery was not to be thought of. To Corfu we were going, and to Corfu we would go. But their state of mind made them duller than usual. They had talked themselves out too. They said little till we were going down that tremendous hill leading into Dover and could see the Channel close enough to detect that it was really very rough. We might have known it by the wind, but who ever thinks of the wind till the time for crossing comes? It may lull, then why fret about it? This is one of the imaginary evils which cause so much care in life. They are all like the wind. Never mind them. They will blow over. That is true philosophy.

But the Major was no true philosopher. He philosophised in part, and he feared in part, and fear soon got the lion's share and swallowed up poor philosophy.

'I can see it will be very rough to-morrow. Wish I had never come. Nothing so nasty as sea-sickness.'

Twentyman was much better. He was biblical. 'Who can tell what a night may bring forth? It may be calm to-morrow.'

Besides, the giant was hungry. He was thinking more of his dinner than of anything else. Dinner and tea and breakfast first. That was his triple line of defence. After that let sea-sickness do its worst.

'Why, we shan't go on board for eighteen hours at the least. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."'

'All very fine,' said the Major. 'You seem very self-sufficient, Twentyman! Suppose it gets much worse in the morning, what then?'

What the famished Twentyman would have answered to this question no one can say. By this time we were at our journey's end, so far as the coach was concerned. We got down, claimed our luggage, paid the coachman and guard their fees, had our things taken up to our bedrooms, and ordered dinner.

Of course we did not escape the inevitable beefsteak. What Englishman ever did in those days? and I am Englishman enough to assert that a real old-fashioned tender steak cut off the rump,—no! I won't hear of any of your French fangles of the filet, or under-cut of the sirloin,—I say such a steak, preceded by soup and fish, and followed by, say a grouse or woodcocks, and a plum-pudding and custards, washed down with a bottle of champagne at dinner, and a good one of claret afterwards,—I say after such a steak a man ought to go to bed in charity with every man.

We had not such a good dinner as that at the old 'Ship,'— dear me! only last summer I saw it staring at me with bills in all its windows,— but we had as good a one as we could.

'There is nothing like being well fortified before you proceed on an expedition of this kind,' said the Major. 'I 'll bet a penny that this,'—here he swallowed it,—'this is the last bit of good beef that we shall have till we come back,—if we ever come back. I say, Twentyman, what a bore leave is! I wish the Horse Guards had refused me mine.'

'No good thinking of that. We must go on,' said the giant.

'What time does the boat sail?'

'At ten precisely.'

'How long shall we be getting over?'

'That depends, of course, on wind and tide. In four or five hours, perhaps, with this wind.'

This part of the conversation was mine. Twentyman was never good for three answers running unless he was very much excited.

'Why don't they make the steamers quicker, or the passage shorter?' drivelled on the Major.

'They have made them quicker, and so they have made the passage shorter. Perhaps some day they 'll make them quicker still.'

'Wish they 'd done it already. I wish, too, that Count Toif were here to be sea-sick with us. I feel sure we shall all be as sick as cats.'

So we went maundering on till bedtime came.

Next morning Twentyman was up early. Long before the Major, who never neglected his rest, and whose trump was still sounding along the passage when I came down at eight o'clock.

'How 's the sea?' was my first question.

'I've seen the Captain, and he says it 's blowing very hard on the other side, but it 's off shore here, so we shan't feel it at first.'

'I'm afraid the Major won't like it. But you must go and stir him up, or he will never be ready in time.'

While Twentyman went up on this pious mission, I got breakfast ready. Soon after,—that is to say, in twenty minutes or so,—I heard the giant striding back.

'He won't be long now, but I never knew a fellow sleep so hard. The sleep seems to sink into him like a frost into the ground. He is asleep far below his skin.'

Shortly after the Major appeared, dressed in what seemed to be a diving-apparatus. He had a rough Macintosh suit on. They had just come in, and were not yet smooth. They had a rough, sergy look outside, and were much heavier.

'The weather is sure to be rough. Just what I said, my luck all over. Wish I never had got that leave! What is there for breakfast? Broiled whiting, ham and eggs, muffins, cold partridge. Thank you, Twentyman; some of that cold partridge.'

With that the Major sat down and completed his fortifications by eating a hearty breakfast, made up of everything on the table.

We all did very well in this respect, and having been much, as you know, on the sea, I had no fears for myself.

By ten we were on board with our things.

You who have only lived in these latter days,—you little innocents of some twenty or thirty summers—you have no notion how comfortably one went on board then, and how much easier it was for the luggage. There was none of that dashingly destructive work which crumples up young ladies' boxes and baskets as though they were brown paper; none of that reckless hauling them up by a crane, merely to toss them over down an inclined plane one after the other, where those who have only carpet-bags,—gentlemen, I mean; who ever saw a young lady with all her things in a carpet-bag?—can stand by and make merry at other people's luggage, as it leaps down, jumps up, cuts capers, rolls over on one side merely to turn up on the other, and performs diverse absurd antics in the sight of heaven, merely for the fun of those cruel people who go down to the pier to laugh at the sufferings of others. No! in our time everything was done decently and in order. There were, perhaps twenty passengers besides ourselves.

Punctual to the hour—to the very minute, in short,—the hawsers were loosed, and the *Queen Adelaide* was under steam for France.

Some men are born to make fools of themselves. There are things to do and not say, and there are things to say and not do. If you know that a man is a very great bore, gives bad dinners, has a vinegar-cruet of a wife and rude children, you may say, if he asks you to come, that you will go and stay with him at some time or other. That is a thing to say and not to do. A thing to do and not to say or talk about was going across to France that day. Why we all went I'm sure I can't tell, except that we said we would go. Just as we started one of the passengers, whose wits must have been muddled, went up to the Captain. and said, 'A very fine day, Captain. Do you think we shall have a smooth passage?'

'No, I do not, Sir,' said the Captain. 'I call it anything but a fine day; and as for a smooth passage, you may think yourself lucky if we have any passage at all. I go because I must. It's my business; but why you all go I can't think.'

So that passenger retired looking rather sheepish. It was one of those bright days when the wind seems to blow all the harder because it is bright; it seems as though the wind can't bear to see the sun having it all its own way, and bursts out into a passion. I scarce ever saw a brighter sun or fiercer wind. At first, under the shelter of the English shore, we felt it little; but as we got nearer and nearer to Calais, it seemed to blow harder and harder, and the whole surface of the sea was covered with little rainbows as the sun shone through the white crests of the waves, which the wind cut off into spray as soon as they broke.

Dear me! long before that how sick the Major was! He turned yellow, green, and blue; he fell flat on his back; he called out 'Steward!' but no steward came. The sailors came instead, and trampled on him. They could not help it, for they had to get in the boat, which was in danger of being blown off the davits. There the Major lay groaning, and yet no one could give him help. All the animals that he had eaten, all the birds that he had shot, were more than avenged by the tribute which he was forced to render to the fishes. He did manage to roll out of the way, though, when a gun broke loose—one of the two five-pounders which they kept on board for signals—and came lurching over to his side of the deck; then the Major was as shifty as an eel, and it ran by without hurting him.

Twentyman was far less ill. He got a good seat under the bridge amidships, and there he sat, looking the picture of misery all through the voyage. Once only was he disturbed, and utterly discomfited, when a fat Frenchman rose up in a wild way, intending to follow the Major's example in paying tribute, but after a few faltering steps he tottered, turned round, and embraced the gallant giant, at the same time rendering to him what he had meant for the fish.

Do? what could Twentyman do but grin and bear it? He could not throw the Frenchman overboard; that would have been murder on the high seas, and Twentyman would have been guillotined. No; he grinned and bore it, and got a towel and wiped himself all over.

After a dreary time we reached Calais. Then there were no facilities. You were called on for your passport as soon as you landed. It was taken away from you, only to be returned when you left the fortress. After that you were driven into a pen, and kept there while the *douaniers* examined the luggage, an affair of some hours. What was all this for? A very good reason: that you should pass the night at one or other of those excellent inns—the glory of Calais and the shame of Dover—Dessein's or Quillac's. It really did not much matter which you went to; Dessein's had most diplomats, perhaps; but at either of them you could get, at a short notice, all that we tried to get at long notice the night before at Dover, and could not. At Dover we had none of that imaginary Barmecides' feast I mentioned a little while ago, except the beef-steak. At Calais we had everything I have imagined at Dover except the beef-steak.

We went to Dessein's, and at Dessein's we slept. Next morning we were to go on by the *malle poste*. You should have seen Major Plunger doing justice to French fare with his teeth, and injustice to it with his lips and tongue.

'As for him,'—and the wretch said this with his mouth full of a *potage à la Bisque*—'he hated these rich soups. Give me a little gravy-soup or mutton-broth.' It was the same with the fish *entrées* so good at Calais, and with the *poulet* and the *perdrix*, with the *beignets de pêche*, and the *omelette aux fines herbes*, which followed. He much preferred a good rump-steak, a roast fowl, and some apple-fritters; but it was remarked that, however much he abused French cookery, he ate everything that was offered him like an otter.

Here, too, Twentyman was much better. He was in high spirits at having been ill only by deputy or vicariously, and as he had taken the precaution to have a warm bath, he looked the pink of neatness.

'I must say I like French cookery,' was his sage remark; 'but it doesn't follow that I don't like English cookery too.'

Having got this worthy pair abroad, I am not going to bore you to death with them; the more so as I must get on. We started next morning early, and I had to be paymaster and spokesman. We got three places in the *coupé*, and were on our road to Paris across French Flanders before seven A.M.

Of all our escapades and stupidities on the journey I decline to dwell. Of course, we had them; perhaps more than our share. But when we got into any mess I consoled myself with thinking of Arethusa, and saying, 'Well, this is another day off the period of separation. I wonder if Auntie will give in at last, and not force me to be "rounded off?"'

At Paris—it was Paris of the days of Louis Philippe, recollect,—we went to Meurice's. I thought the two would be better off at an English house than in a French hotel, and so they were. I think they were very happy. We only stayed in Paris two days, and in those two days we saw everything; at least, we walked over everything. You don't remember old Paris, with its quaint streets, and *tourelles* on so many of the houses. The quaint streets are, I think, all gone. What has become of the Rues de la Vannerie and Tissanderie, of the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, and a host of others, as quaint? Gone, Sir! all gone; made straight, widened, lengthened, asphalted, and macadamised into new boulevards and avenues. I daresay it is all very much improved, especially for strategical purposes; but I miss old Paris, and I mourn over it.

We had trouble in Paris, too. In the Champs Elysées we nearly came to grief. Did I tell you that Major Plunger had a dog—a Skye terrier—delighting in the name of 'Mop?' Well, Mop went with us along the Champs Elysées, and we had got so far as the fountain, near the middle. I am not at all sure this fountain, too, has not vanished before the spade of M. Haussmann; but it was there in those days, and it was called the Fountain of the *Rond Point.*

'Jove! what a fine place to give Mop a swim! He hasn't been in the water since we left Warwickshire.' So said the Major; and when the Major said anything he tried to do it. 'Hi, in, Mop! hi, in, Mop!' he cried; and in went Mop.

This brought the sentinel down on us in a moment. When I say the sentinel, you know that in this the Paris of the present is like the Paris of the past, that in both there are and were sentinels posted here, there, and everywhere. What they guard is not always clear, but in this case I suppose the sentinel was guarding the fountain.

He came up to us and said, not so much severely as seriously: '*Savez-vous, Messieurs, que c'est defendu de baigner les bouledogues ici.*'

It was no use saying that Mop was no bulldog. He turned to some *carte,* and showed us the words:

'*Bouledogues ou autres chiens.*' And so we had to give in, and call Moppy out.

As we were going away, I asked him, jestingly, 'And if we had not called him out, what then?' '*Alors,*' was the reply, '*ce chien-la serait bientôt parmi les blessés.*'

How unlike that sentry in Windsor Park, who, seeing a little spaniel running about on forbidden ground, not only spoke to it, but tried to shoot it several times. But those were before the days of musketry instruction; and so, after several rounds of ball-cartridge had been expended, he desisted.

Of course we went to the theatre; only one night, though. The play I took them to see was at the Palais-Royal; but it was not one of those disgusting nudities so common in the present Paris. No; it was to see *Michel Perrin,* followed by the *Gamin de Paris,* with Bouffé in both pieces. Dear me! when before did I ever see such an actor as Bouffé? And, what is more to the purpose, when shall I ever see such a one again?

I do not mean to say that the Major and Twentyman could understand either piece—certainly not *Michel Perrin.* But they were very good; they laughed when I laughed; and as in the *Gamin de Paris* it was nearly all through the piece, they laughed a good deal.

That was the first night. The next we were to start for Macon in another *malle poste,* and so to go by Chambéry and Aix les Bains, along the Valley of Savoy and over the Cenis to Turin. This was, I believe, the shortest way; and as all ways were the same to me, and the Major wished to see something of Turin, I took them that way.

I will say nothing of that journey, till we got across the French frontier into Savoy. Now it is all French, and there is a railway to St. Michel; then it was all Piedmontese, and there were only diligences. But I don't think I ever had such a lovely journey as on that September day, through the Valley of Savoy. The weather was most delightful, so warm and yet so fresh; except the *cretins,* with their hideous *goîtres,* all was bright and cheerful.

'I wouldn't have missed this for a good deal,' Twentyman kept on saying at least twenty times a-day; and he said it as if he meant it. Perhaps there was a great poet stowed away in that gigantic frame; who can tell? The Major was more practical; he still went on eating as much as ever he could, and availing himself, at the same time, of the Briton's right to grumble.

We stopped a night at Chambéry to sleep, and then we made a long day, and got to Lanslebourg, at the foot of the Cenis, about six in the evening.

I had only seen the West Indian mountains and the Peak of Teneriffe when I was a child, and since then the Scotch mountains, so that the Alps were a wonder to me. But if I thought them astonishing, how much more so must they have been to the Major and Twentyman, who had never seen anything higher than Snowdon? I don't mean to say Snowdon is not a mountain. Let no hot-headed Welshman fall foul of me on that score. Snowdon is a mountain, just as a short woman is a woman, though she be only four feet four. As a woman of that stature is amongst women, so is Snowdon amongst mountains. After this declaration, don't let any one go about saying that I say Snowdon is not a mountain.

I daresay all of you know the way the road goes up over the Cenis in zig-zags, and down the other side in the same fashion. We three, after dining at Lanslebourg, where, for the first time since leaving England, we had a bad dinner—as bad, say, as one that you would get at a first-rate English hotel. At Lanslebourg, we started to walk up the mountain, while the diligences, drawn by mules, went up the zig-zags. Here the giant's long legs stood him in good stead, and he was first by a long way at the top. I came next, and then the Major, puffing horribly, and much distressed by persisting to wear his mackintosh, as he thought it might 'be cold up there!' 'There' being the top of the mountain which we were about to climb.

We had not long to wait for the diligences, which came toiling up the zig-zags; and when we got in, down we went at such a rate that I was fairly aghast, lest we should topple over the precipice. One lady, I believe, somewhere in the diligences,—for there were three,—did go into hysterics, and one mule fell down, and was dragged along by the seven others. There were eight to each diligence; but at the end—at the bottom of the hill—both the lady and the mule were quite well; and really, in looks and temper, there was little to choose between them. Late that night we reached Susa, or, rather, early next morning, and I remember what a thrill ran through me as I felt the warm breath of Italy rushing up, as it were, from the valleys to meet me; and how I longed for Arethusa to be there. She would never have gone into hysterics, I am sure.

Next morning we were up early, and I engaged a vetturino to take us to Turin. At Turin we accordingly arrived, very hot and tired, and very dusty, and very hungry, and very thirsty, but, considering all things, in wonderfully good spirits.

Major Plunger did, though, just hint that he would be in a certain 'warm' place if we ever caught him taking his 'leave' out of England again.

'As for me, I like it very much indeed,' said the taciturn Twentyman.

We put up at Turin at the 'Hotel Feder,' a well-known inn, where we were excellently treated. Here the Major recovered his temper and spirits. I think he slept eighteen hours without stopping out of the first twenty-four we spent there.

'Not up,' said Twentyman, whom I sent to look after him; 'but the snoring has never ceased since he went to bed.'

'Does your party mean to stay here some days?' asked the polite landlord.

'Yes,' I said.

'Then I'll go and get rid of the next-door neighbour to your friend,—one of our Italian counts,—who says, if that snorer stays here he must leave.'

So the poor Italian was fairly snored out of his hotel by the grunting Major.

I believe the landlord thought he was one of the Seven Sleepers. When twelve o'clock came, and no Major, the waiters were for breaking in the door, but we, knowing the habits of our friend, would not suffer it.

'Let him sleep his sleep out; he is very tired; he'll be down in an hour or two.'

And so he was, all the better for his slumbers, and with a most voracious appetite.

We stayed at Turin four or five days, and saw all the lions. The best thing by far in Turin is the distant view of the Alps. Monte Rosa, which we had seen so well on the Cenis, towering above all the rest. What with *Cima de* This and *Cima di* That, the mind gets fairly bewildered when a guide attempts to point out and identify all the peaks. But Monte Rosa is the queen of all.

We saw the palace, and the old ruin in the midst of the town, and the arcades, so well adapted against heat in summer and cold in winter. Soldiers, too, we saw, not in such numbers as I have often seen them since, under Carlo Alberto and Victor Emmanuel, but still in great numbers. That was a very dull time in politics. The Austrian heel was still hard pressed on Italy and Piedmont; or, rather, Piedmont's king was wavering between despotism and freedom. Out of Piedmont, the white coats of the Austrians were everywhere, except at Ancona, where there was a French garrison,—the first of those fingers in the Italian pie which France has had ever since the Revolution of the Three Glorious Days in July.

After we had seen all that was to be seen at Turin, I tried to get my friends to go to Milan, but they would not. Major Plunger hated cathedrals, and had now got a notion that he must get on to Corfu, or his leave would all run out.

Twentyman would only do what the Major did, and so they lost seeing the Lombard capital.

I thought it best to have a vetturino to take us down to Ancona, where one of the Austrian Lloyd's steamers, then a young concern, was to pick us up. And so we went lazily along, making easy stages, and passing by Parma, Piacenza, Modena, and Bologna. We had to show our passports perpetually, but we had got them all properly *viséd* in Paris, and the only trouble we had was that, whenever the officers looked at the Major, they said, 'chauve,' 'calvo,' and 'grosso,' words of which he soon got to know the meaning, and which always threw him into a passion. 'Non calvo, but hairy,' he was once heard saying, which only drew down on him a 'Si, signor,' from the remonstrant *douanier*.

After a day or two at Bologna, to my mind by far the finest city on that side of Italy, we went slowly on, turning aside to see Ravenna, and its pine-forest, and its churches and tombs, much to the Major's disgust. 'All time thrown away: very poor place.' Then we went to Rimini, hard by the sea-shore, and I tried in vain to interest them with the story of Francesca. No! they had never heard of her, and didn't care who she was or when she lived.

I rather think the sight of the Adriatic made the Major melancholy, for he was very silent and morose as we neared Ancona. We had a day or two, and I tried to get them to Loretto to see the Santa Casa; but it was all no good. 'A pack of Popish idols and mummeries, fit for no Englishman to see. All very well for monks and nuns, but not for British officers.' So we did not go to Loretto just as we had not gone to Milan.

During our stay at Ancona we had ample opportunity of seeing the smartness of the French infantry, who thronged the place. They showed all their usual orderly intelligence, though the Major declared their drill wretched. 'Can't march a bit,' he said. 'Talk of comparing them with any of our regiments of the line! It's all nonsense. Our fellows would outwalk them, as well as outeat and outdrink them. Never saw such a slovenly, shuffling quick step.'

We saw, too, the famous harbour, and the mole, and the arch, and the statue, and we saw hosts of those monks and friars of whom the Major had such dread, and we saw the fine peasantry of the March of Ancona working one day in three in the fields, and playing at Mora in the sun on the other two. Truly it seemed a land of soldiers and priests, of great fertility, and extreme idleness and ignorance.

CHAPTER V.

HOW WE WENT ON TO CORFU.

At last the steamer came. We saw her smoke miles off from the end of the mole, and were ready to embark long before she entered the harbour. The Major was tired of travelling. His wish now was to get on, to have his leave out, and return to Warwick. Why he came, I never could exactly tell, except that he said he wanted to see his brother. But now we are on board ship, the *Ferdinando*, one of His Imperial and Apostolic Majesty's steamers. Not a war-steamer,—I don't mean that,—but a merchant-steamer, carrying the Austrian flag.

What a splendid afternoon it was, and how the moon shone that night, as we ran along the shore —for the *Ferdinando*, you must know, was to touch at Manfredonia, Tremiti, Bari, Brindisi, and other places—how grand the spurs of the Apennines looked, and the Gran Sasso d'Italia, the backbone of Italy, which cuts off the north-east from the south-west coast. We were of all nationalities—Turks, Germans, Greeks, besides English and Italians, the last, of course, outnumbering the rest. All along the land journey the Major had declared that he would have a berth to himself. I thought as this was doubtful it would be better to secure Twentyman as my berth-fellow, and I did so. How the giant was to screw his six feet odd into the crib called a sleeping-place, was his concern, not mine.

The Major, I must tell you, was a very clean man, greatly given to comfort and washing, things very good in their way when you can get them, but very hard to get on land in Italy, and on board any ship. How the Major used to storm at the shallow pie-dishes called basins, and the the little caraffes of water called jugs. 'Fancy calling this water enough to wash in! Why, my sponge would suck it all up in a moment, and yet feel dry as a bone.'

This sponge, you must know, he carried about with him in an oilskin bag. No! it was not macintosh. Macintosh bags were not yet invented. It was oilskin, and a very nasty, sticky bag it was, always clinging together when the sponge was out of it.

As soon as we got on board I made friends with the steward, and in my best Italian—very bad was the best, I am afraid—I got a cabin with two berths for Twentyman and myself, and a cabin also with two berths for the Major. The steward, whom we only caught after many '*subitos*' and '*adessos*,' said the fat gentleman could have the cabin all to himself if the steamer were not full; and as it was not full up to the time he spoke, and we had left Ancona, we made up our minds, and the Major made up his, that it was all right. He got his portmanteau up out of the hold; he opened his dressing-case; he got out his sponge—his sacred sponge—and had a preliminary wash. Then he came on deck only to go down to tea or supper, or whatever the meal was; and after that was over, when, as usual, he ate everything, and abused everything, he went up on deck, and smoked cigars in charity with all men.

How beautiful that night was, and how I thought of Arethusa! The recollection of her followed me about like a guardian angel, and seemed to keep me safe. I daresay you think I have forgotten her all this while that I have been telling you about the absurdities of my fellow-travellers. They were a great comfort to me. I looked on them as children confided to my care. I was their nurse. They were so helpless; they were something to think of. But as soon as I was left alone, in my bed, on deck, on shore, Arethusa was ever there, and I said over and over again, 'When shall I see those Acroceraunian Mountains?'

'High time to turn in,' said the Major, about eleven o'clock. All this time the sea was as smooth as glass, and sea-sickness had been scouted by every one on board.

'Yes,' yawned Twentyman, 'high time;' and so they dived down the companion.

I stayed up an hour or two longer, lost in my sweet thoughts, among which ever arose the feeling that the three months would soon be over, and then that Mary Harbury would be finally disposed of by my refusal to have anything to do with her or her ring fence.

But even lovers get tired sometimes. I, ardent as I was, so lost in lingering recollections, began to think it time to follow my friends.

'Don't go to bed yet,' said the steward. 'We are just going to stop,'—at some place, I forget the name he mentioned,—'and there will be such a noise of letting off steam and unloading freight, that it will not be possible to sleep.'

I defied all these influences, and went to my berth. There in the lower berth lay Twentyman, with his gigantic limbs curled up in the air, fast asleep and breathing hard.

But if he was breathing hard, what was the Major doing ?—snoring away like a snorer, droning like a bagpipe, grunting like a pig, and sometimes squeaking. It was a most fearful concert. One must have been very tired to stand such music; but I was proof to it. In a few moments I was fast asleep, and asleep I continued. I never heard anything about the stopping of the steamer; no! nor one of the Major's unearthly notes all that night.

But in the morning I was awakened by a din in my berth that no one could have withstood. It was a mixture of oaths and shrieks all blended together, and was really awful.

'I say, what's all this row about?' said Twentyman.

'Yes, what *is* it all about?' I responded. Rubbing the sleep out of our eyes, we saw at the open door of the cabin Major Plunger in a state of fury, holding the steward by the throat. Besides being in a state of fury, he was in another state as to his attire, which I shall not attempt to describe. I say little about it, because it was little.

'What's he done, Major?' said Twentyman, uncoiling one of his legs and setting it on the floor.

'Done?' said the Major; 'gone and put a leper into my berth, who has washed with my sponge.'

This was alarming; and as it threatened to be very serious for the steward if I did not get up, I followed Twentyman's example, who had already rescued the steward from the Major's grasp.

As I was afraid the irascible Italian might stiletto his antagonist, I pacified him by saying that, as the Major was 'molto iracundo,' he must excuse him, and asked him how it was that he, the steward, had allowed any one to use the Major's sponge.

The steward's story was short. When the steamer stopped the night before she took in some passengers, and amongst others one gentleman who was put into the Major's cabin, simply because that was the last berth left. He certainly was very scorbutic-looking, but the steward did not think he was a leper.

This was enough, so far as it went, and now I turned to the Major, whom we had taken into our cabin, to hear what he had to say. Twentyman lay on his berth, and I lay on mine, holding, as it were, a bed of justice, while the Major, in the scantiest attire, stated his case.

'You know, both of you,' he said, 'that I was to have that cabin to myself. That was the bargain. I went to sleep, and slept as I always sleep,—well. When I woke up, I said to myself, Now for a good wash. All my things were laid out ready beforehand. There was even a pail of water—I can't call it a tub. Well, when I looked at my sponge I had a sort of feeling that some one had touched it. I had left, I must tell you, a little dirty water overnight, that I got rid of out of the porthole, and then I just had a good wash. I felt as clean as though I were at Warwick. Such a shave, too!' rubbing his chin. 'When it was all over, I heard a sort of grunt behind me. I turned, and what do you think I saw in the lower berth, or the one below mine? By Jove! a leper asleep, as white as snow. That scoundrel the steward must have put him in overnight; and as I feel sure that my sponge had been touched, that leper must have thought it was put out for the good of the whole cabin,—a common sponge!—my sponge a common sponge!—and sponged his filthy carcass with it. There he is, sound asleep now. Peep into the cabin, and you can see.'

It certainly was as ugly a story as it was nasty. To make it all right, we did peep in, and we did see what certainly was a most loathsome-looking fellow,—a man like Vesuvius of late, in a violent state of eruption,—fast asleep below the Major's berth.

Now we turned again to the steward, whose fright and anger had departed, and he was again the pliant body a steward—and above all an Italian steward—always is.

Up to the present time the steward had not understood the great charge against him. He thought he had been collared for putting another passenger into the Major's berth; but when told he was accused because that passenger had washed with the sacred sponge, he burst out into roars of laughter at the absurdity of such a supposition.

'I assure you,' he said, 'in all these years I have never known an Italian passenger wash so soon after he came on board. If they wash at all, it is just before leaving the vessel to go on land. No, no! that gentleman never washed with the sponge. He may have touched it, and looked at it as a curiosity; but wash with it, he certainly did not.'

When all this was made plain to the Major, he was a little mollified.

'But who,' he said, 'will guarantee me against catching that fellow's leprosy, for he may have given it to me by merely touching my sponge?'

'No one, of course,' said Twentyman; 'no one. It's a bore, but it can't be helped. All we can hope is, Major, that it won't break out all over you.'

'Gracious goodness!' said the Major; 'fancy returning from leave a confirmed leper like Gehazi.'

'Awful bore,' said the consolatory Twentyman. 'How nasty it would look in the medical report: "Invalided for leprosy!" They'd hardly believe it at the Horse Guards!'

There was no help for it. The Major had to return to his berth to make a hasty toilet, to rush on deck and wait for his breakfast. He thought he had escaped the leper. Not at all. He and the leper had consecutive numbers. He was No. 90, and the leper No. 91. They were bound to sit next to each other. I was 88, Twentyman 89, so we all sat at breakfast in a row. I first, then Twentyman, then the Major, and then—the leper! The worst was that the leper was late in coming, and his arrival when breakfast was half over nearly made Major Plunger ill. The leper, too, as many loathsome people do, thought himself very charming, and would offer his unhappy neighbour little civilities and attentions all through the rest of the meal.

'Confound that fellow!' said the Major, when he appeared on deck with a cigar in his mouth; 'he'll be the death of me!'

After breakfast I consulted with the steward, and was glad to learn that Signor Scorbutico was only going as far as Manfredonia, and that we should get rid of him before nightfall. That was such good news for Major Plunger that he was quite excited, and said:

'If that fellow would only go, I should be quite happy!'

Very beautiful was it to run by the shore, to touch at Tremiti, then, I believe, as now, a place of exile for political prisoners, for *carbonari* then, and for *camorristi* now; to round the great promontory of Gargano, and—to the great delight of the Major—to land the leper.

He had still to undergo dinner with him, and the leper's attentions were as marked at that meal as they had been at breakfast. It was rather a joke for us,—I mean for Twentyman and myself; but it was anything but a joke to Major Plunger. One of his eyes got inflamed—I believe entirely from exposure to the night air and smoking. It was but a little redness after all, but nothing would satisfy him but that he had got the leprosy in his eye. He was certain that was the way in which it began, and he was always bathing and sponging it.

Very glad, therefore, was he, and were we, when, after doubling the great headland of Gargano, the butt-end of the *Sasso d' Italia,* we ran in for the Roads of Manfredonia.

How strange and yet how beautiful are those Norman towns all along that coast; girt by a line of walls and towers, within which, as in some of our own Cinque Ports, the modern town has shrunk!

They may have outgrown their walls and barriers since I was there in 183-, and have spread out over field and valley, but then there was a shrinking inwards, a shrivelling of the population. Straight up the hill from the shore went the line of wall, enclosing a castle and a cathedral, both far too big for the walls. Then, after running up for some hundred yards, the fortifications took a turn to the left, ran along a sufficient distance to complete the square or parallelogram, and then turned back to the shore. That was the town or city of Manfredonia, as seen from the sea, and such, I daresay, it still is.

Even in those days there were brigands. We had a company or two of Papal soldiers going to meet a famous chief. The officers had made conquests of all the women on board, chiefly Venetian ladies, who spoke the choicest Venetian, and were much interested in the future campaign.

Boatload after boatload of the brave defenders of Gregory XVI. departed for the shore, and as each boat pushed off, their female sympathisers waved their kerchiefs and called out: '*Guardate vi da incidere ai mani dei brigandi.*' 'Take care not to fall into the hands of the brigands.'

I must say I thought the soldiers, and more than all the officers, looked as though they would much rather fall into the arms of the ladies they left, and no wonder if the horrors one heard of were likely to befall them.

As it was, we were glad to lose them, as they crowded the boat and were not good company. But our great rejoicing was when the leper left. It had been kept dark which port he was likely to patronise for his disembarkation; and when the steward came up bearing a very small bag, which contained all the leper's worldly goods, the Major's joy knew no bounds.

'I say, Twentyman, he 's going. Just look at my eye, there 's a good fellow, and tell me how it looks.'

'Better, much better; it will be all right to-morrow,' said the giant. 'I suppose you can see well enough to look at him as he goes over the side.'

'Of course,' said the Major. 'Here he comes.'

A leper is not a pleasant thing to look on; nor do I believe that our friend was one. I very much doubt whether the ancient Israelites would have excluded him from the congregation; and yet he was so ill-favoured that I don't wonder the Major disliked sitting by him, particularly after his suspicions as to the sponge. I am not going to disgust you with his appearance, but only to say how we lost sight of him. Confess that in this I have been very good. I have not shocked you by details.

Well, up the companion he came, and if he looked bad below, he looked much worse in the broad light of day. Yes! he was loathsome; there was no denying it.

I don't know if you are aware that landing on that coast is no easy matter. It is not that the sea is rough: it may be; but when we were at Manfredonia, it was quite calm. The danger of landing is not so much from the sea as from the boatmen who put off from the shore, and fight for the passengers who are to disembark. How many passengers did we land at Manfredonia? About ten; and for these at least a hundred boats fought. Talk of the cities that contended for the birthplace of Homer. It was nothing to the contest to land at Manfredonia.

Down the gangway our leper stepped. His luggage had been handed down before him, and been safely lodged in one boat. But when he appeared himself, it seemed as though the object of all the other boatmen was not to suffer him to enter that particular craft. He and his luggage seemed never destined to meet. He was dragged here and pushed there. Beat and buffeted, hauled and mauled, till at last, when he had rashly set one foot on one boat and the other in another, the boats parted, and he, after striding on each boat as far as he was able, could stride no longer, and fell into the sea.

We were just going off; for the captain of the

Ferdinando was anxious to get on, and would not tarry; but before we were well under way, we saw the leper fished out by a boat-hook, and safely seated in the boat with his luggage. He looked sleek and shiny as a seal; but like a very leprous one.

'Glad he is all safe,' said the Major; 'but I hope this will be a lesson to him not to use another man's sponge. Twentyman, how is my eye?'

'Much the same,' said the giant. 'If anything, a little redder. It will be all right tomorrow.'

That night the Major slept in peace. He had his cabin all to himself. Indeed, had any passengers come on board, I don't think, after the steward's experience of Major Plunger's clutch, that he would have ventured to put them into that cabin.

Next morning we came to Bari, which, I remember, was a large town, almost a city in our estimation,—and I daresay quite so in its own. It had—and I suppose has—a cathedral and a bishop, and it looked as shrunk within its Norman walls as a nut two years old. There we had to disembark a lot of copper money, in cases; and as the boatmen—who were as brown as berries, and as naked as Adam before the fall—were fighting for the right of taking them on shore, one case was lost overboard, and sank to the bottom. I have often thought of that case of Papal pence, and wondered if it has ever been fished up.

Last of all we came to Brindisi, where we landed. Every one lands at Brindisi to see the house that Virgil is believed to have stayed at when on his travels. Being an outspoken man, I shocked the captain of the port of Brindisi very much by pointing out to him that the house was certainly not Roman, but mediæval,—a twelfth-century house perhaps. All he said was, that it was not safe to trifle with popular traditions,—that that house not only was, but was believed to be, that in which Virgil stayed, and that it was much as a man's life was worth, down there in the hot south, to run contrary to received beliefs. In fact, Brindisi at that time was very like an American city in the South in the old times, when the opinion of the citizens was a law unto themselves.

At Brindisi we had not so far to go to Corfu, and at Brindisi we picked up several Greeks. The most interesting of these were a father, mother, and daughter. The father was one of those small, well-made men who are really much stronger than they look—a man built on the model of the old Greeks, whose proportions it was extremely unjust to put into modern clothes. In the palmy days of Athens you would have seen him in the gymnasium stripped, and then you would have seen a frame like the best of the Elgin marbles. The mother was rather of the Italian type,—a very severe face, with regular features. She must have been a very handsome woman when young; but, alas! women in Greece so soon get worn and shrivelled,—if they don't get coarse and fat, which is worse. The daughter, Sappho; yes! the daughter.

All this time I have never told you the name of the family. Well! you know one sees people first, and learns their name afterwards; but I may as well say that it was a fine high-sounding name—'Maurocordato;' and mind you pronounce it—if you try to pronounce it at all—'Mavrocordato;' for *u*'s in Greek are usually *v*'s.

But to come back to the daughter. When I saw Sappho Maurocordato sitting in a boat with her respected father and mother, as they were being pulled towards the *Ferdinando* by a brace of sunburnt boatmen—burnt almost as red as Dutch bricks—I remember saying, 'Well! here is a pretty foreign girl at last!'

Twentyman, whose favourite position was staring over the side, said, lazily:

'What a stunner!'

Major Plunger seemed moved, and about to say something; but he said nothing.

Yes! let me describe Sappho. She was not dark, with the darkness of Greek beauty. She was fair, with light brown hair; she had blue eyes—not dark blue eyes like Arethusa's, or greenish-blue like Mary Harbury's—but blue, azure blue. Her features were regular, and she had a higher forehead than Greeks, and indeed than women in general. In figure she was as perfect for a woman as her father was for a man; and, I must say, she had not inherited any of her mother's severity of expression.

Signora Maurocordato looked as though she had suffered much. Like Dante, she bore her wrongs and sorrows on her face; and it was easy to see from her features that she had a story.

Their boat touched the side, the red bricks held on with their old-fashioned boat-hooks, just such, I verily believe, as were used at the siege of Troy. After the usual strife and gesticulating about the fare,—when fury enough to win a pitched battle is expended on the difference of twopence sterling—the three new passengers mounted the side. Signor Maurocordato, with great activity and energy, the Signora more sternly, but with decided determination in her step, and the Signorina with a burst of laughter,—magnetic laughter,—and a tripping gait.

I said magnetic laughter, because there are many kinds of laughter. There is the horse-laugh, a loud, muscular burst,—which is not worth much,—but which is hearty all the same. Then there is the mere skin-deep smile, which seems as though the face of the smiler were painted, and he or she were afraid to crack the enamel. There is the laugh, the laugh of commerce, the sign so often hanging out of an empty shop, anything but hearty or exhilarating. And last of all, there is what I call magnetic laughter—which is catching and infectious, which spreads from face to face of a company, as the streamers of the northern lights flash and spread; laughter which magnetizes you, in short, till you feel, however much you may resist the feeling, that you must laugh too, and on the right side of your mouth. I dismiss, of course, laughing on the wrong side of your mouth, as no laughter at all—as much a mockery as a Jerusalem artichoke is compared with a real artichoke.

Well! that magnetic laughter was Sappho Maurocordato's; when she laughed or smiled it was as when Venus put on her cestus, she won every one about her to the same mirth. It was not a chattering laughter, but a real merry burst from the heart.

She said nothing. She only laughed, and we all laughed with her. The Major laughed and laughed again. Twentyman, whose risible muscles were stiff and more rheumatic, laughed once. As for me, the better laugher of the two, I laughed all the while Sappho laughed, and when she stopped I stopped.

She followed her parents along the deck, and when they sat down together side by side, she would not sit with them, but plumped herself down opposite to them, next to me.

I daresay you will say this was all playing a part. I daresay. Women play many parts in life, and some people, though I do not, think they are always acting. Was Sappho Maurocordato acting on board the *Ferdinando?* Who can tell?

It so happened that we three, the Major, Twentyman, and I, were all of a row on a bench, like sparrows on a wall. And not at all unlike sparrows, too, in other things. The two clung to me, so that when I rose they rose, and you might as well expect to see two sparrows still sitting after one had taken wing, as to see the Major and Twentyman seated when I had risen.

As soon as Sappho was seated next to me, she turned round and looked at each of us full in the face. It was both a general and a particular look, aimed at us all together, and yet with a quick separate glance for each. When we compared notes afterwards, the Major said: 'That girl's eyes went right through me.'

'My eyes seemed to melt away before hers,' said Twentyman, very prettily and poetically. 'They were lost in hers.'

After that speech I had some hope of my giant. His heart, as I have said before, I believe, was in its right place.

As for me, I decline to speculate on the effect those eyes produced on me, but I can tell you that I said at once to myself, 'No! they are not half such nice eyes as Arethusa's.' And then I began to muse on the Acroceraunian Mountains and my own pet fountain.

Her mother said something to her in Greek, which, of course, I could not understand. Even if it had been like the ancient language, which it is not—not at least in ordinary conversation—the pronunciation is so unlike an Englishman's notion of the way in which Pericles spoke, that Pericles himself, with all his sharpness, would not understand one word in ten of what we say.

Then they went on in Italian,—in that bastard Venetian dialect which I know now, but of which I knew nothing then.

I do not know if you feel as I do, but it is very provoking to sit near people talking, and not to know what they say. At last I mustered up courage, and in my best Italian I said it was a very fine day, and that I hoped we should have a smooth sea all the way across to Corfu.

My neighbour smiled,—this time it was not a laugh,—and said in much better English than my Italian:

'I do hope it will be fine, for I hate the sickness of the sea.'

How glad I was, and how still more glad were the Major and Twentyman, to hear a lady talking their own dear English tongue!

Nor was that all. Signor Maurocordato also spoke very good English, and the only one of the three who was disinclined to do so was Madam, whose excuse was the Englishman's,—that she was 'afraid of being laughed at.'

Dear me! how many sins, both of omission and commission, has not that 'afraid of being laughed at' served to conceal!

It was amusing to see how very polite both the Major and Twentyman instantly became. They were gentlemen, and as soon as they shook off their mortal fear of being attacked by any one in a foreign tongue, there was no little civility that they were not ready to offer. It was all done in the rough, genuine English way, and was all the more welcome.

Major Plunger was sure it would be damp sitting on deck, though the air was balmy beyond the balminess of any English day. The moon, too, was waxing fast, and I, even I, full of the last full moon at Mandeville Hall, and with the White Lady still running in my head, was forced to confess that at Brindisi half a moon is brighter than an English full moon.

But while I have been moon-gazing, the Major and Twentyman had both dived down the companion, and soon reappeared with all the wraps they could lay hold of.

As soon as they had been disposed of, we all began to talk.

The Signor could see that we were English officers, going to Corfu,—it was so easy to tell English officers. 'There was an unmistakable something about them,' and so on.

As I listened I could not help thinking the Greeks of the nineteenth century are just as much given to flattery as those of the Lower Empire.

'Yes,' said Major Plunger, in a magnificent way; 'we are English officers,—that is to say, Mr. Twentyman and I are; Mr. Halfacre, this gentleman, is not. We are going to see some brother officers at Corfu, and Mr. Halfacre has come with us to speak for us, and show us the way.'

'Ah,' said the Signor, 'capisco. Mr. Halfacre is what you English call a T. G., a travelling gent. You, of course, will be lodged with your friends in the citadel? Where are you going to stay, Mr. Halfacre?'

While I was wondering how he could have got my name so pat, the Signorina said:

'We have heard of Mr. Halfacre before. Have we not, papa?'

'When and where?' I asked.

'That you must guess,' was the reply. 'I daresay you will know all about it when you get to Corfu.'

It was no use trying to get their secret from them as to how and where they had heard my name, which is not so common as Smith. Had my name been 'Smith,' it would not have been wonderful. Every one has heard before of the Smiths, but Halfacre, it was past belief that they should ever have heard it.

However, heard it they had, for though it is not at all an easy word for any foreigner to pronounce, they did not call it *Halfacré*, as was probable, but *Half-ăcre*, or *Halfăker*, as plain as possible.

I gave up guessing, however, and we went on with the conversation.

'Yes,' said the Signor, 'we have heard of Mr. Halfacre, and I must say I am surprised that he has not heard of us. If he has a mystery, we have one too. Both will no doubt be cleared up at Corfu. But what I wish to ask is: If Mr. Halfacre will come and stay with us—some part of the time, at least, that he is at Corfu?'

'Why, really I have made no plans. I certainly am free enough, for I know no one in Corfu, though it seems Corfu knows me. The old story, I suppose: 'More people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows."'

'If you are free,' said Sappho, 'you will come and stay with us in such a lovely house among oranges, and myrtles, and cypresses, up at the top of a hill overlooking the sea. Do you like riding?'

'Very much indeed; I like nothing better.'

'Then again you'll come to us, for there are lovely rides all over the island through the olive-groves, and as one rides over the myrtles the odour rises round one. Oh, it is delightful!'

'I have made no plans,' I said, putting on some of Aunt Mandeville's stiffness. I was not going to jump down the throat of the first pretty girl I met.

'Oh, you'll come to us all the same, plans or no plans,' said Sappho; 'see if you don't.'

'I am quite ready to leave it there. I will see if I shall.'

The *Ferdinando* was not a fast boat, not at all; she was a regular slug. Those were not the days of fast boats; then any boat—any steamboat, I mean,—was a fast boat. But it was pleasant to sit there on deck, breathing the pure air, to feel the fresh, crisp wind which blew off the Albanian coast, and, later on, to catch sight of St. Salvador, as the highest mountain in Corfu is called.

It was only very slowly that we made up our minds to go to bed.

'Miss Harbury won't have much chance against Miss Sappho, Halfacre,' said Major Plunger.

As for Twentyman, he was deep in love—over head and ears in love; and that, when a man is six feet four, is very deep in love, indeed.

But his way of showing his feelings was peculiar. 'I wish Miss Sappho were not a foreigner; then I'd try to marry her.'

With which qualified expression of admiration the giant turned into bed.

We had none of us much rest. At eight o'clock next morning we were running up the North Channel, leaving Butrinto, on the Albanian coast, on our leftt.

The Greeks are early risers, and I found Miss Sappho on deck.

'I thought you were never coming,' she said; 'but you are better than the rest of them. What's the name of that tall man, who spoke so little?'

'Twentyman.'

'Twentyman! what a good name! Twenty of him would make forty ordinary men.'

'Tell me which are the Acroceraunian Mountains.'

'Let me see. There they are,' pointing, as she spoke, to the great mountain range of Albania, which show in such majesty from Corfu.

'And where is the fountain of Arethusa?'

'Arethusa! I never heard of her. She is no friend of mine. Does she live in Corfu?'

Against ignorance, as well as against stupidity, the gods are powerless. What was the good of prolonging a conversation with a girl who neither was modern divinity nor the ancient nymph?

And now we neared the harbour. There was the citadel; there the semicircular town; there fort this and fort that; there Vido, the island, in front, on which England expended so many hundred thousand pounds in fortifications merely to have the pleasure of blowing them up. Soon we saw the British men-of-war at anchor; still the wooden walls of Old England, and not yet the modern matchboxes. There they lay so trim and tidy, with their yards so well squared and their rigging all so taut. Soon we saw the red-coated sentries, and heard the everlasting drums and fifes.

The Signor and the Signora had now come up. Major Plunger and Twentyman followed. The drums and fifes would rouse any officer from his rest in any foreign land. In a few minutes more the *Ferdinando* had taken up her moorings, and our voyage to Corfu was over.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW I LANDED IN CORFU.

'THERE 's Bill!' said Major Plunger to Twentyman, pointing to a stout artillery officer, who was looking up at the ship from a boat among the many that swarmed round her. 'How are you, Bill?'

Bill, thus challenged, responded, 'Pretty well. How are you, Dick?'

'All right,' was the answer, and so the two brothers, Bill and Dick Plunger, met. They had not seen each other for fifteen years.

'I say,' said Twentyman, 'we had better all go ashore together. By Jove! there goes one boat over. I hope there are no sharks in these waters.'

'Sharks!' said Sappho; 'there are hundreds of them. A sentry was snapped in two by one a few weeks ago.'

'I shan't bathe here!' said Twentyman emphatically, as if there was any shark spawned that could have cut him in two.

'Good-bye,' said Sappho; 'we're sure to meet again; and see if you don't come and stay with us in the country, Mr. Halfacre.'

'Good-bye; good-bye; good-bye!' And we three wanderers went over the side. Fortunately, there was no fight for our bodies, because the Major's brother had already secured a boat.

We landed at the stairs between the citadel and the palace—that palace, the glory of Engineer architecture; a most elegant and commodious building, the work of that distinguished corps in the days of King Tom.

At the stairs the Major went off into the citadel along the esplanade. Twentyman was also quartered somewhere else in the fortress. With the selfishness of soldiers, they left me to myself, and two burly Maltese porters carried my luggage to the Hôtel d'Angleterre, across the esplanade.

Yes; there I was, all alone in Corfu in an hotel. I had come away so hastily that I had no time to get letters of introduction. We had Coutts' circular notes, that was all.

Would you believe it, that all this time I had never once remembered, never so much as looked at, Count Manteuffel's letter of introduction? The time had not come for me to want it till I landed. The first thing I did was to get out the letter, and then I saw on it, written, not, I am thankful to say, in the German fly-crawling character, but in a good round Italian hand:

'Al Illustrissimo Signor,
Signor Spiridion Maurocordato,
Corfù.'

And now the murder was out. The Count had sent them a private letter, warning them that I was coming to Corfu the bearer of a letter of introduction, and that was how they were all so ready with my name. They had been practising the pronunciation of Halfacre for days before my arrival. I must tell you that they had only gone from Corfu to Brindisi for a few days on business, so that they had plenty of time to get the Count's letter.

How odd it was that I should have fallen in on the way with the only family to whom I had a letter of introduction!

Should I present it? Was Sappho Maurocordato any rival to Arethusa? I scouted the notion. She was a pretty, merry girl, and that was all. Her forward foreign manners made her more demonstrative than English young ladies, but one excused that in her because she was a foreigner. There could be no harm in presenting the letter; and so, having had a bath quite free from fear of lepers, I made myself smart, and set off to find the Maurocordatos' house.

It was not far off. It was the last house in Condi Terrace on the left as you turned up from the esplanade. Condi Terrace, which was—and, for all I know, still is,—the Belgravia of Corfu, was built on one of the old bastions of the dismantled town. When I say 'dismantled,' I believe the fortifications were only masked by the houses, not dismantled; and that, if the city of Corfu were ever besieged,—as it has been, over and over again, in Venetian, Russian, and French times,—all the houses of Condi Terrace would disappear in a puff of smoke, and be razed from the face of the earth before the strategical necessities of the besieged. In such a case, it will be hard to say which would be the worst enemies of Condi Terrace—the friends within or the foes without! Let us hope, for the sake of Condi Terrace, if for nothing else, that war may not show its horrid face to the town of Corfu.

Perched up on a height, the terrace commanded a wide view over the country in front, the mountain of Santa Decca filling up the foreground, and it had a side view of the sea and the Albanian coast and mountains on the left. Yes! there was a lovely view from those houses.

It was rather soon to call, but I was idle, and idleness is the root of all calling, as well as of all evil. The Maurocordatos had a very nice apartment; and in the saloon I saw seated, as demurely as though she had never done anything more than sit there all her life, the Signorina Sappho.

'Well, you have come!' she cried, rather triumphantly. 'I told you you would. Have you found out the mystery?'

'Yes,' I replied. 'The fact was, I threw Count Manteuffel's letter into my portmanteau without looking at the address; and I am not sorry that I did so, as it gave me, at least, an opportunity of making your acquaintance as an utter stranger. Letters of introduction are always unpleasant things to present, and in this case we meet as acquaintances when I present it.'

'As friends, too, I hope!' said Sappho.

Here the Signora entered, and brought a difficulty with her. How could this same Italian beauty, or past beauty, be the lemon-haired Count's sister, for, you know, he said his sister was married to a Greek, and this Greek was evidently Signor Maurocordato.

I think the Signorina must have guessed what was passing in my mind, for she said:

'Mamma is Count Manteuffel's half-sister. Grandmamma was married first to a Greek and then to a Prussian General, and that's why mamma is so dark and her half-brother so fair.'

'I was wondering,' I said, 'at the utter want of likeness, but you have made it quite clear.'

Now the Signor entered. Besides being Prussian Consul, he was Hereditary Grand Standard Bearer to Santo Spiro, the patron saint of Corfu, an office of immense dignity and usefulness, the onerous duties of which were to walk before the shrine of the saint on the day of his translation, holding his banner.

But in spite of his office, he was a lively, pleasant man, who seemed disposed to do everything for me that he could.

It is so strange to find an Englishman who knows no one in Corfu, but that, of course, will soon be mended. You will call on the Lord High Commissioner, and on the General who commands in chief, and then they will both ask you to dinner, and you will get into society, and—

'Forget us Greeks,' put in Sappho, very cleverly. 'That's always the way with you English, when the Greeks are kind to you. You are a rude, uncourteous set.' And then she burst out into a peal of laughter.

'No, I shall not,' I said. 'I am not so fond of generals and dinners. I can have enough of them at home. While I am here I would sooner see the country and the people, especially if they are so charming as I have already found them.'

'If you really mean that,' said the Signorina, 'we will take you at your word. After having done what politeness requires to your countrymen, after playing a little at cards with them—I don't mean what you call gambling, but only leaving cards on them,—give up your countrymen, and come and stay with us at Gastouri a few miles out of the town, and there we will make you as happy as we can.'

'Agreed,' said I. And so it was settled that I should go in a few days with them to their country place; meantime I was to stay at the hotel.

That afternoon I went to see Major Plunger and Twentyman, whom I found very fairly lodged in the casemates at the citadel.

Every one who has been at Corfu knows the citadel—that huge bifurcated rock that rises at one corner of the esplanade to a height of some hundred feet above the sea, cut off by a ditch from the mainland, with the English church, and the officers' quarters, and the barracks, and the batteries clustered round its feet.

Now, all these fortifications are useless, and that is why, when our exodus came, which at one blow destroyed the pleasantest station for soldiers out of England, and the most delightful resort for T. G.s fond of woodcock-shooting in the world,—when we cleared out in order that the grand idea of the

Greeks might be fulfilled, we left them standing, and blew up the works on the low island of Vido which were really useful in modern warfare. But when I was there nothing could be more imposing than the citadel, from the top of which the heavy guns there mounted looked as though they could send their plunging fire right down upon the decks of the line-of-battle ships moored beneath.

I should think that Major Plunger stood quite an inch higher when I saw him than when he had left the steamer with Bill.

'This is something like a fortress. No nonsense, no excuses. At night drawbridge up, password set, and a ball through your body if you can't give it.'

'All very right, I daresay,' said Twentyman, who was stretched all his full length in an American rocking-chair smoking a cheroot. 'All very right and necessary; but what's a fellow to do if he forgets the password, and gets shot? I suppose he ought never to stir out of the citadel after dark. When a fellow comes home from dinner, what's he to do? Then he may forget?'

'I'm sure I can't tell yet,' said the Major. 'When I've tried I'll tell you.'

'Been to call on the Lord High?' asked the irreverent Twentyman.

'No, I'm going to-morrow. What's the General's name? I must call on him too.'

'Quickstep,' said the Major. 'He's an awful martinet, they say, and parades regiments in the noonday sun. Ever so many men have fallen down this summer with sunstroke.'

'I suppose,' says Twentyman, 'he thinks if an enemy should come he might choose to land, not like a thief in the night, but a grasshopper at noon; and so he wants the men to be ready for him.'

'Very glad I'm on leave,' said Major Plunger. 'We should have a good many empty helmets in a month's service out here.'

'So am I,' re-echoed Twentyman.

'Come and dine at the artillery mess, Halfacre?' said the Major. 'I have got my brother to put you down as an honorary member. Seven sharp.'

So at seven sharp I went, and was introduced to some twenty or thirty artillery officers and engineers. It was a very fair dinner, and a good deal of wine was drunk, and afterwards there was some card-playing, and I lost some money in betting to 'Bill.'

Altogether I went home very much disgusted.

Next day I took a walk through the city, and out at the Land Gate, and down towards the sea, and up by the Casino to the One Gun Battery,

—that famous One Gun Battery at the entrance of the old port, where Palæopolis, the old city of the Phæacians, was situated.

At the end of September the sun at mid-day was still scorching, but in the mornings and evenings the air was fresh and cool. But what a charm of sea, and land, and air was shed over the whole place; and yet, wherever I went; from the citadel, from the Casino under the huge artocarpus tree at the door, under the clustered olive-trees at the One Gun Battery, my heart ever turned towards Arethusa, and my eyes sought the mountains amid the gorges of which her fountain was hidden.

'Ah! Arethusa! Arethusa!' I said, half aloud, when a merry laugh was heard behind me from a lady on horseback, cantering up the road to the battery. It was Sappho Maurocordato, riding out with her father and Yanni her Greek cousin.

'You Englishmen are just like sheep,' she said. 'You all of you go on doing the same thing for ever, as if you were fated to do it. I knew you would be here. I felt as sure of it as that you would come to us at Gastouri, and here I find you; and, do you know, as we came along we saw such a sight. We saw your two friends, the heavy cavalry detachment, plodding along the road, and looking as though they had never walked a mile in their lives.'

'I have nearly had enough of Corfu,—I mean of the town,' I said. 'When are you going into the country?'

'To-morrow mamma and I go, and you may as well come too. The day after papa will come. Besides, if you get as tired of the country in as short a time as you are of the town, you can always get back, for it isn't more than eight or nine miles.'

'I shall have done all my paste-boarding to-morrow, and then I shall be free. I will come the day after with the Signor, if he will allow me.'

'Very good; the day after to-morrow then.' And as she said that she turned her horse's head and rode him down the steep pitch at full speed, through the gnarled olive trunks, and over the myrtles and cyclamens.

'What a madcap, Pazza!' said the Signor, in Italian. 'Come, Yanni, let us follow her;' and then the two performed a like *fantasia* down the brow of the hill.

I was still standing there, enjoying the view, when the Major and Twentyman came up, dusty and deliquescent as the curates' wives immortalised by Sydney Smith.

'Holloa! you here?' said the Major, wiping his forehead. 'Hotter work this than the Mandeville swedes. Twentyman, like a good fellow, gave me his arm. Did you see Miss Sappho what's her name? She passed us riding.'

'Oh yes, I saw her. I'm going to stay with them the day after to-morrow in the country.'

'Not before you have seen the Lord High and the General?' asked Twentyman.

'I am going to call to-day, and if they ask me to come to dinner, well and good, but they will have to send the invitation after me.'

I walked back with them, and wrote home all that morning a long letter to Aunt Mandeville, and another to Colonel Chichester, telling them all about our journey. Did I dilate very much on our meeting with Sappho Maurocordato? I am afraid not. To the Colonel I said nothing; but to my Aunt I said that the Count's introduction had been the means of my making the acquaintance of a very delightful family, relatives or connexions of his.

I forgot to say that I found a letter from dear Auntie lying at the post-office. It did not say much, except that she was not very well, and felt very dull. Brooks had got a fit of gout, and so had Mr. Grubb. She saw the Harburys sometimes, and Mary was very well. That was all, except that she prayed I might have a safe return.

Then, in the afternoon, I went and left my card on King Tom, Sir Thomas Maitland. An orderly ushered me into the hall of the palace, and an *aide-de-camp* took my card and entered my name in a big book. So that call was over. Then I went across the parade or esplanade, I forget which, and called on General Sir Harry Quickstep. That was not quite so awful, but it was not pleasant for a shy man. There, too, my name was entered into a book, and if the Lord High and the General returned their cards or sent me an invitation to dinner, I might consider myself received into Corfu society.

Afterwards I went across to Butrinto in a sailing boat. It was a soldier's wind, fair both ways, and I thought myself lucky to find Twentyman staring down at the sea, at the head of the stairs, just as he used to stare over the bridge at Warwick.

'Where's the Major?' I asked.

'Gone to look at a horse. He wants to buy a charger, I believe,—a barb, and take him back to England to astonish the Colonel.'

'Come along with me for a sail;' and so the giant slowly descended the stairs, and we had a delightful expedition, which had, however, a sad termination.

Just as we were off the citadel, well across the channel from Vido, we saw a party of soldiers bathing.

'I thought this was a bad place for sharks,' I said to the Maltese boatman.

'Yes, very.'

The words were hardly out of his mouth when we saw a scurry and a flutter among the bathers—a rush across the water as when waterfowl are scared. Fortunately the men were not very far from shore, and all succeeded in reaching it but one. We were running down on them with all sail; but we were too late. The hindermost swimmer stopped short, he was half-drawn under for a moment, and then his body sprung up again. A boat which had put off from the shore was beforehand with us, and lifted the poor fellow in. His thigh was gone, bitten close off at the hip. He was taken into the moat on his way to the hospital, only to die before reaching it, and the savage monster that had slain him swam boldly round and round the bloody patch in the water, to see if he could complete his meal.

'What a brute!' said Twentyman. 'Why does not some one shoot it?'

'Many have tried,' said the Maltese, who had been crossing himself all the time; 'but sharks have charmed lives—at least, this one has, for no one seems able to hit him.'

You may imagine with what appetite we landed. Twentyman walked off to tell Plunger all about it, and I walked on to the Casino, and thought of Arethusa.

While I was there I quite made up my mind that Corfu was a dull place—even for an accepted lover, who has to feed on the recollection of past favours. How heartily I wished that the three months were over, and how decidedly I determined to say 'No' to my Aunt's ultimatum.

All that night I dreamt of sharks.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW I WENT TO GASTOURI.

NEXT day I was to start for Gastouri with Signor Maurocordato. It was not far; not more than a few miles. Out at the Land Gate, through the suburb, past the soldiers' cemetery, filled with the victims of low fever and liquor, a little further on the race-course, and so on and on till the road began to mount.

On our way we encountered a portent in the shape of Major Plunger, run away with by a half-broken barb which some wily Greek had persuaded him to try. No one ever doubted the Major's horsemanship. Out with the North Warwickshire he went as well as any one; not quite so straight as some, perhaps, but still very well. But on that October morning—for we were in October—he passed us more like John Gilpin than any one else. He had this against him, too — that he was utterly ignorant of the country and the roads. In fact, he had never been out of the gates of the fortress before, so that he was worse off than the 'trainband captain' and 'the citizen of London town.'

Just as he passed us he nearly rode over a burly Greek priest, who was walking, as they always do, in the middle of the road. We were driving; and even had we been riding it would have been useless to follow him at any pace.

'He sits him well,' said the Signor; 'but there are few men in Corfu who can ride "Abdallah."'

'You know the horse, then, and his name?' I asked.

'Of course I do; every one in Corfu knows Abdallah. He has no vice; but with most people, except his own master, he is an irreclaimable runaway.'

This was at the entrance of the suburb. We passed the cemetery, and then we came to the beautiful race-course. I wonder if the Modern Greeks keep it in order and have races on it, or whether they are letting it go to rack and ruin like King Tom's beautiful roads—for I must tell you that one most admirable proof of King Tom's despotism was that he laid out, and levelled, and metalled most excellent roads all over the islands. When I was last there, there was still only one little bit of road in all Greece—that from Athens to Megara.

Well, we reached the race-course, and there—

half-way round the three-miles course — we saw the Major and Abdallah, still going like the wind. There had been some heavy rain the night before, and it was rather heavy going.

'We are in no hurry,' said the Signor, 'though Abdallah is. He will have had enough of it by the time he comes round to this spot. Let us wait here and speak to the Major.'

So we waited, and in a little while horse and rider reached us, still going very fast, but both distressed, the Major much the worst of the two.

'What a brute! what a brute!' gasped out the Major, in a state quite as bad as that of John Gilpin, except that he had not the necks of the bottles at his belt.

'How did you come to get him?' I asked.

'Oh, the Maltese horsekeeper, to whom I went to look at a charger—never saw such a beast in my life, by the way, and told him so outright — that scoundrel said there was another horse standing there as quiet as a lamb, and he knew his owner would be glad if any British officer would do him the honour of riding him. It seemed a good offer, and so I had him saddled; but as soon as ever I mounted him—it was fortunate the stable was close to the gate, and not in the crowded, narrow streets — as soon as I got on he bolted, —downright bolted, and you know the rest. I saw you pass just before I mounted, and thought I should have a pleasant ride; but now see what a state I'm in—bathed in perspiration and bespattered with mud.'

'Well,' said the Signor, 'you have sat him, and that is not what every one can do. Many a British officer has fallen from the saddle of the invincible Abdallah. I must say, though, that horsekeeper told you a fine story. Abdallah's owner is the last person in the world to play tricks upon travellers. He lends the horse when he is asked to lend him, but he always warns those who ask that his horse is very "fresh."'

'All the horsekeeper's fault, no doubt,' said the Major; 'but I will give him another trial;' and so we went on. It was all very well when we walked the horses in our phaeton, but as we too wished to get on we began to trot and then to trot fast. Then Abdallah's spirit returned, the road was smooth as a billiard-table, there was nothing to stop him, and, in spite of the Major's tugging, off he went at full speed.

'It's no use,' said the Signor; 'the Major is fated to ride alone to-day. Abdallah will not stop now till he gets to his own stable. He will turn sharp off to the right, and in two miles more he will land the Major at his master's door.'

'And who is his owner?'

'My Cousin Yanni,' said the Signor. 'You saw him riding Abdallah yesterday with Sappho and me, and then he went quietly enough; it is the old story—the wildest horse may be ridden by those who know how to ride him.'

On we went; and soon beginning to climb, we went up and up, and round and round, through olive and orange-groves, till we reached Gastouri. The house was a strange, tumble-down place, not looking very large, yet having plenty of room in it. We entered at the back by a courtyard of great size, having large barns and granaries for the produce of the estate; for in Corfu the rents are paid in kind. Beyond the courtyard was a gateway, leading into a garden, and across the garden was the dwelling-house, properly so called, consisting of four or five large rooms on the ground-floor, and bedrooms above. In the wings were the offices, with more sleeping-rooms above.

In front of the house was a terrace and a verandah, round which grapes clustered and fig-trees grew, though the season of figs was almost over. All along the terrace were large orange-trees; yes, real trees, none of your *orangerie* abortions—dwarfs, whose only beauty is their stunted age. Trees bearing fruit, and flowers, and buds, and having thorns and spikes, too, as any one who climbs an orange-tree knows to his cost. If we had toiled up the hill, we were repaid by the prospect. A lovelier view human eye never saw than that which burst upon us from that terrace. Thence far above all the surrounding country we saw the fertile lowlands, all across to the crest of Condi Terrace; Corfu, with all its forts and batteries, lay before us, and behind it rose the cleft peak of the citadel; farther still, miles and miles away, towered St. Salvador,—the highest land in the island, whence Otranto, in Italy, may be seen on a clear day. On the right, or, if I am writing for Scots, I would say on the north, lay the Corfu Channel; the strait between the island and the main, flecked with the white sails of feluccas, and crisp with a fresh breeze. The sea was of that intensely dark blue which the ancient Greeks compared to wine—almost purple in its tint.

All this we saw afterwards at our leisure. What we really did see when we reached the terrace, were Sappho Maurocordato and her mother, seated under the verandah.

'Well, Mr. Halfacre,' said Sappho, with one of her bursts of wild laughter, 'what do you say about coming or not coming to Gastouri? Just four days ago you knew neither us nor our place of abode—not even our names; yet we knew all about you, resolved to have you here, and we have got you.'

'I say that no man can resist his fate; what he is fated to do he will do.'

'Very wise; for all the world like an old Turk with his kismet, or an old Greek with his pepromenon.'

Now don't be scared, any of you young or old ladies who read this book, at that long word. It is quite fair in me to make Miss Sappho use it, because she was a Greek, and, as you know, the Greeks speak Greek; but I am not going to let her speak any more Greek or any more Turkish unless I can help it.

You may laugh at me as you please. I said, 'Let those laugh who win.' I said I had had enough of the town of Corfu yesterday, and to-day I like it still less; and then I told them the story of the shark.

'Very horrible, no doubt,' said Sappho; 'but what I want to know is, why men will go and bathe in water where they know there are sharks? It's the sharks' nature to eat men, if men give them a chance. Do you think, now, if sharks could live out of the water, that you would ever see them walking into a fishmonger's shop on land?'

'Very well put,' I said; 'but then the loss of shark life is not so horrible as that of human life.'

'I should like to hear what the sharks would say to that. A shark priest, for instance, preaching to ground-sharks. I daresay he would enlarge upon the shocking end of a young shark who took to all sorts of wickedness, and would follow a ship, till he was caught and killed. His agony and remorse would be fearful while he was being hacked to pieces; but then it would be all too late.'

'Yours is a strange nature,'—and then I was going on; but she snapped me up more like a shark than anything else.

'Ah! but I haven't half done. You say human life is more precious than shark life. So it is in the abstract, I admit. But take a special case. These ignorant fishermen of ours, sunk in ignorance and superstition, as great idolaters as any Pagans,—or even your British soldiers and sailors, whose sole desire seems to be rum, or some ardent spirit, for which, and under the influence of which, they will commit any crime. A little lower than the angels indeed! So he might be; but what is he?—not far above a shark in his instincts, and worse than a shark in that he might know how to do right, and does it not! No! depend upon it, there is a good deal to be said for sharks.'

I could not help saying, 'Well! Miss Sappho, I wish we had you at home to discuss religion, and right and wrong with one of our neighbours.'

'Which of them?—perhaps, I know all about them, as well as about you. Shall I guess?'

'Guess by all means. What shall I bet with you that you cannot tell me the person I was thinking of?'

If you think it wrong to bet, reader, I quite agree with you; but this is not a treatise on morals, but a true story. When I was in Corfu, all the young ladies betted with the officers, harmless little things, a pair of gloves, or a bottle of scent, *ess bouquet* being the favourite; I said, therefore, 'Oh, anything you like; a bottle of *ess bouquet*.'

'A big bottle?' asked Sappho.

'Yes, as big a bottle as Mr. Taylor has in his shop.'

You ignorant people who have never been in Corfu must know that the British Government there could never have got on without Mr. Taylor, who was banker, wine-merchant, and everything to us. How the British army could have got on without him for a single day, I cannot tell.

'Done,' said Sappho. 'You'll give me three guesses, of course?'

'Yes!'

'Well,' said Sappho, with a most graceful banter, 'I will make you a present of my first guess. I mean to throw it away, not to frighten you by guessing right at once. My first guess is, Mr. St. Faith.' She pronounced it *St. Fait*; for few foreigners, not even Greeks, are good at the final *th.* 'It 's not Mr. St. Faith, because he is a good, easy man; not given to discuss right and wrong; nor caring to inquire into the nature of sharks. No! I should have no discussion with him.'

'Well! you know one of our neighbours and friends; but you are right in thinking that I do not mean him.'

'Yes! I knew it,' said Sàppho. 'That was only a little powder burnt to clear the barrels of the gun. My next guess shall be,—who shall it be?' she said, archly. 'Now I think of it, I won't guess right till the last guess. Now for guess No. 2: It is not Mary Harbury, with her no one could discuss anything. She is too *bornée;* she lives, you know, in a ring fence.'

She said all this so coolly, that I was fairly puzzled, and blurted out:

'No! It is not Miss Harbury. How do you know she lives in a ring fence?'

'Oh, we know a great deal more of Warwickshire in Corfu than you think. How do you know that I have not been there, and seen Harbury and Mandeville Hall, and even the White Lady?'

'You seem really to know everything. But now for your third guess. Like the Princess in the Fairy Tale,—you must guess right this time. It 's your last chance.'

'All I say,' said Sappho, 'is Madam Harbury, —Mind I don't say Mrs. Harbury, but 'Madam' Harbury,—that you may be quite sure that I know all about her. Have I won the bottle?'

'Yes! fairly.'

'Then take care it is a good big one.'

And then she rose, and ran off into the house.

The Signora followed her. She had sat all the while in a sort of duenna fashion, seemingly musing, and apparently paying little attention to what her daughter said. Once or twice I turned to look on that severe and serious face, but it seemed lost in the depth of its own sorrows, and I did not gain a single word. The Signor had disappeared. He was a busy man. Busy in Corfu with his consular duties; signing passports and invoices, and charter parties, and protests, and all that mixture of maritime law and the main chance which make up a foreign consulate. As he carried on business for himself, in Corfu he was up to the eyes in oil, that being the staple of the island. In Cephalonia and Zante his hands were stretched out for currants. In Theaki—that dry-bone Ithaca—he got quince marmalade; and let me tell you, if you have not tasted quince marmalade from the birthplace of Ulysses, you do not know what quince marmalade is. Then he imported timber, and iron, and coals and clothes,—in fact, he was a general merchant in a good way of business. The Jews, of whom there were thousands in Corfu in my time,—and very good, thrifty people, too; not a bit worse than the Christians,—used to say there was no one they liked to deal with less than Spiro Maurocordato. Spiro being the short for Spiridion. As for manners, very many of our city men, who would be quite beneath doing what they would call such a huckstering business as Signor Spiro, had not half,—no, nor a tenth of his polished manners and refinement.

But to return; he had gone off to his barns and oil-presses; the ladies had gone into the house; and I was left alone on the terrace.

Did I admire the view? If I did, you will all agree with me that I must have been a fool. There are things in life beyond views and prospects even the most beautiful. No; I did not admire the view. I walked about, up and down the terrace, with my eyes open, but seeing nothing. I was blind for a season, wondering how it was that Sappho Maurocordato knew so much about me and my friends. Of course, they had heard it all from their relation the Count; but why did the Count take so much trouble to write about me, and—excuse the pardonable feeling of a lover—why did he not mention Arethusa as well as Mary Harbury?

'I 'll be bound,' I said to myself, 'they know all about Mary Harbury's sampler.'

Now I daresay some of you think that, having got you well away into the Ionian Islands, an unknown land to so many of you, I am going to carry you with me through all sorts of hair-breadth escapes from Turks and brigands, that I am going to take you up to Scutari, at least—look it out on the map, my dear—to Yanina, or perhaps to Montenegro, where the blood-feud exists in full perfection; where a Turk kills a Montenegrin if he catches him over the border, and then the Montenegrins come down and kill two Turks. After that the feud goes on in all the progressions, arithmetical as well as geometrical, till at last there is no Turk in Bosnia, and no Montenegrin in the Black Mountain that is not at feud with every Montenegrin or Turk respectively as the case may be. See how I throw away my opportunities. I might make myself the captive of brigands or Montenegrins, both much the same in your opinion, and, let me add, in mine. We might go to the *Bocce di Cattaro*, to *Kleck*, even to *Cettigne*, the capital of the Montenegrins, or I might be carried away up to the mountains of Acarnania, like my good friend Signor Valsimaki, and spend my three months with cut-throat Greeks, until Aunt Mandeville, under the guidance of Sir Benjamin Bullion, sent out three thousand pounds sterling to set me free. But I disdain all these devices, just as I refrained from letting that shark, who, according to Signorina Sappho, had so much to say for himself, snap Twentyman in two instead of that unhappy private in His Majesty's King's Own. I could easily have done it by one stroke of the pen. Our boat might have been capsized, as indeed it once or twice nearly was, by a gust of wind off the land, and then both Twentyman and myself would have been food for sharks.

But, no! this, as I have always told you, is a truthful story, with more *Wahrheit* and less *Dichtung* in it than Gœthe's autobiography, and it is just this truthfulness which must make it so taking to the general public, who desire nothing less than ideas and imaginations, and nothing more than facts; you will please, therefore, to stay for a while with me at Gastouri.

I had just got so far in my brown study as wondering if they knew anything of Mary Harbury's sampler, when the Signorina's head appeared out of a window on the upper story, and she said:

'Won't you come upstairs and wash your hands?'

Now, could anything be more prosaic than that, and yet one thorough good washing of hands, if they are very dirty, as mine were, is worth a dozen imaginary conflicts with brigands?

Perhaps you will say that a conflict with Signorina Sappho, whom I have very badly described, if you do not see that she was witty as well as beautiful, was more dangerous to an engaged lover than any brigand—if that is your opinion, wait till the end of this last volume, and you shall see.

It was very prosaic, but, when a young gentleman is asked by a young lady to come in and wash his hands, what is he to do but to go? So I went.

The staircase at Gastouri was not a great architectural work. I should think whoever designed or constructed it did so with a determination that as few human beings as possible should ever get up it. It was just such a staircase as I once met in a Scotch inn, with a fellow-traveller who had been at the siege of Badàjoz. He tried it once, and he tried it again, and then he gave up the attempt in despair. 'I would sooner mount the breach of Badajoz than climb that staircase;' and he was as good as his word, for he stayed downstairs all night and slept on the sofa. It is quite true that he was old and rheumatic, but even old and rheumatic people must go upstairs sometimes to bed, and staircases should be made to suit them.

Well, just such a staircase was that at Gastouri. It had all the faults that a staircase ought not to have; it was long, and narrow, and steep; it was dark and slippery; it went round and round and round, just like the road that led up to the house. It was a staircase that a lame man might mount, but which he would never descend. No, they were not famous for staircases at Gastouri.

Slipping, sliding, groping, and—I am sorry to say—now and then swearing, I got up that staircase. If you object to swearing I cannot help it. There is a time to swear and a time to forbear swearing; but so long as staircases are built like that at Gastouri there will be swearing, at least, the first time you climb them.

At the top of the stairs I met a mouldy-looking sort of major-domo, a Maltese Joseph, *Giuseppe* by name, who came fawning and crawling up to me, hoping that I had *non fatto di male*—not done myself any mischief—coming up. 'I heard the Signor slipping,' he said, blandly; 'but every Signor slips the first time he comes up that staircase.'

'Very likely, and many times too; but I am up, where is my room?'

'Here,' he said, 'at your honour's service,' and he threw open a door into a room looking out on the front and commanding the same splendid view.

He wanted to do all sorts of things for me—to render me all those useless services which valets render to their masters; but I bowed him out.

As the dinner-hour was four o'clock — so primitive were we in Corfu in those days — there was no dressing, only a deal of washing. 'Water, water, and a bigger basin, no matter of what crockery or earthenware, so it was big.' I did not get it then, at that moment, but the next morning I saw in my room an immense pan, of a rude kind of majolica, which I think I heard they made in Zante. And I had another, bigger still, for a bath. Out of these two I washed and 'tubbed' to my heart's content all the while I was at Gastouri. I have heard men boast of having been the first to throw a fly on this or that Norwegian river, and I am inclined to think I was the first in an humbler but more useful vocation. Yes, I believe I was the first man who ever tubbed in a native house in Corfu. You must recollect that all this happened more than thirty years ago, in the reign of King Tom, and that since then tubs and philanthropy have made the round of the world, like the French Revolution.

Down that staircase perilous, I went again. They were waiting for me in the saloon, and then we went to dinner.

When I say dinner you must remember the Greeks are not great meat-eaters; they are not now, and were still less then. What had we? Botargo and olives first, as a whet. You don't know what botargo is? A sort of caviare made of fishes' roe, only not so good, and certainly not *botargo to the general* in the Levant, where it is largely eaten. Then we had a glass of Santorin wine, very good I think, I dare say Mr. Denman will let you have some at a reasonable price. Then we had soup, rather meagre, with vermicelli in it. Then we had fish fried,—oh, so good!—sardines, and cuttlefish. Yes, cuttlefish and sea anemones, also very good. Then we had a chicken, rather stringy, but stewed or fricasseed with olives. Then we had two snipes—one for me and one for the Signor. After that we had a cake and quince marmalade, and some oranges very green, and the last figs of the season. Another kind of wine we had, a red wine, tasting very nasty, with rosin in it. Very nasty it is for a day or two till you get used to it; but I was very thirsty, and so I drank it and made no faces, much to Sappho's amusement, who said:

'You're the first Englishman I ever saw who drank our rosined wine without making a face. I have hopes of you. For your comfort, let me tell you, it is very wholesome.'

That was all the dinner. After it was over we went out and took a ride among the olives and myrtles,—the Signor, Sappho, and I. The Signora stayed at home; indeed she never rode all the time I was there. She seemed to have something on her mind which she could not shake off. She would speak a few sentences brightly and lively enough, and then she would fall back into the slough of despond in which she lay wallowing all her life.

That was a lovely southern evening; we walked our horses, we trotted or galloped, we stood still, agaze at all the glories of the Albanian coast. Early as it was in the season, there had been snow-storms among the upper gorges of the hills, and later on it was wonderful to be in the summer-heat of Corfu,—I mean a heat equal to that of our summer,—and see great snow-clouds gather and burst on the towering peaks.

On that evening I again returned, as we were slowly riding up the ascent to the house, to the charge about Arethusa and her fountain. She was in her liveliest mood at the time, but seemed all at once turned to stone or ice, and said:

'I tell you I have never heard of Arethusa or her fountain.'

Then I recited to her long bits of Shelley's poems:

> 'Arethusa arose
> From her couch of snows,
> In the Acroceraunian mountains—
> From cloud and from crag
> With many a jag,
> Shepherding her bright fountains.

And I told her the story of—

> 'Alpheus bold
> On his glacier cold,'

and how he pursued the nymph, and how he caught her.

'Do you mean to say you never heard all this, or anything like it?'

'No,' she said resolutely, 'I have never heard anything about Arethusa and her fountain, but then you must remember that we Modern Greeks don't know everything that happened to our ancient people.'

It was no use talking to a young lady who knew nothing of the subject on which I wished her to enter. My own Arethusa,—I could not talk of her without confessing, and so I preferred to say nothing, and not to ask what I was dying to ask, whether Count Manteuffel had ever mentioned Arethusa,—my Arethusa,—in his letters?

When we got home we had a light supper—botargo again, and wine and bread, brown bread of the country, and cheese,—yes, cheese. Sappho Maurocordato, that young lady of ancient lineage—I believe the Maurocordatos were famous long before the Norman Conquest — ate cheese, plain bread and cheese. Not bread-and-butter, like Charlotte, in *Werther*, and Mary Harbury, in Warwickshire.

After that we all climbed up that staircase, which was the most curious combination of the ladder and the corkscrew, and went to bed.

In a few moments all was still, and I fell asleep, saying: 'How odd she should never have heard of Arethusa and her fountain!'

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW I LIVED AT GASTOURI.

We got up early. All the Greeks are early risers. They like to get their work done before the sun gets up. I thought I should have beaten the Signor, for I got up the very minute the mouldy major-domo knocked at my door, but when I came down I found he had been up and out ever so long. Perhaps he did not pay so much attention to 'tubbing.' At any rate he was out.

Soon after Sappho and her mother made their appearance, and then the Signor was sent for from his vats and presses, and we had breakfast. I remember we had neither tea nor coffee, only that rosined wine.

'You'll have so much of it, you'll be forced to like it. We never have tea or coffee for breakfast. Our doctor says they are bad for the nerves.'

We had fish, and some sort of bacon, and figs, and grapes, and the berries of the arbutus. That, with the wine and brown bread, was our breakfast.

We had hardly finished it—for we made a long, dawdling meal of it, and the Signor, who had to go into town on business, was just thinking of ordering the carriage—when horses' hoofs were heard in the courtyard at the back, and in a little while in walked Major Plunger and Mr. Twentyman, with the faces of men who had to draw lots to lead a forlorn hope.

In all my born days I never saw men so awfully afraid of foreigners and foreign ladies.

'We have come, ladies,' said Major Plunger,—looking round to Twentyman, whose blank face held out no signs of hope, save a very forlorn one,—'We have come to pay you a visit;' after which surprising announcement, he paused, while the giant nodded, and said: 'Yes; just so.'

'Indeed!' said the Signora, returning for a moment to this wicked world. 'Indeed!—we are very glad to see you.'

'Would you like some breakfast?' said the practical Sappho; for the mouldy major-domo had not cleared away the fragments that remained.

'No! thank you very much,' said the Major. 'If I might have a glass of wine?—what do you say, Twentyman?'

'Oh, certainly,' said the Cornet.

The Major then clutched the bottle, poured out a glass for himself, and one for Twentyman. The hot ride made them both thirsty, and both glasses were drained at the same moment.

'Faugh!' said the Major.

'My!' said Twentyman.

And then they both made the most distressing faces.

Sappho whispered: 'Didn't I tell you so?' and went off into one of her laughing fits.

'May I ask,' said the Major, 'what wine this is, which has—if I may so express myself—a very physicky flavour?'

'Wine of the country,' said Sappho; 'our own wine, made with our own grapes. It won't keep unless we put rosin into it, and that gives it the taste you call "physicky;" but it is very wholesome.'

'Very glad to hear it,' said Twentyman; 'very glad to know it 's your own wine, and so wholesome. I was afraid we had got the wrong bottle, and that instead of wine it was something else.'

So long a speech from Twentyman—almost as long as the one in which he gave his reasons for not marrying Mary Harbury—was a phenomenon only to be explained by the effect produced by the wine on his palate.

When the wine was over, the Signor appeared, only to take leave of his visitors and to start for town. When he was gone, we went out on the terrace, and then Major Plunger—while Sappho was trying to draw out Twentyman—told me he had a letter for me from 'the Lord High's secretary.'

'It's to ask you to dinner to-morrow; and I hope you will be able to come; Twentyman, and I, and Bill are going.'

'I don't think I have any choice. I suppose King Tom's commands are absolute. Let us see what the ladies say.'

So we asked the ladies—that is, we asked Sappho, and she said I had no choice. Go I must.

'But all you dear, good creatures,' she said, in a wheedling way, bringing the bright battery of her eyes,—as Major Plunger gallantly expressed it afterwards—to bear on us all at once—'you dear good creatures, why don't you get him to give a ball? I don't care for his dinners; perhaps, because he doesn't ask me. But I do love a ball. I look best in blue.'

'I should think you did,' said Twentyman, with a gravity which set us all off laughing, except the Signora.

I wrote my letter of acceptance for the dinner at the palace the day after, and the pair of Heavies took it back with them.

'Too clever by half, that young lady,' said the

Major to me, as we crossed the garden to get to the horses. 'Good-bye; take care of yourself.'

I am sure no schoolboys ever went home from school in happier mood than those two British officers trotting down the hill at Gastouri.

What did I do that day? The ladies and I sat under the vines on the terrace, all through the heat of the day doing nothing, in a most thorough *dolce far niente.* We counted the pigeons as they flew past; the sails on the sea; we would have counted the clouds, only there were none to count.

I read some more Shelley to Sappho when we were tired of doing nothing. She said it suited the dreamy nature of the day. Such poetry could only have been written in a sunny land. But she did not like dreamy poetry; she preferred what she called active poetry,—Byron for instance.

In due time the major-domo told us that dinner would be ready in half-an-hour, and again I scaled the staircase to wash my hands.

Why dwell on food? Our dinner was of just the same kind as the one we had the day before,—and so they continued all the time I was at Gastouri. No! I am not a glutton. I don't write down in my diary when I ate the first woodcock of the season.

The Signor came back from Corfu in time for a ride; and he found a letter of invitation from the Lord High for the dinner to-morrow, so that he and I could go together.

Then we went out for a ride in another direction, but through much the same woods of olive, and myrtle, and cypress, as the day before; then back, home to supper, and to bed.

Yes, I thought more of Arethusa that day than I had done the day before. She was part of my being; how then shall I not think of her?

Next day I wrote letters home, and gave Aunt Mandeville a full account of my movements. I suppose writing is catching, for, as soon as I began to write, the melancholy Signora—the sad prophetess of Gastouri—began to write, too.

'Mamma is writing to Uncle Manteuffel,' said Sappho; 'shall she remember you to him?'

'By all means,' I said; 'tell him I am very well and very happy.'

'Shall we send any message to Mary Harbury?' asked Sappho, maliciously.

'None; except that if the Count sees her, it would be a comfort to me to know that her sampler was finished.'

'Sampler,' said Sappho; 'what's that?' So I had to explain to her what a sampler was.

'Very useful, no doubt, and very pretty, I daresay; quite as pretty as I hear Miss Harbury is.'

I really could not carry on the conversation,—it was too disgusting,—so I let it drop.

After our letters were finished Sappho took charge of them, and the Signor drove me into town; we were to dress and sleep at his house on Condi Terrace. I left him to go to his business, and walked about the city, seeing the sights.

The inseparables—Plunger and Twentyman—joined me, and in such a strong body, we thought we might go and see Saint Spiridion, the patron saint of Corfu.

When I say see Saint Spiridion,—or Santo Spiro, as he is called for short,—I really mean it. Of some saints you can only see their bones or relics. The skeleton of a mediæval saint was too precious to be kept all in one place. It was distributed over the Christian world—a head here, and a jaw-bone there. This church had a thigh-bone or a shin-bone; and so on with his fingers, toes, and teeth. Nay, some mediæval saints had two heads, and double bones in their bodies; else how can it be that one head of St. Machutus is to be found at Pisa, and another at Innspruck? But at Corfu you may see Santo Spiro, body and bones, and a very nasty sight I think it, very much like a baked monkey, all brown and shrivelled, but still unmistakably human or simious,—is that too hard a word? I beg pardon; I mean monkey-like.

Yes, there he lies, they tell us, the very body of one of the prelates who assisted at the Council of Nice, fifteen hundred years ago and more. That shrunk and shrivelled hand signed the form of faith laid down at that Œcumenical Council. I wonder how many of the hands of the bishops now at Rome will be seen on earth, lying in silver shrines, like Santo Spiro, say, in the year 3000 A.D. Very few, I imagine, and yet what is it compared with Egypt's mummies, which are, they say, three thousand years old.

But to come back to Spiro. We saw him on paying a fee, I think it was a guinea. They unlocked the silver shrine, and we saw all his glory, and, if I may coin a word, 'shrivelry.' Nor did they forget to point out that the soles of his sandals were smeared with clay; for, you must know, that once a-year, when the crops are ripening, Santo Spiro walks out of his shrine by night, over the fields, blessing them and bringing increase. Oh! most powerful Santo Spiro, thus to stand between man and heaven!

Once a-year, too,—but it was not when we were there,—the Saint was borne about the city, in procession with the Archbishop and all the clergy, and the General and British troops fall in, in honour of the saint. I forget whether I was told that 'the Lord High' went, too, but I rather think he did not, lest he should make Santo Spiro proud. I believe, too, that since we were there the British troops have not been allowed to take part in the procession. I only tell you what used to be the case in the days of King Tom.

After seeing the saint, we went round the fortifications, and took a boat, and went over to Vido, the low island that forms the port, and which we made so strong for ourselves, only to blow it up when we went at the instigation of Austria.

The Lord High's dinner-hour was seven o'clock to the minute, so that we had little time to dress after our sight-seeing.

Did I wear the uniform of a full cornet in the North Warwickshire Yeomanry? No; I did not. I went in mufti, as I believe it is still called; and the Major and Twentyman were in mufti also. At ten minutes to seven we drove up to the palace, and were ushered into the Lord High's presence. He was a fine man, with a very commanding air, looking, as he had proved himself to be, well fitted to rule the Greeks. He was very polite, but he could not be expected to spare much time to us when there was the Russian agent and his wife, and the French agent and his wife, and many ministers and high officials of the Septinsular Republic, and General Quickstep and his wife.

Five minutes to seven came.

'Are we all here?' said King Tom to his secretary.

'All, your Excellency, except that T. G. Lord, who came yesterday in his yacht. You told me to invite him.'

'Let us have dinner to the minute,' said King Tom. And at seven, as it struck, we walked, more than thirty of us, into the dining-hall—a very fine room, as, indeed, all the rooms in that palace are.

It was rather hard on the Lord, though, for the soup was not cleared away when in he walked unannounced.

I looked round as he entered, and, to my surprise, saw it was Scatterbrains. He took his seat opposite to me at the only vacant place, looking as cool as an ice-plant.

'Halloa! is that you, old fellow? When and how did you come here?'

'Just for a three months' run with two friends. And pray what brought you here?'

'Idleness and my yacht, the *Mermaid.* There was nothing to do in Ireland. We had shot the grouse till they were as wild as hawks. Some one told me there was first-rate woodcock-shooting here, and so I got the old craft out, and here we are. We have made a splendid passage of it.'

Then he subsided into a series of attentions to a lady near him—a Greek, with very little French, and most awful Italian. Scatterbrains knew French well; it was his only accomplishment, but he was soon aground. I remember the lady said to him—he had beautiful hair then; now he is as bald as a coot: '*Comme vous avez beaux chevaux;*' and when he nodded, with a most puzzled face, she went on: '*Moi aussi j'avons eu des beaux chevaux, mais à present ils commencent à tomber.*'

I am afraid I burst out laughing so loud that I frightened the lady, for she said little more; but it was comical to find her out making such horrid mistakes.

Just after that Twentyman gave me a nudge, and when I looked round he said: 'Is that the Scatterbrains who told you the story about the fishermen?'

'Yes; there is but one Scatterbrains in the world, the dear old fellow!' And then I thought, as I looked at him, how good he had been in aiding me in my designs on Arethusa that evening last summer.

I suppose he saw what I was thinking about, for, as soon as he had recovered himself after his French passage with the Greek lady, he laid his hands on his left side, and said, quietly:

'Is it all right here?'

'Yes; quite right. Come to me at 10 Condi Terrace to-morrow morning, and I'll tell you all about it.'

'All right, I'll come;' and then his natural politeness led him to make another attempt on the lady next him, quite, I am bound to say, as unhappy as the last. Then he gave it up as labour thrown away, and turned his attention entirely to his plate.

All that I remember of the rest of the entertainment was that it was very good, very long, and very hot. Every one sat next to the wrong person, and there was no conversation. As a rule, diplomatic conversation is not lively; at a dinner you ought, in fact, never to have more than one diplomatist; you will find him quite enough. If there are more present, they are jealous of one another, if they are of the same nationality; and if they are of different nationalities, they guard the tips of their tongues so jealously, lest they should let out state secrets unawares, that they cannot be said to converse. At a true diplomatic dinner, almost the only safe question at Corfu was the great one: 'Whether the woodcocks had arrived in Albania?' '*Est que les bécasses sont arrivées?*' To that it was possible to answer 'Yes' or 'No,' but little else, except, perhaps, a hope that they would soon come, coupled with the historical fact that they had been very late last year. But, thank heaven! that dinner was not one of *Haute Politique,* where every single man present, in his befrogged and bestarred coat, is supposed to be bursting with state secrets, which he must not, for the life of him, tell. If he dared, he could, but as he can't, he doesn't; and so the dinner drivels away in commonplaces, and the guests go away with an indigestion from overeating and drinking.

Still it was dull enough, and I was not at all sorry when it was over and we were taking our coffee in the great drawing-room. There it was that I introduced the Major and Twentyman to Scatterbrains, who charmed them by asking them to come and see him on board the *Mermaid.*

King Tom kept early hours, so we all went away soon, and as the Greeks kept early hours too, it was not long before I was in bed and asleep in Condi Terrace. No! I did not dream of Santo Spiro clambering over my chest with his clayey feet and staring at me out of his shrivelled monkey-face. I dreamt, as I always dreamt, of Arethusa.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW I STAYED ON AT GASTOURI.

We had scarcely done breakfast when Scatterbrains came to take me out for a walk. This just suited me, for the Signor had his office to attend to and we were not to go back to Gastouri till the afternoon.

'Tell you what, old fellow,' said Scatterbrains as we got on to the parade, 'those Heavies are coming on board to lunch, so you had better come too.'

To this I agreed, and then as we walked under the shade of the arcades to escape the burning sun I told him all my story and how I had sped. He was my oldest friend. I had been with him under Dr. Cutbrush, who used to try to flog knowledge into him by what may be called the breech-loading process. In this the worthy doctor utterly failed, but either he or some one else had made Scatterbrains a right good fellow; so trustworthy and reliable. I rather think he always had it in him. It was his nature, and as he grew up it came out.

He was common sense itself. He was a man then to whom you might tell everything, and I told him everything. When I had done I asked him, without giving him any time to think, 'What he thought of it?'

'Well, don't take one's breath away. Let me think.'

And he did think for two or three turns of the arcade; during which he stopped and stared vacantly into Taylor's Repository, while I went in and bought the biggest bottle of *ess bouquet* that I could find to pay my bet to Signorina Sappho.

Even when I came out he said nothing, and but for his still smoking I should have thought him asleep.

At last he said:

'I think it a very bad business.'

'Why?' said I. 'I have had it all my own way.'

'I don't see that. You have offended your Aunt,—that 's plain; you have slighted Mary Harbury,—that, I suppose, you don't deny; and you have gone away from the woman you love for three months. I don't like it. Women are women.'

He would say no more, and as it was time to look after the Heavies we picked them up. From the Stairs the stentorian voice of Scatterbrains bawled out, '*Mermaid* ahoy!' His gig pushed off at once, and her eight oars soon brought her to where we were. In we all got; Scatterbrains took the yoke-lines, the men gave way, and in almost less time than it takes to write the story of our embarkation we stood on the quarter-deck of the *Mermaid.*

She was a fine vessel; not a racing craft, but fast for her accommodation, which was very good. A three-masted schooner, with plenty of beam, and tall 'tween decks. The skipper used to say he feared no wind in the *Mermaid,* the harder it blew the steadier she got, and then it only was that you found out how fast she was. I forgot to say,—a most grievous omission I know to yachtsmen,—that she flew the white ensign, which, for the uninitiated I must explain, means that Scatterbrains was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, whose abode is at Cowes Castle.

We had a famous luncheon, and the Major did ample justice to it. There was a round of cold boiled beef. He had not seen such a bit of meat since we left London. It did his heart good to see it. Nor was Twentyman, nor was I, nor Scatterbrains himself, behindhand. For the time being it was to all of us the very best bit of beef we had ever seen, and so it would be till he saw the next good piece. Then it, too, would have its turn of praise. How fortunate is life in having a succession of charms, and how silly are those who linger in recollection on things past and who do not look forward and appreciate their blessings, present and to come, instead of brooding on the remembrance of what having once been can never again return in exactly the same shape!

There is a piece of moralising for you all out of a round of boiled beef!

'Deuced good luncheon,' said the Major, after he had eaten everything that came in his way.

'Yes, very,' said Twentyman, who always said amen to the Major's grace.

'Glad you like it,' said Scatterbrains; 'now let's go on deck and have a weed. You don't smoke, Halfacre, I know; no doubt your friends do?'

'I should just think so,' said the Major; 'what I should have done without smoking all my life I'm sure I can't tell. Why, a cigar thinks for one.'

'Yes! and often a deal better,' said Scatterbrains, 'than the fellow himself could think. Smoking brings out one's ideas; first comes a cloud, then out of the cloud come shapes. That I call thought.'

'Do you mean that all thought is smoke?' said I, bitterly.

'No; but I mean that, under the influence of smoke, one's thoughts become clearer, and take shape out of it.'

'That I can't tell,' I said, 'as I am no smoker. Perhaps you will tell me I am no thinker, and that proves your point.'

'That's just what I am,' said Twentyman; 'I can't think for the life of me.'

'I don't think we shall settle the question,' said Scatterbrains; 'let us smoke our weeds out in peace and try not to think.'

'Quite so,' said Plunger; and so they smoked on in silence.

Then we shook hands, and the gig was manned, and we were put on shore, and I went back to Gastouri with the Signor.

As I went I wondered what right Scatterbrains had to say that it was a bad business. I daresay he wouldn't have done it better himself. In fact I was rather hurt at his saying that what Lady Meredith, and I, and even Aunt Mandeville, had called good was bad.

We found the Signora as melancholy as usual and the Signorina as lively. She was greedy for news. Who were there at the dinner? How many ladies? What did they wear? Did they look well? 'The young ones I mean,' she said; 'old ladies are always frights. I daresay Mrs. General Quickstep wore her amber satin and her green turban. Just like a Turkish Fakir.' What officers? A few, including the Heavies. Any one else? Yes, a lord. What lord? Lord Scatterbrains. Do you know him? Yes, and he's coming out here to-morrow to see me.

'To see me, you mean,' said Sappho; 'it must be me he is coming to see.'

'I can only say what he said; but of course he will pay his respects to Signora Maurocordato and you.'

'Shall I like him as much as I like you?'

'How can I tell? I did not know till now that you liked me.'

'Just like men; — waiting like children till they're told. They ought to find out for themselves:' and then off she went into one of her laughs — only to shake it off and run away upstairs.

We did not ride that afternoon; we all walked, the Signor, and the ladies, and I, down the hill in front of the house to the sea-shore, and there we watched the fishermen dragging their nets and bringing up all sorts of strange creatures out of the deep. Cuttlefish, echinuses, sea-anemones, molluscs;—in short, I know not what, and of all colours and shapes. The wonders of the deep. What struck me most was that they threw nothing away. All was fish that came to their net·

So unlike our fishermen, who, when they haul a net, are more busy in killing and casting out dogfish and others which they declare to be uneatable or poisonous, than in securing the edible portion of their haul. But this was a long time ago. I believe our fishermen are not above eating dogfish now; but it did strike me as strange that everything that fishermen catch in the Levant should be of use, while the greater portion that they catch in the British Isles should be rejected as worthless.

Then we sat down and talked of the sea and the strange things in it; and of the stars, as they came out—bright and sparkling—not like stars with a cold, with comforters round their rays, as they look in our damp English sky; and of the moon, and how it affected people at the full.

All at once—thinking to trap Sappho in her words—I said:

'What do you think of our White Lady, who appears once a-year at the full of the moon?'

'My brother,' said the Signora, 'has written to us all about her. It is a subject I would rather not talk about. It is painful.'

While her mother said this Sappho seemed to listen and said nothing. So my attempt had signally failed, except that I learnt that the White Lady had sufficiently interested the Count to make him write a full account of her to his relations.

After that little was said; we climbed the hill slowly, ate our supper solemnly, and crept up the ladder to bed in silence.

As I looked out the triumph of Night was complete. She flashed her glories over land and sea. There was no sound, save the distant murmur of the surf as it chafed on the rocky shore.

Though the Signora spoke seldom, her words were words of might, like those of a sorceress or magician in olden times. There was a weight in them beyond the weight of speech. They were more like dogmas reduced to writing. From them there was no appeal. You might as well have thought of Barham turning the Thirty-nine Articles into the verse and metre of the Ingoldsby Legends as of Signora Maurocordato uttering one cheerful word.

When she spoke conversation ceased, and it did not revive for hours. Thus it was that we were all of us very dull the next morning. Sappho looked, for her, wretched. I felt as though I had done something very wrong, though what it was I could not at all make out. The Signor was almost surly. He looked as though all his wine had turned sour in the night. The Signora looked like herself—the woman of sorrows.

We were all glad when breakfast was over, and still more so when we heard the heels of Scatterbrains' horse clattering in the courtyard.

'I am so glad he is come,' said Sappho. 'He will cheer us up; and I even forgive him for saying that he was coming to see you and not me. I wonder what he is like?'

All this time I have never described Scatterbrains. As I think I have drawn the picture of almost every one in this book, I may as well draw his to complete the gallery.

Viscount Scatterbrains was a tall young man, just about my own age. He was dark, with dark eyes; his nose was slightly aquiline—not, of course, so much so as that of the late Duke of Wellington, though his was also described as 'slightly aquiline.' It was not 'moderate,' like Major Plunger's. It was, as I have said, 'aquiline.' More I cannot say. He had fine teeth, and not small hands and feet. No; they were decidedly large. Everybody can't have small hands and feet, or shoe-leather and gloves would be cheaper. Fancy if there were no men's gloves bigger than seven and a-half! Yes; his feet and hands were large, but not clumsy. But the great charm about him was his expression: it was so frank and open. You had only to look at him to see he was a man who would never tell a lie. He was not at all clever: a dunce at school, and no genius at Oxford; but he had, as I have told you before, the priceless gift of common sense. He would tell you in a moment what you ought to do, and when he had told you, the best course was to take his advice. You were likely to get no better. No; not if you sought for it a whole summer day. His manners were off-hand and abrupt; but I don't know that any one, except some very silly women and sillier men, liked him the worse for that. You saw at once that you had a true man before you. Why do I call him Scatterbrains? Am I his maker? Has he not been handed down to me? Besides, if you look again, perhaps he was called Scatterbrains because he scattered other people's brains—not because his own were scattered. At any rate, he was no fool, and so there you have him before you.

As he came in the Signor, who had made his acquaintance the day before, and who had given him the invitation, without which Scatterbrains would certainly not have come, rose in a solemn way to receive him. But before he could say a word Sappho came forward, and said:

'Welcome to Gastouri, Lord Scatterbrains. How long do you mean to stay in Corfu?'

'I don't know. I am come to shoot woodcocks.'

'Truly a most lordly quest. Have you no woodcocks at home?'

'Yes, in Ireland we have plenty; but then there are more here. Not to mention that there are other things to see besides woodcocks in Corfu.'

'Then you have come to see us, and not to shoot woodcocks. How flattered the Ionians ought to feel!'

'I am beyond flattering any one,' said Scatterbrains, who felt he was being attacked. 'What I like is truth, and I try to speak it.'

'Ah! so we all do,' said Sappho; 'but we so seldom succeed. I am sure I try every day; but it breaks my heart to think how many stories I tell without meaning it.'

'Perhaps you're like Pontius Pilate, who, though he asked what was truth, would not wait for an answer.'

'That's not fair,' said Sappho, exultingly. 'I can't talk against a book. Talk your own talk, and don't throw Bacon's Essays at my head.'

Now, I do not really think that Scatterbrains had ever read a line of Bacon's Essays. Book-learning was certainly not his forte. He must have snapped up the quotation at second-hand, and used it he knew not why. It had passed at some time into his inner consciousness, and now it came out of it.

He had evidently had enough of his tongue-fence with Sappho, and retired from the field behind a few commonplaces to the Signora, who answered in the most matter-of-fact way. Then he tried the Signor with some statistics as to what the chief crop of the islands was. How long ago it was since the last good olive-crop? Why currants would not grow in Corfu, when they throve in Cephalonia and Zante? On these and other points he acquired a store of useful information, and if he had been Vice-president of the Board of Trade in that day, you in all likelihood would have seen it all in a book; but as he was not, these scanty recollections must suffice. As for me, I have no time to waste on oil and currants; I must get on.

Just before he took his leave, Sappho again attacked him by saying: 'I hope you don't mean to take Mr. Edward away with you to that stupid woodcock shooting? It is too soon for it yet, and he is too good to be wasted on it if it were.'

'Well,' said Scatterbrains, 'there are boars and bustards on the plain, and chamois on the mountains. Why shouldn't he come to shoot them instead of idling his time here?'

This speech Sappho was pleased to take to herself, and she was almost angry.

'So much obliged to you for putting us at Gastouri below wild boars and bustards. Like to like, my lord. I should say Master Edward had chosen the better part; and I say again, I hope you will not take him away from it.'

It was getting warm under the verandah where we were sitting, and the common sense of Scatterbrains told him it was time to go. He got up, therefore, and took his leave with the most studied politeness and a smiling face.

After he had gone the round of the family he shook hands with me, and said outright:

'How much longer are you going to stay here?'

It was such a home question that I could not answer it at once. 'Oh! I am sure I don't know. Perhaps a month, or two months. It is much pleasanter here than in town.'

'No doubt,' said Scatterbrains; 'but you'll think better of it: you will never stay so long as that.'

'He shall,' said Sappho, almost wildly, 'if I have my way. Good-bye, Lord Scatterbrains. I never wish to see you again.'

'What a very unfortunate man I am!' said Scatterbrains, with the utmost coolness. 'We never know what is for our good.'

'A nasty, provoking, cold-blooded brute!' said Sappho, throwing herself back in her chair after he had left us. 'Why should you not stay with us as long as you like, and be happy? Besides, to come and say that, just when we were planning all sorts of expeditions for you to show you the country!'

'Well, I am not gone yet, and I certainly shall not go over to Albania to lie in the marshes in the

Mermaid, and run the risk of fever, merely to shoot wild boars and bustards. I do not like shooting well enough for that.'

'Oh yes! we know,' said Sappho. 'You follow gentler game—Mary Harbury and her sampler.'

If anything could have made me rush back home before my time, it would have been that Mary Harbury with her everlasting sampler haunted me in those lovely islands. But then I reflected, that if I ran back before my three months were over, I should only rush into the actual presence of Mary Harbury and her sampler, and that instead of hearing of them I should see them. I preferred, therefore, to stay where I was.

Now, I daresay, all you young ladies who have young gentlemen attached to you, think I was behaving very badly in exposing myself to the charms of Sappho Maurocordato when my heart was fixed for ever on Arethusa Chichester. Even supposing the temptation would not be too great for me, you will ask, Was it fair towards Sappho to expose her to temptation? If I say there was no temptation about me, you will smile. You will tell me that every heart has another heart waiting for it, its counterheart—I know the printer will spell this *counterpart* unless I look sharp after him; that all men are tempting at times, especially if they are shut up alone in a house with a young lady, of some of whom it may be said that it is safer to have nitro-glycerine in the house than them. If I tell you that Sappho Maurocordato was quite able to take care of herself; that I had no reason to suppose that she was not going to be married to her cousin Yanni or some other Greek Yanni, you will still say that she ought not to have been tempted; that there is no proof that she was engaged to any cousin, and that it remained to be proved that she was able to take care of herself. As you are so unreasonable, I throw myself back on the great axiom that there are things to do and not to talk about, and that this was one of them. I did it unawares, strong in my unalterable affection for Arethusa, which nothing could shake, and very glad to get away from the mounting guard and 'shoulder arms' of Corfu, to the quiet shade of Gastouri. Besides—and this ought to crush your scruples—had I not that letter of introduction? Did not Aunt Mandeville know that I had it; and had I not written to her to say that I was quite well and happy at Gastouri? I had every right to stay at Gastouri, and I stayed there. Young ladies or young gentlemen, I don't believe that one of you could have done better.

If I tell you, besides, that Sappho was like a sister to me, you will laugh and say: 'How could

I, who never had a sister, know what a sister was like?' That is very true. I never had a sister, yet the poets have imagined and described scenes in heaven, ay, and in hell, that no eye, save that of their mind, hath ever seen; and so I, too, can imagine what a sister's tenderness might have been to me, and fancy that in Sappho Maurocordato I found that sister for a while.

That was her great charm; she was always fresh and merry, but she never gave herself any love-sick airs. To use a vulgar expression, she never set her cap at me, and seemed thoroughly heart-whole. If she had a love-secret, she kept it well hidden.

But she was always ready to make a party for me. We never rode alone, I declare—no, not for a hundred yards; we did not ride together for whole mornings together, as I have seen some young ladies of good position only last season ride in the 'Row.' Am I sour moralist enough to cry out at their doing so? If they like it, and their parents permit it, they are quite welcome to do so as far as I am concerned. All I say is, that I never, in all those months, ever rode a hundred yards alone with Sappho Maurocordato. Wherever we were, and wherever we went, there was either the Signor, with his heart full of business, or the woe-begone Black Lady, as I might call the Signora, watching over their daughter. Now, young ladies, and old ladies, dear kind friends, throw stones at us if you can. If I really must tell you my feeling on the matter as I rode about with this very pretty girl, it was this; that though she pretended never to have heard about Arethusa and her fountain, she very well knew all about my Arethusa from the Count, and that she respected my secret. Time will show if I was right.

So on and on I stayed at Gastouri. The weeks came and the weeks went, and sometimes I went into Corfu to see the Major and Twentyman, whose leave began to grow short. They never came back to Gastouri. That one visit and the wine was enough for them. Sometimes we joined them and the other officers in a paper chase on horseback—a kind of mock hunting, in which, over the vine-stumps and olive-groves, one got nasty falls; but if they had little conversation out of the saddle they had less in it, and little passed between us.

I had no letters from Aunt Mandeville, but that did not surprise me. She was not much of a writer. Poor Aunt Mandeville! This was about the end of October, when I had been away more than a month—nearly six weeks, in short. I remember thinking, 'Half my exile from Arethusa over. In two months I hope to be back at Mandeville Hall, and Arethusa will be at Leamington. How glorious!'

Where was Scatterbrains? Strange to say, I never saw the dear fellow in Corfu after that visit to Gastouri. His warning was more serious than I took it for at first. Whether he had gone away in a huff, or whether wild stories of the boars and bustards, and the showers of woodcocks over in Albania, had hurried him off in his zeal for the chase; certain it is, that three days after that visit we saw the three-masted schooner beating out of the South Channel at Corfu, bound for the Gulf of Arta, no doubt. Yes! it was the *Mermaid;* we saw her close beneath us from Gastouri. There was flying her white ensign proudly, and she held her own against the breeze on the losing tack. Gone, and Scatterbrains with her.

'I am glad he is gone,' said Sappho. 'I hope I may never set eyes on him again.'

During that month I think we went all over the island. We went down to Lefkimo, to the Leucimne of Thucydides, to see the site of the sea-fight at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. That was at the extreme end of the island, towards the south. Then another day we took boat, or rather ship, at Gastouri, and sailed away to the bend of the island, which faces the town of Corfu. We did that to climb Mount St. Salvador, 3000 feet high. The ladies were left at a village half-way up, while we men went up to the convent at the top, and had a view of all the islands, and Albania, and even of the Gulf of Otranto. Another day we went to Govino—a pass in the middle of the island, looking down on avenues of cypresses and orange-groves; on another we went to Pantaleone, and had a merry picnic under the oak; but as I sat under it, I thought I would much rather have been at Chiswick, sitting under that beech with Arethusa, than with all the women in the world.

Last of all we went to the old monastery of Palæocastrizza, haunted by two or three old monks. There it stands, looming huge over the sea, and looking down on its perfect horseshoe bay. We stayed there till the moon rose over the bay, reminding me strangely of Arethusa and of Ilfracombe, and then we rode home as fast as we could, for fear fever should lay hold of us as we passed the old arsenal of the Venetians. Dear me! it was all very pleasant. Sappho was to me as a sister, and I ever bore about with me the memory of my love. How sweet it is for a young heart to keep a secret, and how bitter are secrets to the old! How they burn their way out!

Was I happy? No! But as happy as I coul be anywhere, anxiously expecting my release.

November came, and with it the necessity on the part of the Signor to go down to Cephalonia and Zante, and then up the gulf to Corinth, and across the isthmus to Athens. What would be easier or more pleasant than that I should go with them? Sappho settled it all, and it was settled in half an hour. We were all to go, the melancholy Signora as well. She clung to her husband like fate.

As for me, I liked it much better than staying any longer at Gastouri. When travelling I could pay my own expenses, and I began to think that I was a burden to my hosts, though Sappho always declared I did not cost them a penny. I was the only Englishman, she said, who never cared whether I had butchers' meat or not. I was a thorough Greek, and lived like one of them. Still, as soon as we set out I should at least pay my own expenses, and perhaps some of theirs. How were we to go? By the Austrian Lloyds Steamer, of course, first to Argostoli in Cephalonia. There she was to drop us, and when the Signor had done his business, another steamer would take us on to Zante, and then a Greek steamer would take us up to Corinth.

It was pleasant, and it was easy. So I wrote my plans home to Aunt Mandeville. I told her I was going to travel with a charming Greek family. I remember I sent a duplicate by Major Plunger and Twentyman, whose leave was up, and who went sorrowfully back by the way which we came, just about the time that the Maurocordatos set off on our expedition. I was not, you understand, to come back to Corfu, but to make my way home by the Straits of Messina and Marseilles.

I always thought it very odd that Sappho should be so kind to me, when she evidently hated the English from the bottom of her heart. She hated them with the holy hatred of race. She looked on us as invaders and oppressors, who coerced the Septinsular Republic in its aspirations for liberty and union with Greece. Even then, in the stern days of King Tom, her motto was Ενωσις, and Ενωσις is the Greek for 'union.' Well, King Tom is dead, and King Storks, the best king they ever had, has departed, and they have got their Ενωσις, and a sad mess they seem to have made of it. But in those days the grand idea was young and ardent as Sappho herself. This seemed her only serious subject, and I believe she took to me more because I was not a soldier, not one of those red-coated tyrants who kept down her people, as she fancied, than for anything else.

So, young ladies, you see there is good sometimes in everything; good even in not being a soldier.

By way of precaution I wrote a letter to

Colonel Chichester just before I started, and addressed my letter, 'Post Office, Leamington,' &c., telling him what my plans were,—that I was leaving Corfu with a Greek family, to travel through the Islands to Athens—that would take up all of November—and that I hoped to be at Mandeville Hall by Christmas Day.

Having written these letters, taken leave of Major Plunger and Twentyman, called on the Lord High, and the General, and my friends,—what more, may I ask, could I have done before leaving Corfu? 'Nothing,' I answer decidedly,—'Nothing.' And with this feeling I packed up my things, like a wise man, with my own hands, not troubling the mouldy major-domo, except to give him a *douceur*. Then I went down to the port at Corfu with the Maurocordatos, paid my passage to Argostoli in Cephalonia, and went on board, by good luck, our old friend the *Ferdinando*.

CHAPTER X.

HOW I TRAVELLED WITH THE MAUROCORDATOS.

OFF we went, out of the harbour, past the Casino, past the One Gun and Palæopolis, past Gastouri, past Lefkimo, past Paxo. It was fine weather, but with a little sea on, which, in the course of the afternoon, sent the ladies to their berths. The Signor and I paced the deck till supper-time and bed-time, and then I went to my berth and slept, only to find that the steamer was lying at anchor in the harbour of Argostoli. There we all landed. We saw the lions, we saw the British resident, we saw the Cyclopean walls of the old primeval cities, we saw the strange subterranean current that works the mills, we saw the Black Forest crowning the mountain in the centre of the island. All this I and the ladies saw while the Signor was busy with his wine, and currants, and oil.

In the afternoon we passed Ithaka, longing to land on that dry-weather spot, famous for Penelope and Ulysses, and now for quince marmalade. But we had no time to stop; we were bound for Zante,

'Zante, the flower of the Levant'—the beautiful fantastical island, with its revengeful race, of whom the director of police told me, when I asked him the difference between Corfu and Zante: 'The difference is this, it takes ten policemen to arrest one man in Zante, but in Corfu one policeman will arrest one hundred Corfiotes.' It is a sort of paradise of murderers, Zante. There is at least one murder every day. Zante would not be Zante without it, and the whole population, man, woman, and child, think it is their bounden duty to assist any murderer to escape from justice. Their excuse is that San Dionysio, or San Geronimo, once helped a murderer down from the gallows; and as they are bound to do what the saint did, why they do it. Close to the lawless mainland, too, a murderer is safe once he is off the island. But it is a lovely spot, looking away to the ancient Messenia and right up the Gulf of Corinth. But the glory of Zante, which it shares with Patras and Vostizza, is currants. As Bergen in Norway, and Wick in Scotland, are all herrings, so Zante, in the currant season, is all currants. We were there just at its height, and currants were the reason of the Signor's going there at all. How many barrels of indigestion did we not see in the shape of the currant-crop, piled up on the wharf in casks waiting for transports to take them to all parts of the world? How many doctors' bills after Christmas, and how many bottles of black draught might not the philosophic eye have seen, attending on those casks, after greedy little boys had consumed them in plum puddings and minced pies.

I remember that in the evening, while the Signor was still up to his eyes in currants and accounts current, the ladies took me to a concert, where we had some good music, and then a dance. I danced with Sappho, of course; and she said, as others have said, that I danced very well—for an Englishman.

Next morning we were up early, and away. The *Ferdinando* was half-full of currants. She was going to Patras and Vostizza and Corinth for more currants, and we were to go in her. First we touched at Patras. No! we ran over first to Missolonghi, and had a look at the low town in the marshes. There it lay lost in sand and mud. But to that sand and mud it owes its fame, for they formed its defences in the famous siege, the Silistria of that great war. There, too, lost somewhere in the marshes, lies Byron's heart. Yes, absolutely his heart, which was lost by the defenders of Missolonghi, when they effected their retreat rather than surrender to the Turks.

After that we went over to Patras, and again it was currants—currants. Again we went on shore;

again we saw consuls and vice-consuls, and currants. So it was at Vostizza and other places up the Gulf. Vostizza, where there is the finest plane-tree I ever saw. Reader, if you ever go to Vostizza, look at that tree, and let the currants alone.

What of the scenery? It was magnificent. I remember once old Dr. Cutbrush caning a boy very much for saying that Achaia was a mountainous country. 'It is as flat as my hand; how could the Achæan League have made all those famous marches through a hilly country?' So the poor fellow was caned; but now that I was at Vostizza, on the old Achæan coast, it was plain that old Cutbrush was wrong, and the little boy right. Achaia is even hillier than the opposite coast; and right opposite stands Parnassus, not to mention the Thessalian range looming behind it.

From Vostizza we ran over to Salona; and while the Signor was again hard at work, we went to Delphi. Yes! we stood on the great plateau where the temple of Apollo once stood, and whence the Pythia uttered her oracles when under the influence of the *genius loci.* I proposed to Sappho to play the Pythia, and utter an oracle. She said the days of oracles were over, and that if she uttered one nobody would believe her.

'Suppose I were to prophesy that you would marry Mary Harbury, what would you say?'

'I should say what you say, that the days of oracles were over, and that the prophetess of Delphi prophesied deceit.'

'We shall see,' said Sappho. 'You behave just like those who inquired of the oracles in ancient times; they would not believe what they heard unless it jumped with their fancy. Suppose I were to prophesy that the Fountain of Arethusa, of which you are always talking, would never be content with half-an-acre of ground for her basin, what would you say then?'

'I should say the prophetess was a demon, and the oracles the invention of devils.'

'Don't lose your temper,' said Sappho, mockingly. 'I did not utter the oracle. I only asked you what you would say if it were uttered. So you think the fountain would be content with such a little plot of ground? We shall see. But you must own, it is not much for a fountain, which dashes all the way down the Acroceraunian mountains to escape a river-god, to be content at last, after all her headlong course, with a poor plot of ground half-an-acre in extent.'

'Sappho, you will drive me mad,' I said.

Just then the Black Lady came up to us. She had been sitting just out of earshot, on a great boulder.

'Sappho,' she said, 'it is getting late; we must get back to the steamer: let us go.' We went. I forgot to say we had ridden to Delphi from Salona, and had been there the greater part of the day. Slowly we rode back on that November afternoon. It was dark when we reached the *Ferdinando.* With a feeling of gloomy foreboding at Sappho's ill-omened words I slunk away to my berth.

Next morning was bright and lovely, as we ran across the Gulf for Loutraki, at the head of the Gulf, the port of modern Corinth. The steamer was now full of Greeks, armed with all the cutlery of their race, with old-fashioned flint-guns and pistols, and yataghans. Very picturesque they looked, and very ill-looking most of them. Handsome and yet ill-looking. A school of porpoises ran by, and instantly twenty of those old, long-barrelled guns were discharged at the devoted fish. Some were hit; for the waves were red with blood; but none turned over in sign of death while the steamer was near.

And now the time was come for leaving the *Ferdinando.* There was a strong breeze blowing right up the gulf, making the spray fly on the rocks and stones of the shore, which formed the sole landing-place at Loutraki. Yes! at the Isthmus of Corinth there was not even such a jetty or slip as one meets in the meanest English fishing-town, to shelter a boat in landing her passengers. Some boats put off from the shore; and we saw several loads trying to land, and get a good ducking. One boat was capsized on the rocks, and stove in; though I believe no one came to grief. But landing, especially for ladies, looked ugly.

While we stood looking over the side, and hesitating about engaging a boat, the captain of the *Ferdinando,* a most polite Austro-Italian,—if you can understand such a hybrid,—came up, and offered to put us on shore in his own boat. 'We shall get a little wet, but I think I can run her in safely under that big stone on the shore.' As it was not likely that we should get any better offer, we accepted the proposal, and off we started. We certainly did take in some water; in fact, the spray flew all over us in showers, but the rowers were strong, and as soon as we got near the stone, and the water shoaled a little, out jumped the two foremost, and seizing the boat on either side, held her straight, while the captain steered her in with the way that was still on her. Very glad was I, for my own sake as well as that of others, when I found myself safe on land. I like ships, but I hate little boats, especially in the Gulf of Corinth, with a strong breeze blowing on shore, and no shelter to run for.

But there we were on land. It was all right; we thanked the captain heartily, and went up from the beach.

At the Hotel of the Isthmus—a sort of fifth-rate inn—was a great gathering of Greeks, as usual, discussing politics. I really believe it was one of those insurrections which are always taking place in modern Greek history. But besides being a political meeting, it was a kind of fair, and I observed that the Signor here, too, did a good stroke of business; what he did it in I can't imagine, for the country seemed barren, except of the Isthmian pine—a dwarf sort of conifer. New Corinth, except that I do not wish to insult Old Corinth, I should call a nasty village; and as for Old Corinth, one miserable hovel, and seven superb columns of a Doric temple, are all that is left of the proud city, the wealth and luxury of which were such that, as the old proverb ran, 'It was not every man's money to go there;' meaning, that if he went there without a good store of money and wealth he would soon be ruined.

But then there was the Acro-Corinthus—the citadel of the old city. Well, we went up it, and a very steep climb it is—higher than up to Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh, if you have ever been there. And what did we find up there? About three hundred soldiers, regular Greeks,—I mean

Greek regulars,—of whom I may say, that if the bandits, of whom we hear so much, are worse-looking, they must be very ill-favoured.

Those gentry might be anxious to acquire money by all lawful means, and one of these seems to be brigandage in Greece, but I very much doubt, at the time of our visit, if any of them possessed a silver bit. The Signor turned from them in disgust, and said he had no dealings with such men. In this I can well believe he spoke the truth. A man might deal a long time with such beggars before he made anything out of them, and he might lose a good deal in trying to do it.

They were picturesque enough to look at, and disgusting enough to make one look suffice. We turned away from them then to the view, and that was indeed splendid—all down the Saronic Gulf to Egina, away into the Morea to Argos, and further on towards Sparta and Taygetus. As for Megara, it seemed to lie under our feet. All this we saw, to say nothing of the view the other way, when we turned and looked back on the Gulf of Corinth, and the sea and mountains we had passed the day before.

But the more one gazed, the more one was struck with the savage barrenness of the country round Corinth and the Isthmus; land once blooming with fertility, and now a howling wilderness. All across the narrow neck of land we could trace the rude attempts made to sever it, only to wonder why it had never been done.

But we had to get to Athens that day; we could see the smoke of the steamer coming for us up the other gulf. We descended, therefore, followed by about fifty of our ferocious-looking friends, who might have figured amongst Callot's voleurs and brigands, in his 'Miseries of War,' with great effect.

For some time I could not imagine what these worthy cut-throats were going to do; but when we descended on to the plain, we found they were to be our escort across the Isthmus, to protect us from the brigands. Juvenal's

'Sed quis custodiet ipsos
Custodes?'

rose on my mind. 'Pray heaven,' I mentally ejaculated, 'I may never meet ten of these fifty, when I am crossing the Isthmus alone on a dark night!' Nay! for that matter I should not at all like to meet three of them at mid-day in the same lonely place.

And now we are off, some twenty of us, in four tumbledown carriages, of a kind which it is impossible to describe. They were not ancient chariots, but they looked as though they might have been the stock-in-trade of some livery-stable keeper in Old Corinth when Mummius sacked it. Too bad for the rapacious Roman to take as spoil, and so they had remained there ever since.

We got into them, I and the Signor, and the ladies and two Greeks, in fustanellas; that is, with their shirts outside their *Beinkleider*, and with cutlery enough to stock Mr. Lund's shop: only, of course, not so good. They wanted, these amiable Greeks, to keep their guns with them, two long-barrelled, Venetian pieces; but we remonstrated, and so they were tied on the top of the vehicle. One of them—not the pieces but the Greeks—told us that he was an Akarnanian going to Athens to demand justice of King Otho, that his gun was an heirloom in the family, and that on the stock were more than one hundred notches, showing how many Turks had been shot with it in the course of generations. His father had used it at Missolonghi and Athens in the War of Independence, and he had used it a little in Akarnania, when he crossed the frontier against the Turks. Then they shot as many Turks as they could. He was now going to get justice from King Otho for some cattle which the Turks had 'lifted' from his land.

He was rather amusing, that Greek, and I hope he got his justice, though I doubt it.

Less than half-an-hour's jolts and jumps brought us to the other side. Here there was another political meeting, at which all the men assembled and made long speeches. It ended, like an old Guy-Fawkes day in England, with bonfires and firing of guns. I saw our Akarnanian fire his off several times. All this time, while the men were settling the affairs of Europe, and voting Turkey to eternal perdition, I saw several women, the wives, no doubt, of these patriots, working hard in the fields, many of them with a child at her back. Such was Greek life at the Isthmus, and such is Greek life wherever I have seen it in Greece: 'Very little work, and a great deal of talk.'

We got on board the steamer, and steamed away down the gulf. How lovely it was! And then, as we turned and made for the Piræus, and saw the Acropolis right before us, with all its marbles flushed with the rosy rays of the setting sun, and when I saw Ægina, 'that eyesore of the Piræus,' as Pericles well called it, standing there a perpetual reproach to the Attic race, and when we saw Salamis, and, last of all, when we ran through the narrow mouth of the Piræus, and took up a berth amongst the crowd of shipping in that narrow port, how many mingled recollections of Greece and her ancient glories did not throng in my mind!

'Yes; here we are at Athens,' said Sappho. 'Here is the Piræus. There is an English line-of-battle ship, and another, and another, and two French and one Russian. And we shall go up to Athens, to our capital—the capital of us Greeks—till we have Stamboul, and we will drive along the long walls built by Themistocles and Pericles, our ancestors.'

So she went on identifying herself with the race from which it is not so very plain that the Modern Greeks sprang.

But who could gainsay a woman in this mood?

We landed, we got our things together, we hired a carriage. Now, I believe, there is a railway, then carriages were exorbitant. We drove to the 'Hôtel de Russie,' and were soon seated at the *table-d'hôte*, which was served almost as we entered the hotel.

So there I was at Athens, about the middle of November, with the Maurocordatos.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT HAPPENED AT ATHENS.

As soon as dinner was over, Sappho insisted that we should be taken out for a walk by the Signor. She had never been in Athens before, so it was all new to her. The woe-begone Signora stayed behind, as usual, to write letters. For myself, I was too impatient to see the sights to think of writing, though the post was leaving for France that very night, and if I missed that chance I could not write for another week. But it was no use thinking of writing. I could not write from Athens to any one and not tell them something of Athens. Besides, I was too excited to write.

Away we went then, we three. It was dusk and we could only rush round the town. It is not very big now, and it was much less then. The Signor knew Athens well, and was our guide in the fast-darkening twilight. 'Yonder,' he said, 'is the Temple of Theseus, and over against it is the Areopagus; somewhere near the latter, low down in the hollow, was the Agora, the market in which the ancient Athenians, so like the modern Greeks, spent most of their time in doing nothing, and asking silly questions.'

Then we turned and walked round the Acropolis on its desolate side, past the Roman buildings at its base and on till we came to the Arch of Hadrian, the only bit left of his new city, and not the city of Theseus, as the inscription tells us, still so legible on the arch that a child may read it. We went through the arch and gazed over the great arid waste, only relieved by the magnificent columns of the Temple of Jupiter, standing like so many giants that have survived the destruction of the rest of their race. Then we went back to the slope of the Acropolis, to the border of the heaps of rubbish and dust which man and time have hurled down from the rocky mount. We must have passed over the site of the Temple of Bacchus—not a gin temple, but where the masterpieces of Greek tragedy and comedy, the sublimity of Æschylus, the beauty of Sophocles, the pathos of Euripides, and the wit and satire of Aristophanes, were poured out year by year to the delight of Athens and her allies. When we were there no one knew exactly where the site of that temple was. It was reserved for a patient German to declare where it must be from written proof. The Greek government asked him what he thought

ought to be done. 'Dig,' said the German; 'dig here;' and they dug with such success that they completely unearthed the seats of the old theatre, and found them and the stage lying there comfortably tucked up under ever so many beds of dust. As it was we passed over it, and turning round the base of the Acropolis, and now leaving its desolate side, we found amongst some mean houses the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, the most elegant bit of architecture, perhaps, in the world.

But here our archæological explorations came to an end.

'Papa,' said Sappho, 'it's no good going on any longer pretending to see in the dark. I don't know what Mr. Halfacre can do, but I really am not a cat—I can't see when there is no light.'

In fact, we had gone on and on for some little time, fancying we saw things because we were told we ought to see them. The Signor said 'See this,' and we saw it. How strong is faith, even in sight-seeing! Dear reader, do you never see things because you believe you see them?

Sappho's common sense—in this she was Scatterbrains in petticoats—brought us to ourselves.

'Yes,' said the Signor, 'it would be better to have light; we can come again to-morrow. Let us go to our hotel.'

Thither then we returned, delighted with what we had not seen.

Did I lie awake that night thinking of Arethusa? I did better; I fell asleep thinking of her, wishing she were there with me to see those glorious works of art. The last thing I remember was saying, 'When we are married we will come here, and I will be her showman, and she will believe me as I believed the Signor when he showed me things in the dark. She will have faith in me, as I have faith in her.'

Was not that a long sentence for a man to carry in his head just as he was falling off to sleep? But it really was my last waking thought that night; in my dreams, of course, Arethusa was always with me. My nights, at that period of my existence, were the dearest part of my life.

Next morning I was up very early. I was down long before Sappho appeared, or any of them. I stole a march upon her basely, and went out for a little walk. Then I saw things which I had not seen the night before—little things, but still essential parts of life in Athens. First of all, I saw the Dust. I have spelt it with a big D to show what a feature it is at Athens. If there are dustier places in the world than Athens, all I can say is, I never saw them. I don't believe that all the dustmen in all the world, with all their brooms and carts, would ever sweep it away, if they worked day and night. Dust! You walk out in London on Sunday in a dry summer;—I say Sunday, because, except in a few favoured districts, there are no water-carts in London on Sunday; heaven is supposed to lay the dust all over London on that sacred day;—you walk out in London on Sunday, I say, and you come back with your boots dusty. You are abused for bringing so much dust into the house, and you fly to brush it off. That is after a ten-mile walk. But in Athens your boots are dustier at your first step than if you had walked twenty miles along an English high-road. You put your foot out, and it sinks into a thin, whitish powder, down for inches, with what result as to the polish of your boots I need not say. No! Athens is the city of dust. Let no one deny it. At first, as I walked on, I thought it was only the street in which our hotel was that was very dusty; but I soon found that all the other streets were the same, only many of them were dustier. It is worse now, no doubt, than in ancient times; then there was more shade and more water. The Turks and Greeks had not cut down all the olive-trees on the hills, and Ilissus and Cephissus were real streams, not dry water-courses flooded, perhaps, ten times in the year. Then, too, there was at Athens the Academy and its groves of planes. Now, except the puny plantations of Otho and his Queen, and the few pepper-trees growing along the walks, there is hardly a green thing in Athens except the palace garden.

The next thing that struck me in that morning's walk was the excessive abundance of officers and generals in uniform, even at that early hour. The Greek army seemed to consist entirely of officers. If there were any privates they kept themselves carefully out of sight. Perhaps if they showed themselves they were afraid they might be called on to mount guard. I observed, too, that the officers and the generals were in a highly excited state, loitering about in knots, and discussing politics. I believed we were on the eve of a revolution: but it was all nothing; it was merely the way in which this army of officers spent its days in talking politics and neglecting its duty. One half the mornings wasted by men in generals' uniform, in babbling at the corner of the streets, and in the market-places, would have cleared all Greece of brigands, drained her marshes, and laid out roads all over the country.

Ah! what good would one year of King Tom's reign have done the Greeks in those days!

But I saw more. I climbed up to the rock of the Areopagus; I stood where the *Bema* — the tribune — is supposed to have stood; I was on the very spot from which Demosthenes launched his philippics against the rising might of Macedon, and where St. Paul stood, and confuted the philosophers. Down below, in what used to be the market, where were the crowds of gay idlers, of Athenian citizens, the spoilt children of Pericles and Alcibiades, who would not come up and stand round in sufficient numbers to make a legal assembly, who caused a 'count out,' as our whips would say, and who ran up and down the Agora shirking the heralds, the whips of the republic, who ran after them with a rope stained with vermilion, trying to hit them, in which case the marked man was forced to attend the assembly or be fined? Yes; where were they? Their works of art and literature remain, and will remain for ever, but where were they? All I could see from the Areopagus were three generals standing in the deserted space, and gesticulating together. Though they were a hundred yards off, at least, I knew they must be talking politics, and in their mind's eye, already established as field-marshals of the grand army of the Greeks, the head-quarters of which are at Constantinople.

But I must get back to breakfast, and leave the ancient Greeks to Madam Harbury, whose interests in the good men of old you well know.

As I walked back to the hotel, the Temple of

Theseus was on my left, and the front of the Acropolis straight before me. Seen at that distance the temple might have been built not a hundred years ago. There it stands with its roof on, and its columns reddish-yellow, with that beautiful lichen which only grows over Greek marble to make it more lovely. The dragomans will tell you, as mine told me, that this reddish-yellow was the blood of the Greeks that stained the columns as it spurted out in some imaginary Turkish massacre. Don't believe them: it is a lichen growth, and no human blood.

Yes; there before me was the Acropolis; the Temple of the Wingless Victory on the extreme right nestled up in a corner. Hard by it a good mediæval watch-tower, which some fools are for pulling down. I beg you to believe I am not one of them. Then right in front the Propylæa, the marble defences of the gate, all in marble, and strong enough to stand twenty centuries of time and sieges, man's worst work on earth. Further back on the left, the Erechtheum; still, I believe, rather a puzzling temple to the learned; and above all, and behind all, and over all, absolutely crushing them with its weight both of size and beauty, the Parthenon. Yes! the Parthenon. There it stands, shorn of its marbles and of its great statue of the mighty goddess. A temple which has been besieged, blown up, battered, spoiled and robbed, and which still stands, after all that has befallen it, and proudly says: 'Man and time have done their worst, and man more than time; yet here I am. They have but taken away my jewels and my dress. Here I am, still alive, in glorious beauty, though naked and stripped to the skin.'

As I walked home on the inhabited side of the Acropolis—for, you must know, a great part of the modern city has nestled under one side of the Acropolis, and is as thickly peopled and as busy as the opposite side, where the city of Hadrian stood, is waste and desolate—I saw the wall running round the crest of the rock, and saw it, as we are told, full of bits of statues and columns. If you look to Thucydides you will understand the political necessity which made the old Athenians,—who could work with a will when they chose,—build that wall in such a hurry, as to spare no materials, sacred or profane, that came in their way.

I found them all waiting breakfast for me, and Sappho rather sulky at my having got the start of her.

'Very mean of you to take that advantage of a lady, who has her hair to do, and I don't know what besides. What have you seen?'

Then I told them where I had been, and what I had seen, not forgetting the dust or the generals.

'Yes,' said the Signor. 'It is dusty in Athens, especially at this time of the year, when there has been no rain for months. I daresay we shall soon have some showers to lay the dust.'

I did not tell him what I thought—that it would take all the water in the Gulf of Corinth to lay the dust of ages which lay in the streets of Athens. But I thought that I now saw how it was that the plays of Aristophanes are so full of allusions to eyes and eye-diseases, and why the great orators worked them up into their speeches, as when Pericles made that hit at Ægina, which I have already told you. Athens must always have been a bad place for eyes, and oculists must have done a good business there. How could it be otherwise, when the sun glares down on the white soil, and every gust of wind sends the impalpable powder in clouds into your eyes?

After breakfast, we again set out on our exploration of Athens. Now we had daylight and a long day before us. Both Sappho and I were for going up to the Acropolis at once, but the Signor would not let us. He hired a carriage, and we drove to see the palace. I am sure I don't know why we went; perhaps he thought its architecture a good contrast, and preparation for the Parthenon. Perhaps he was really proud of it, though I believe it was the work of a German. I am not going to abuse it. I call it very pretty, and so is the garden; very pretty—wonderful, in fact, for Athens, where it costs as much to make one blade of grass grow as it did the Pharisees of old to make one proselyte. Yes, it is at Athens, water, water, water, and again water; what that garden cost in water-carts, to keep it green, would have made ever so many miles of road.

After we had seen the palace, we drove round to the desolate side of the Acropolis, now in the full blaze of a mid-day sun. How hot and dusty the vast expanse looked, and how dazzling those gigantic columns looked in the glare. One, I remember, had a chapel on the top of it—a sort of Simeon Stylites hermitage, erected for himself by some holy anchorite. He must have been both hot and cold by turns up there.

Then we drove through the Arch, and admired the clearness of the inscription, which is cut in letters so clear and large, that you can read them from below, and so on, along that side, below the great heaps of rubbish, reversing the way we had come in the dusk the evening before, until we turned at the end of the rock, and the carriage drew up at the entrance to the Acropolis.

Yes, there we were, going up to see the Parthenon. Did we go in by the side-gate? No; we went straight up the clive—the slope that leads through the Propylæa. What was the Propylæa? I can't help the hard word; I did not make it. The Propylæa are the 'defences before the gate,' —the barbican, or whatever else you like to call it, in Gothic architecture. It was a marble outwork, built by Pericles, to protect the real gate of the Acropolis. You know the Acropolis was the citadel of old Athens? Yes, I thought you did. This outwork was very strong and solid, and all of marble. There are marble blocks and marble beams, so solidly put together, all fitted so nicely, without mortar, that it is a wonder to see; some of the beams have toppled down, not from any settlement, but from the misfortune of war. I forget how many times the Venetians and Greeks besieged the Turks in the Acropolis, and how many times the Turks returned the compliment—certainly a good many times. Well, we scrambled up the steep slope, over the marble steps, amazed at the beauty of the work; and then we made straight for the Parthenon, across a whole desert of blocks of marble, huge drums of columns, and broken capitals. Yes, we both reached it together, Sappho and I. The Signor was slower in his movements, and had to pick his way across the blocks. There we stood before the great temple, together, staring up at the Pediment.

'Yes,' she said, bitterly, 'you may look; you won't see much there. Where are the sculptures of that Pediment, and where are the friezes and metopes that once adorned the walls of this *our* national monument? *Our!* I say—*our!*'

Then, without waiting for an answer, she went on: 'I know where they are. Papa saw them in London, in a great, gloomy building, which you call your Museum, full of smoke and blacks. He went there when he was in England on business, and saw what you call "the Elgin Marbles," after the robber who stole them away. They ought to be here, for he said he did it to save them from the Turks. Now the Greeks are here, why doesn't he send them back?'

So she went on, dilating on this sentimental grievance, till her cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkled as she spoke. It was in vain to tell her that Lord Elgin really preserved the marbles by taking them away. She always returned to her text: 'If that was the only reason, why doesn't he send them back?'

But we had not gone there to quarrel about the Elgin Marbles, but to admire the Parthenon. By this time the Signor had joined us, and we paced it every way—in its breadth and its length, and we were in ecstasies at the trueness of the workmanship, and the wondrous fitting of the huge blocks together.

Not content with admiring it from below, Sappho must see it from above, and up we went to the back of the Pediment, across one of the huge marble beams, which must have been four or five feet wide. There is a story of a man who, having crossed this marble bridge, lost his head, and refused to come back with his friends. What they did with this giddy-headed mortal I am sure I don't know; all I can say is, he was not up there when I ascended. The Signor was content with the back of the Pediment, which looked a barrier like a mountain; but Sappho insisted that the right thing was to go on to the cornice in front, on which the Pediment rests, and at the extreme end of which is still one bit of sculpture which Lord Elgin did not carry away.

I was ready enough, and we soon stood on the cornice; getting out on it at the extreme left as you stand with your back to the Pediment.

That, if you like, was giddy work, to look down seventy feet, and seemingly to stand on nothing to spectators from below. But after all it is not so very bad. The cornice is broader than it looks—four feet, I should say, by guess after all these years. It was rather what I call 'tippy.' In places the blocks had lost their bearings and lay up and down at all sorts of odd angles, but still we walked along it to the extreme right, and then I had the satisfaction of seeing that the bit of sculpture left behind by Lord Elgin was so worn and weathered as to be worth little as a work of art.

'Now you see it,' I said, 'what do you think of it? Don't you think it would have been in a better state if it had gone with the rest?'

'Very likely,' said the wilful lady; 'if it had gone with the rest, it might come back with the rest. What I wish to know is when the rest will come back? Oh, you English—you English robbers!'

There she stood in the blazing sun staring out of her great eyes down to the Piræus and Salamis and Ægina and across the blue sea to the Morea. She looked like the great goddess herself as she denounced us as a nation.

'Yes! robbers. You were stolen yourselves. The Normans came and stole away your freedom, and ever since you have stolen from all nations. Here a rock, or a headland, or a port; there a province or half a continent. But what you most like are islands. Even robbers have tastes, and your taste is islands. I should like to know how many islands you have stolen. If another nation discovers an island, you seize it and say you were there first. If they colonise it or settle it, you seize it all the same. If it isn't yours, it ought to be. You are worse than the Dutch.

Who discovered and settled most of the West India Islands? The Spaniards and the French. And whose are those islands now? I suppose Van Diemen was an Englishman; his name has such a very English sound. And our islands, the Ionian Islands, why has England got them? Only because they are islands. And Heligoland, why have you got that? Only because it 's an island, and that you might smuggle your nasty cotton into Germany. That 's what papa says when we are alone. Go behind this Pediment and ask him if what I say is not true? Nothing satisfies your greed for islands. If Stromboli throws up an island that only lasts a week, some brave English Post Captain sticks the Union Jack on it and makes it British soil. I really believe Englishmen think that every island in the world naturally belongs to them. I daresay the reason is that you think yourselves safe on your islands, shut in all round by water. But perhaps the time will come when a stronger than you shall come and force you to disgorge the spoil that you have heaped up in your asylum of thieves. There! I have done; the mad fit has passed off. Let us rejoin papa.'

I had stood gazing at Sappho all the while that she denounced us as a nation of thieves, and I must say she played the part of a prophetess to perfection. I liked her better, too, than when she sat on the tripod of the Pythia at Delphi, and mocked me with riddles and oracles as to my Arethusa. We can bear,—at least I can,—a national wrong better than a private insult. When she had ceased, I only said:

'Very fine declamation, indeed! Some of it deserved, I daresay, though not all. The English nation, neither as a nation, nor as individuals, are so bad as we seem. But I am not going to contradict a young Greek lady before the Pediment of her own Parthenon. Here, I think, you stand on your own ground, and have a right to say what you like. Perhaps, though, if you Greeks had robbed more as a nation and less as men, if you had been a little more like Englishmen and a little less like Greeks, you would have been stronger as a nation and more respected as individuals. It's the old story of great and little dealings. A great conqueror kills his thousands and his hundreds of thousands and is crowned; a little man, a grocer it may be, kills his rival and is hanged. It is the way of the world. So it is with England, and so it is with Greece.'

'Very bitter,' said Sappho, 'and, like all bitter things, very nasty. Again, I say, let us go back to papa.'

I am sorry to say we found the Signor fast asleep with his back to the Pediment. If the glories of Greece and the infamy of England were at all on his mind, it must have been in his dreams; but I am sure he was not dreaming of anything so great. If he were conscious of anything in that sweet snatch of mid-day sleep it was of oil, and olives, and wine, and marmalade, and figs, and, above all the rest, of currants—currants as black, and sleek, and glossy as black Genoa velvet, as I heard a currant-merchant at Patras describe his crop.

Just so does the breeder of a pure short-horn cow declares that there is no beauty on earth to compare with his 'Last Rose of Summer.' Nothing that Phidias or Praxiteles ever carved, or Apelles or Zeuxis ever painted, is at all equal to the grace and loveliness of a pure short-horned cow. Nay, I am not sure that he does not think that beautiful women ought to go on all-fours like cows, and the fat wives of that African king—the King of Lollipoppo, if I remember right—across whom Grant and Speke came in their search for the sources of the Nile.

Well, we found the Signor fast asleep, and we woke him up. I am afraid he knocked the back of his head against the hard marble with the start he gave, for Sappho, still wild with her declamation, put out her mouth, and shouted out, 'Papa, dear!'

'What is it?' said the Signor; 'I have been so fast asleep.'

'Yes, I know you have,' said Sappho, 'and we have been waiting for you to call us ever so long, and as you never called, I called you, that is all.'

'Oh, I see,' said the patient Signor, rubbing his head. 'I suppose we ought to go down and see the rest of the Acropolis?'

'Of course we ought,' said Sappho, and down she went first, I next, and last of all the Signor.

We saw the Erectheum, and the Temple of Victory, and all the rest of the Parthenon; and Sappho, little Goth that she was, chipped off a great piece from the drum of a pillar that lay shattered there, that I might take it back with me to England. I abused her for it, and kept the bit of marble. Dear me! some things are so soon lost, and there are some that one never loses. There lies that bit of marble after all these years on this very writing-table. I have used it ever since as a paper-weight.

'There, take it,' she said; 'you won't be worse than Lord Elgin. You English, you know, are all thieves in one boat. It's no use for one of the crew to be squeamish.'

After that we walked round the wall that is built round the edge of the Acropolis, and where it was low enough we looked over and down into the town, out over the city of Hadrian, and the columns of Jove's Temple, and we tried to trace the dry beds of the Ilissus and Cephissus, and coming nearer we had a fine bird's-eye view of the palace and its garden, —that one green spot in a desert of dust, and we could see the Queen tending her flowers, and the Bavarian gardeners watering, watering, watering, so long as we looked. Behind the palace rose Lycabettus, and Sappho and I resolved that it should not be long before we were up at its top.

'Now I think we really ought to go home to your mamma,' said the Signor; 'it is just two o'clock.'

Back then we walked to the hotel. There we found the Signora quite happy writing. I have told you that writing is infectious. So after luncheon I sat down and wrote a long letter to Aunt Mandeville, telling her all my adventures. Poor dear Auntie! I said nothing in it likely to trouble her. I wanted to amuse her by showing her that I was amused and happy. I did not tell her that the great cause of my happiness was that in a month I should be back in England, and able to see my Arethusa.

After I had done writing that long letter, I gave it to the Signora, and begged her to post it with hers. After that the energetic Sappho again dragged her father out, and told him of our intention to climb Lycabettus.

'Dear me, Sappho,' said her father, 'don't you think you have almost done enough to-day in the way of exercise? I have never been up Lycabettus in my life. I should think it was harder work than you would like.'

'If you had been up it,' said Sappho, 'there might be some excuse, but, as you have not, you had better come.' Then she threw her arms about him, and said, in a very sweet voice:

'Do come, dear papa; I should like it so very much.'

Need I say that the Signor went like a lamb after this gentle appeal?

We drove to the foot of the hill, and then went up on foot. It is nothing of a climb, but then it was very hot. There is a fierceness in the sun in Greece, even in November, that prostrates one when exposed to its rays. How it seemed to settle itself, with all the malignity of the Dog Star, on my back all the way up! How the poor Signor puffed and panted; how red I know I was in the face; how flushed Sappho got, but how steadily she strode on, racing with me for the summit, and winning by a yard or two! Of course, I let her win. I was not going to be such a fool as the man who rode a race with a pretty young lady with a large fortune—and won it, like a fool. Of course, she married some one else. Men ought always to let women do what women think they can do as well as men. It is no glory to beat them. It will not reverse the sad sentence of all the ages and centuries that, on the whole, and in the long run, and with few exceptions—'Woman is the weaker vessel;' but, in cases where it can be at all done, it is just as well sometimes to let the grey mare be, as well as think herself, the better horse. So it was with that race up Lycabettus. I am quite sure Sappho Maurocordato was intensely pleased to think that she had beaten me in a fair race to the summit.

'I don't know how it is, my Lord,' said the Hampshire farmer to Lord Palmerston; 'I don't know how it is. They tell us it is colder on the tops of the hills than down in the valleys; and yet I never walk up to the top of that hill yonder from my farm down here without feeling very hot.'

We, too, were like the Hampshire farmer; we were very hot when we got up to the top of Lycabettus. There are convents and monasteries everywhere in Greece, and I believe there is one on Lycabettus; all I know is, we did not enter it, but sat down under a big stone, and again admired the view. The hill must have been made for no other purpose than for sight-seers of all times to survey the glories of Athens. From the Acropolis we had Athens under our feet; but from Lycabettus one far overlooks the Acropolis, and sees further and further away into the Morea. Having exhausted the vocabulary of synonymes to wonderful and beautiful, the patient Signor proposed a descent; but Sappho was for staying a little longer, till it was not so hot. What a father that Signor was! The patience of an ass or of Job was as nothing to his. Down he sat again without a murmur, and again he fell asleep.

'Poor papa! how tired he is!' said Sappho. Then, with one of her bursts of merriment: 'Do you know why I like you?'

'No. Why?'

'Because you never make love. You are not as other young men are—what I call "philandering." If you have affections, you keep them to yourself. Of course, I don't believe you care one bit for Mary Harbury?'

'You are quite right.'

'Do you care for any one?' Then, seeing that I was in a dilemma, she went on, 'Well, don't confess; I don't care to know who it is.'

'Of course, you can't care to know, if you say you like me because I never make love.'

'Yes; but don't you know that is often just the way to make others love you?'

'I know nothing about it,' I said, rather roughly.

'Well,' said Sappho, 'that will do. I think we may go down now. Wake up, papa. We are quite ready—quite!'

She said this last 'quite' most maliciously.

Down we went, and as the carriage had been sent away when we went up, we had a long walk back to the hotel.

On the way I told the Signor I should like to see Marathon when I was at Athens. This put the worthy man into as great a dilemma as Sappho's question on the top of Lycabettus had put me.

'Marathon! ah, yes, Marathon!' And then he hummed and hahed much as dear Mr. St. Faith used to do in his sermon. 'Do you particularly wish to go to Marathon?'

'Of course he does,' said Sappho. 'Mr. Halfacre, you know, papa, has only just left school. He wants to go and see the place of which he has learnt so many lessons.'

'Why don't you say,' I retorted, 'that Mr. Halfacre wants to go and see the spot, the sacred spot, where the Old Greeks beat the Old Turks? for I take it the Persians were to the ancient Greeks pretty much what the Turks are to the Modern Greeks.'

'Very nicely said. You're a very good boy. You have learnt your lesson well. Papa, dear, let us take him to Marathon.'

'That is easier said than done,' said the Signor.

'But if we are to go I must look out for a guide. I wonder whether Themistocles Kakourgos is in Athens.'

'That 's rather an ill-omened name,' said I; 'Kakourgos; why, that means "ruffian," or "evil-doer."'

'"What 's in a name?"' said the Signor. '"Handsome is that handsome does." We have that proverb in Greek as well as you in English. All I say is, if I go to Marathon, Themistocles Kakourgos goes with us.'

'I am sure I have no objection,' I replied; and so the Signor went off in search of Themistocles, leaving me and Sappho at the door of the hotel.

'And pray who is this Themistocles?' I asked, as we went upstairs.

'Oh, a friend of papa's, who has dealings with him, and lives up the country in the direction of Marathon.'

In a few minutes,—certainly in less than a quarter of an hour—the Signor returned. Had he seen Themistocles? Yes; and he was coming to supper. Then we could settle about going.

Accordingly at supper-time, about eight o'clock, a rap came at our door.

'Come in,' said the Signor, and in walked Themistocles.

When I say 'walked,'—that is not the word; he stalked in, taking long strides across the room. First he turned to the Signora, and shook her hand so heartily that she groaned. Then he slapped the Signor on the back, just as if he had got a bone in his throat. I am sure I don't know what he would have done to Sappho had not that young lady fled the room. Last of all, he walked up to me, and stared me full in the face.

From all this, you will see that Themistocles Kakourgos had not been taught manners in his youth; nor had he expended much of his capital on learning that branch of knowledge since.

Then he threw himself into an arm-chair, and asked when supper would be ready.

'Oh! very soon, very soon,' said the Signor, in a deprecatory way. 'It will soon come.'

The supper came, and it came in the shape of a much more magnificent repast than we had had all the time I had stayed with the Signor. Suffice it to say, that it was not only very solid, but that it comprised all the delicacies of the season, woodcocks included. Where they got them, in treeless and waterless Attica I am sure I can't tell; but there they were.

If Themistocles was a good guide, he was as good a trencherman. Down his throat went everything. I really thought he must have just come off a long fast. Nor did he spare the wine: Santorin and Cyprus were his favourites. They were stronger, and had no rosin in them. After he had done, he began to pick his teeth with his fingers. I suspect a tooth-pick would have been as much thrown away upon him as a tooth-brush. Yet he had huge, regular, white teeth.

At last he came to business.

'Well, Spiro!' he said to the Signor, 'what can I do for you?'

'We want to take this gentleman, who is a great friend of mine, to Marathon; and we want you to come as a guide.'

'When do you want to go?' said Themistocles.

'As soon as possible. To-morrow, if it suits you. How are the tracks?'

The Signor said 'tracks,'—not roads; for there are no roads in Greece,—and he said it in a very suggestive way.

'The tracks,' said Themistocles, 'are always good when I ride over them. I can always get along. But you know I am a poor farmer, and I can't go for nothing.'

'Oh! of course,' said the Signor. 'That is understood. This gentleman will make it worth your while.'

'Done then!' said Themistocles. 'I'll take you there. You, and Miss Sappho, and your friend, and find horses, and bring you back for ten gold pieces,—French or English, I don't care which. But I will have no silver. To-morrow, if it doesn't rain,—which it isn't at all likely that it will — I will be here with the horses at ten o'clock, and then we can make a good start, and sleep at Marathon, and come back the next day.'

Having said this, he tossed off the remains of the bottle of Santorin into a tumbler, bade us good evening, and strode out of the room.

I remarked that the waiters stood aghast at his boorish ways, and were evidently in great awe of him.

'Your friend seems what we call a rough diamond,' I remarked to the Signor, as soon as he was out of hearing.

'Yes, indeed. But then he is an honest man. That is to say, if Themistocles gives his word to do anything, he will do it. But we should never have got him to go unless we had put him into a good humour with that supper.'

As he said this the Signor pointed to the table, on which literally nothing was left but bones, broken bits of bread, and empty bottles.

Now I suppose all of you think I am going to take you off for two days into Attica, and to show you Marathon, as Themistocles Kakourgos showed it to us. But you are all quite mistaken. This story, truthful as it is, must come to an end soon, and I have no time to take you with me to Marathon. You must be content to know that, true to his word, Themistocles came with his horses next morning, and very good nags they were. Under his guidance we rode, the Signor, Sappho, and I, to Marathon. Yes, we saw everything. We saw that famous plain, and somewhere or other I have a flint arrow-head—one of the Persian shafts, no doubt—which I picked up there. In the evening we went to a sort of farm-house, not the abode of Themistocles, but of one of his friends. It was a cut-throat sort of place, but we both fared and slept well in it. After supper—not so delicate, but quite as profuse as ours at the hotel—Themistocles and his friend sang Romaic songs, about robbery, and love, and Turk-slaying. Then we all lay down—that is, all the men—before the huge fire, on goat-skins and sheep-skins, and slept well. As for Sappho, she was stowed away in a sort of side-room, out of which we had, from time to time, heard women's voices, though we saw no faces.

Next morning we were up early, and had breakfast. I remember it was coffee, full of grouts, and fried eggs, and dried mutton and botargo.

Then we bade adieu to the friend of Themistocles, who was not nearly so great a bear, and so we rode back to Athens, highly delighted.

We shook hands with Themistocles at parting, but we did not ask him to supper. When he was gone, and we had heard the last of his horses rattling down the street, I asked the Signor how Themistocles got his living.

'In many ways,' said the Signor, dryly. 'By selling wool and oil to me and others; but mostly by brigandage. Did you not hear him say that the tracks were always good when he went over them? By that he meant that they were bad when he did not go as guide. Very bad, for then he would not scruple to rob you, nay, to cut your throat if you resisted. But when you can get him to say that he will go as guide for a fixed sum, it is a point of honour with him to go and bring you back safe, and then you may trust him thoroughly.'

'But the police,' I said. 'How is he here in Athens, if he is known to be a brigand, without being arrested?'

'Oh, as for that,' said the Signor, 'if the police were to arrest every brigand who is known to be in Athens, they would have nothing else to do. All I know is, Themistocles has never been arrested; and I also know that you would never have gone to Marathon and come back safe and sound, had it not been for Themistocles Kakourgos and that supper.'

So now, reader, you see why I told you about this little trip to Marathon. It was to show that brigandage, when I was in Greece, was just as flourishing an institution of the country as it is in this year of grace, 1870.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW SCATTERBRAINS SCATTERED US.

So we went on spending day after day at Athens very pleasantly. Sometimes we went up to the Acropolis to look at the Parthenon. We were never tired of looking at it, and sometimes we went about the city on exploring parties. Once we took boat and went to Salamis, and had a pic-nic there. Fancy a pic-nic at Salamis. We were just planning a voyage down to Sunium—and I verily believe Themistocles Kakourgos would have been our guide—when something happened which disconcerted all our plans.

One morning, towards the end of November, we were sitting at breakfast, and Sappho was reading the newspaper. The Signor had business letters, and the Signora—as usual—looked woebegone and said nothing. I was doing nothing, and—as usual—thinking of Arethusa.

All at once Sappho broke out:

'Well! if he has not pursued us here!'

'Who,' I asked; 'who has pursued us?'

'Why, that friend of yours; that rude man, Scatterbrains, as you call him. I see his yacht has arrived at the Piræus, and of course he is on board.'

'I am very glad; I like Scatterbrains so very much.'

'More than I do,' said Sappho; 'I hate rude men.'

Athens is a small place. To be in Athens and fancy you can escape notice is an absurdity. Scatterbrains soon found us out; and besides, he had come to seek us.

In less than an hour from the time that Sappho had read out his arrival, he walked into our room.

'So glad to see you, Halfacre! So very glad! I have been chasing you all the way from Corfu. I came back from my shooting about ten days ago, and there I found a lot of letters for you, lying at the post-office, so I laid hands on them, and here they are.'

As he said this he handed me several letters.

'How good of you!' I said; 'just like you, old fellow, always ready to do any one a service. How long are you going to stay here?'

'Oh, I'm sure I can't tell. I come when I like, and I go when I like. I suppose I shall go when I have had enough of the place. But I will go away and leave you to read your letters.'

There were several letters; but only two that

I cared to see—one from Lady Meredith, and one from Aunt Mandeville.

'I wonder what can have made Lady Meredith write to me,' I said, as I broke the seal; 'no bad news, I hope.'

Now, as I tell you everything, you may read the letter.

'MEREDITH PARK,
'*November* 10*th*, 183–.

'DEAR MR. HALFACRE,

'I do not know whether you will thank me for writing to you; but, after much consideration, I have made up my mind to take that step, and to write to you freely. I am sorry to say that your affairs do not progress very well. A certain young lady and an uncertain Count see a great deal of one another at Leamington, where the hunting season is—as you know—just beginning, and, though I believe what I hear to be all gossip, still I do not at all like what I hear.

'I drove over to Mandeville Hall the other day and saw your Aunt. She was not very well, and I should say rather vexed with you. She says you never write to her, and that she hears you are amusing yourself with a very pretty young Greek lady. I must tell you that I believe this report was brought to Warwickshire, a day or two before I called, by your friend, Major Plunger, who was full of his Corfu experiences, and says that you cut all the English and lived entirely in *one* Greek family.

'I do not know whether you will be surprised or pleased to hear that I found Count Manteuffel staying at Mandeville Hall. Your Aunt says she thinks him charming. He said, from his experience of the fascination of the Greek ladies, that he did not wonder that you should have forgotten Mary Harbury. He called her Miss Harbury; of course I call her Mary Harbury. I need not say that Miss Chichester was not at Mandeville Hall.

'As I went away, Mr. Brooks said, in his most confidential way: "That foreign Count, my lady, which his name no servant can't pronounce, comes here a'most every day. Mrs. Mandeville do get quite fond of him."

'Now I think, all things considered, the best thing you can do is to come back as soon as you can, even before your time is up. I do not, of course, believe that you are falling in love with any young Greek lady—I know you too well for that; but I think it would be as well if you showed your face at Mandeville Hall as soon as possible.

'With Meredith's kind regards, believe me, my dear Mr. Halfacre,

'Yours sincerely,
'EMILY MEREDITH.'

'What a dear, good woman!' I said, right out. 'How she watches after my interest, and yet I can make neither head nor tail of her letter. What can Auntie mean by saying that she never hears from me? Why, I have written over and over again, and told her where I was, and what I was doing.' As for the gossip about Arethusa and the Count, I don't think it worth a thought. I know he used to rave about her, and I daresay he raves about her still, and thrusts himself on her when they meet; but as to anything else, after what has passed between Arethusa Chichester and myself, it is simply ridiculous. I trust her as she trusts me, and when we meet she will tell me all, as I will tell her all.

'But that Plunger! to go and tell lies about me. I daresay he and Twentyman have made a fine story out of my visit to Gastouri. Won't I pay them out when I get home?'

All this I said before I even opened Aunt Mandeville's letter. As I have let you read the other, you may read hers:

'MANDEVILLE HALL,
'*November* 12*th*, 183–.

'MY DEAR EDWARD,

'Though I have written several times to you to complain of your silence and neglect, I really must write again to say how much shocked I am to hear from Major Plunger, and indeed from your last letter, that you have quite thrown yourself into the arms of a Greek family at Corfu. I daresay they are very respectable people—at least, I hope so. Count Manteuffel, of whom I see a good deal, says that they cannot be the family to whom he gave you letters of introduction, because that was one of the first families in the Ionian Islands. I am sorry to say that I could not gather either from Major Plunger or Mr. Twentyman the name of the family with whom you are living. The Major said, as is the truth, that he is not a good rememberer of names; but he could answer for it that Miss Sappho, as he called her, was a most charming person, and had got you, to use his vulgar expression, completely under her thumb.

'I must say, Edward, that this news has been a very great blow to me. To think that you should so misbehave—you whom I have reared up for myself to be my own child, and to show me duty and obedience. This criminal passion is a thousand times worse than that boyish fancy which you had, or professed to have, only a few weeks ago, for Miss Chichester, and I am both shocked and distressed at your levity.

'I am sorry to say I must now repeat my wish, —I ought to say my command, considering the relations which exist between us,—that you will at once write to me without a moment's delay after you receive this, and give your consent to that union with Miss Harbury which, while it will gratify one of the dearest objects of my life—that of seeing you happily settled for life—will, at the same time, save you from the moral ruin toward which you seem to be hastening.

'Believe me,
'Your affectionate Aunt,
'ELEANOR MANDEVILLE."

Now I put it to any of you, what was I to make of this letter? It was a thousand times more puzzling, to say nothing of its unkindness and severity, than that of Lady Meredith, and yet you have seen how hers puzzled me. What did Auntie mean? What did they both mean by saying that she never heard from me? Oddly enough that was just the complaint that I had felt inclined to make against her, for I could only remember two letters that had reached me from her, while I had constantly written. However, there was no use denying the fact that stared at me out of both letters. Aunt Mandeville declared that she had not heard from me. As for Plunger's forgetting the name of the Maurocordatos, that was too like him to excite anything but mirth in my mind. A man who could not pronounce 'Manteuffel,' after months and months' practice, was not likely to be successful with the harder Greek name. But what did Count Manteuffel mean by saying that the Greek family, with the daughter of which Aunt Mandeville plainly supposed that I had formed a disreputable connexion, was not *the* Greek family to whom he had given me letters of introduction? That again was a thing which, if those had been the days of Dundreary, I should have said, 'No fellow could understand.'

No; I could make nothing out of Auntie's letter. The worst was that it had to be answered; that last part must be answered, and answered decidedly. Again, Aunt Mandeville had stepped between me and my love; her tyranny made me free before, and it should make me free then. Much as I loved her, I would not go back at her beck and call, as though I were her pet dog; and I would not give up Arethusa, and I would not marry Mary Harbury.

Then, too, all ye young lovers,—young men, with hearts, and young ladies who have exchanged your hearts for theirs,—stand by me while I lay this insulting, tyrannical ukase before you, and say whether, as a free man and true lover, I was bound to obey it. Of course you are all on my side.

'The God who sends sweet love to us,
He never loved a slave.'

I was right, then, in rejecting, without hesitation, Aunt Mandeville's ultimatum. Yes, I would write to her that very day,—it was post-day, luckily,—the one day in the week that the post left for France,—and refuse to come back before my time; and when I did come back, I would say no power on earth should ever make me marry Mary Harbury.

Dear me! what a passion I was in when Scatterbrains came to look me up in my bedroom, after waiting ever so long for me in the sitting-room, with his enemy Sappho! You must remember, all of you, that Auntie's letter added insult to injury, when it suggested that my 'criminal passion,' as she called it, had made me forget my 'boyish fancy' for Arethusa. 'Boyish fancy, indeed! she shall see whether it is a boyish fancy,' I said, out loud, as Scatterbrains entered the room.

'Well, old fellow! read your letters. You needn't tell me there is something unpleasant in them; I can see it in your face. What is it? Can I do anything for you?'

So I made him sit down, while I stamped up and down the room, and told him all. When I had ended, he said:

'Now, you see the truth of what I said, that you had got into a mess, and that I did not like it at all. You go away, leaving your Aunt half-angry, and then you put yourself into a false position by going and living with a family of foreigners all this time on the mere strength of a letter of introduction from a man who is a rival in love, and who is really half a stranger. You often say there are things to do, and not to talk about, and things to talk about, and not to do; but this was a thing neither to do nor to talk about, and which, if any one did, he was sure to be talked about. Talked about you have clearly been; first, by stupid people, like Plunger and Twentyman—dolts, who mean no harm, and really wish you well, but for all that can ruin your character by their very stupidity. You ought to have remembered, too, that there are knaves as well as fools in the world. How do you know that some knave has not been talking about you, and garbling your doings, on purpose to do you harm? That's what you've got by your imprudence. You see the one fact remains, out of which a whole tower of fraud can be, and probably has been, raised. You did throw yourself into the arms of this Greek family. But it is no use crying over spilled milk; what is past is past. I want to know what you mean to do now?'

'What do you advise?'

'What you ought to do,' said Scatterbrains, 'is as plain as day. You ought to write to your Aunt a dutiful letter, saying that you are coming home at once; put your letter into the post, and take your passage on board the steamer, which will carry it to-night to France. When I got to Marseilles, I should let the letter precede me by a day or two; and when it had produced the effect it is sure to have on your Aunt's feelings, I would show myself at Mandeville Hall, and ask her forgiveness.'

'What!' I cried, 'and marry Mary Harbury?'

'Well, as you put it in that way, I think I would. It will save you a deal of trouble. Mind, I don't say you ought, but, in a worldly point of view, it 's by far the best thing you could do.'

'Never! never!' I said; 'I hate you, Scatterbrains, for giving me such base advice!'

'Well, if you won't, you won't,' said Scatterbrains, dryly; 'but even if you won't, you ought to go home, and have it out with your Aunt, face to face. You ought never to have left a jealous woman, as I know she is—so jealous that I 'll be bound to say she 'll be furiously jealous of Mary Harbury before you have been married six months. I say you ought never to have left a jealous woman like that, and placed your character at the mercy of backbiters. No; the sooner you go back the better, even if it is only to say "No" to Mary Harbury.'

But, no; I would not be persuaded. I felt too hurt; I was too proud to care what any one said of me. They might say what they liked, as they had already accused me so unjustly. I would write and say 'No' to Mary Harbury. It was so much pleasanter to say 'No' by letter. I would not run away like a thief in the night from the Maurocordatos, who had been so kind to me—from Sappho, who had been as a sister to me. I would tell them I was going in a week or ten days, and then I would go to Marseilles in the French steamer, and be home at Mandeville Hall, true to my time, before Christmas.

'Dear me!' I recollect saying, 'how we fret and vex ourselves about trifles. Here am I making so much out of these two silly letters when there's nothing in them. When I get home I'll explain it all away in five minutes; and as for Arethusa, who will bet that I shall not be sitting side by side with her under the Passion Flower at Mandeville Hall on Christmas Eve?'

'You're a fool,' said Scatterbrains, as he heard my determination, and saw me sitting down to write to Aunt Mandeville.

Yes! but though the letters were silly, both of them intensely silly in their suggestions of my wickedness, still there was that tyrannical wish or command at the end of Auntie's letter that had to be answered.

Now I don't call mine at all a good letter, but, such as it was, here it is:

'ATHENS, *November* 25*th*, 183–.

'DEAR AUNT MANDEVILLE,

'Your letter of the 12th has followed me hither from Corfu, whence, as you know by my former letters, I was to start with my friends some time ago. We have had a very happy time of it, and I have seen many things and places, all about which I hope to tell you when I return.

'I assure you I am quite at a loss to understand the cruel insinuations against my character contained in your letter. I have done nothing since I left England that I or you need be ashamed of, and though I cannot return so hastily as you command, I shall be quite able to explain my conduct when I know more precisely what it is that you complain of. I certainly can accuse myself of no want of dutiful affection towards you, but I should accuse myself both of baseness and bad faith towards one who must ever be the object of my tenderest affections, if I allowed you to suppose for one moment longer that I can ever marry Miss Harbury. Absence from England has only convinced me more and more that for me such an alliance is impossible, and, therefore, though it gives me the greatest pain to thwart your wishes, I positively refuse to marry the young lady for whom you have intended me.

'I hope to be back in England, true to my promise, before Christmas-day.

'Believe me,
'Your very affectionate nephew,
'EDWARD HALFACRE.'

Just as I had finished this letter Scatterbrains looked in again. I thought he was coming to apologise for calling me a fool. But I was wrong. Scatterbrains was one of those fellows who never apologise; perhaps because they never do anything that needs an apology. At any rate he did not make one to me. All he said was:

'Done your letter?'

'Yes! Just done.'

'Then give it to me and I'll post it;' and with that he snatched it up and ran away with it to the post, posting and paying for it with his own hands. When he came back he said:

'I daresay that's a very silly letter, but your Aunt will get it. That won't be one of the letters she has not got.'

Then he tried, in spite of the letter, to get me to go that night, but I was too angry and harsh to yield.

'A wilful man must have his own way,' he said; 'but now I am here I don't mean to leave you.'

True to his word he took up his abode in the same hotel, much to Sappho's disgust.

'Just like you Englishmen! Here's a man who has got a lovely yacht, with berths far more comfortable than the beds in any Hotel in Athens, and yet he must leave her down there in the Piræus and come up to us in this vile hotel, to us who don't want him.'

I must say she did everything to disgust Scatterbrains and scare him out of the hotel and Athens, but he was proof against all her freaks, and held to me like a man.

'If you were coming at all,' she said to him, 'why did you not come the same day that we came? We are a fortnight before you, and have already seen all the sights. Do you expect us to go all over them again with you?'

But Scatterbrains was quite a match for her.

'Yes!' he said, 'I do. What's a sight that you can't bear to see twice? Not a sight at all, I should say. Very like those very pretty girls that one sees once and never wishes to see again.'

'Why is that?' said Sappho snappishly. 'Why should one not like to see a pretty girl again?'

'Because some very pretty girls make themselves so very disagreeable that no one cares to see them again.'

'Downright stories,' said Sappho. 'I don't believe there's any man alive who does not care to see a pretty girl twice, however disagreeable she may make herself to to him.'

'Well! whatever you may think, it's my feeling,' said Scatterbrains.

And so the two went on, day after day, sightseeing and wrangling, till even I, who admired Sappho's readiness, began to think such perpetual sparring a bore.

I could not help loving Scatterbrains; he was so true and loyal to me, and was for ever giving me such good advice. His object was open and avowed. He said he thought I had stayed quite long enough with the Maurocodatos, and wished to separate us. I even believe he would have carried me off on board his yacht and set sail with me if he dared. But I must say Sappho gave him no chance. He asked the whole family to come on board and see the yacht, but on such occasions Sappho represented the whole family, and gave it a decided negative. She hated yachts, she said, and English yachts most of all, especially when she did not like the owners.

But one thing Scatterbrains did succeed in. As my pride was satisfied in having written off that refusal to my Aunt, I was now not so unwilling to go home, and so I was persuaded to take my passage for Marseilles by the next steamer, which was to start in a few days.

I don't think I ever saw any one half so happy as Scatterbrains was when we drove down to the Piræus to take that passage.

'Talk of Circe and Scylla and Charybdis and the Sirens,' he said. 'Let the ancients keep them, and let little boys be flogged for not knowing their names and what they did to the unhappy men of old time who fell into their clutches,—but of all dangerous things commend me to a clever young lady who pretends not to be in love with a man, and likes him because he does not love her, and, in fact, 'is unto him as a sister.'

'Why, Scatterbrains, you are getting Biblical—your style bewrayeth you. Do you know I think you are very hard on Sappho?'

'No, I am not! Not half hard enough. She is a wicked young woman, take my word for it.'

'No! I won't take it. She has been kindness itself to me, and has done me a deal of good since I have been here.'

'She has done you a deal of harm, I tell you; a deal of harm already, and will do you more harm yet.'

'I see we shan't agree on this point,' I said, 'so we had better talk of something else.'

As the hour of parting was approaching, I daresay you will like to know how the Maurocordatos bore it. As for me, you know that all I wanted was to get back to my Arethusa; meantime Sappho Maurocordato amused me, and was good to me.

But for the Maurocordatos! Well! the Signora remained the Signora to the end. Perhaps she was a little less woe-begone, and looked as if a weight were taken off her mind. But if she did, it was very little; about as much as when the tide rises in a tideless sea, rising two or three inches, perhaps, and then all the dwellers on the shore of that sea hold up their hands, and talk of the high tide. Just so, I daresay, the Signora thought she should quiet her feelings by being a little less gloomy at my departure; but all I can say is, if she thought it much, I thought it very little.

As for the Signor, he looked on it as a matter of business. Friends must part as ships must sail and currants ripen. In his heart, when he heard the day of my departure was fixed, he drew up for me a bill of lading, as he would have done for any vessels consigned to him; ending, no doubt, as all bills of lading used to do in the pious old times before the flood of unbelief came over us and swallowed us up, with 'And so God send that good fellow Edward Halfacre safe to port.'

That was how the Signor took it. Life was all a matter of business to him. Something to be done to the best of his ability, and he did it.

But Sappho—for, as I have told you, she really was the family,—how did she bear it? Very well indeed, at first. She said, indeed, when Scatterbrains, in a fit of exultation, which was very unlike him, broke out at the *table-d'hôte*, after we had taken the passage, with:

'Well, Miss Sappho, it is all settled; Mr. Halfacre has taken his passage for Saturday next.'

When Scatterbrains said this, she said she had heard before of passage-money forfeited, and berths that were never filled by those who took them; but, after a little banter, her vexation wore off, and she accepted what she could not help. I think she was more and more sisterly and attentive to me that last week than during all the time before, and I felt very grateful to her. We went here and we went there, our guard being now permanently increased by Scatterbrains, who played the part of a male duenna.

'How close he keeps to us!' said Sappho. 'He speaks as little as papa; but then, unlike papa, he never falls asleep. Do you think he ever falls asleep?'

Yes! we went here and there, and she bought me little presents, and I bought her little presents, and I was always thanking the whole family through her for all their kindness, and wondering if I should ever be able to repay it.

So it went on till the last day came; the very last day. I was to sail the next morning. I think we all felt dull, even the Signora; but Scatterbrains,—he was positively uproarious. 'What fun it would be on board the steamer! How delightful the Straits of Messina would be!' He went on at such a rate that in a little while he would have declared the Gulf of Lyons to be the most delightful bit of smooth water in the world,—a perfect mill-pond,—when you and I, reader, know it is about the roughest gulf in the universe.

Yes! he was disgustingly uproarious; as badly behaved as a clown at a funeral, with his low jokes and jests. Sappho could hardly sit out the dinner that day; she had been writing hard all that morning at some letters which she wished me to take with me.

'What shall we do this last evening?' said the mild Signor.

'Anything but have your friend Themistocles again to supper,' I said. 'I really do not feel equal to him to-night.'

'Never fear,' said the Signor, taking what I said seriously.

'Themistocles is miles away, busy bringing down a cargo of wool for me from Thessaly. But what shall we do?'

'Do?' said Sappho. 'What should we do but go up to the Acropolis for the last time?'

It was no use for Scatterbrains to hint that we had seen enough of the Acropolis. 'No doubt he had,' Sappho said. 'Its beauty was wasted on him. You are for all the world like those British sailors,—those most enlightened ruffians of the sea,—a party of whom I saw up there the other day, when I overheard one of them say to his shipmate: "I say, Bill, they tell me these stones was set up nigh a hundred years ago, in the time of King George I." Yes! you are just like them. Of course, you don't care to go up and take a last look of the Acropolis; but Mr. Halfacre does, and I am going with him, and papa is going with him.'

'And I am going with him,' said Scatterbrains, with as much temper as he ever showed, which, it must be owned, was very little.

'Come along, then, my Lord Duenna,' said Sappho, with one of her laughs, as she ran out of the room. Back she was in an instant with her bonnet,—these were hatless days, young ladies,—and away we went.

I remember we walked, I and Sappho together, and then behind us,—close behind,—Scatterbrains and the Signor. Up we went by the way we had so often gone before, under the Acropolis, keeping it on our left, and then when we got to the front turning and scrambling up by the shattered steps on the slope, up to the Propylæa.

As we passed under the marble beams of the entrance, Sappho said, 'For the last time! for the very last time!' with more sentiment than I had ever heard her mingle with her words.

'Yes!' I said; 'the more's the pity. But, you know, the dearest friends must part.'

'Are you quite sure?' said Sappho, turning sharp round, and looking me full in the face. 'Are you quite sure that we are your best friends?'

'Why should you not be?'

'Ah! why should we not be? That's one question; but are we? and that's another.'

'I feel as if you were, Sappho,' I said. Yes! it was the first time I had called her Sappho.

'And I feel as if I were not,' said Sappho. 'There!'

She said nothing more, and would say nothing more just then. She left me, and took Scatterbrains under her wing, and showed him many things that he had never seen before. Then she came back, and insisted on our going up in the dusk to see the last of the sunset from the Pediment of the Parthenon. She was wilful, and she had her way. Yes! we must all go up, the Signor and all, though he begged to be allowed to stay below.

'No! we will all go,' she said, 'or none of us shall go.' So we all went. Up the staircase we went, and across the beam-bridge, and reached the back of the Pediment, where the Signor had his nap a week or two before. 'Now, papa, you stay here, and we three will go on to the cornice. We can't see the sunset well from here.' Out on the cornice we three stood, Scatterbrains, Sappho, and I, looking at the sunset, when Sappho, in a mad fit, took off the hat of the unhappy Scatterbrains, and threw it down to the ground.

'There!' she said, 'that beggar will run off with your nice new hat if you don't run down and fetch it. I saw you liked it by the way you brushed it. If that beggar once puts it on his head you will never be able to wear it again. Why do you stay? Why don't you go? Or—' and she said this in a savage voice, intensely low, but wildly fierce—'or shall I push you over, and send you down a shorter way, like your hat? Go! Why will you not go?'

She was so earnest that even Scatterbrains yielded. Besides, his common sense told him it was the only way to save his hat; for it was quite true that it had fallen close to where a filthy beggar sat—one of those beggars only seen in Greece and the East, the very recollection of whom makes the flesh creep at this distance of time. Slowly and rather surlily he retreated, leaving us alone on the cornice.

'Don't take the trouble to come back,' she cried out after him; 'we shall soon be down.

Then, when he was gone, edging away more to the middle of the cornice, further from the spot where her father was, she put her mouth close to my ear, and whispered, 'If I said I loved you, would you believe me?'

'No, I would not. I have never thought you loved me;—you have never shown it. It has been the great charm of my stay under your roof—that I felt I could stay with you and not love you. Did you not say, only a few days ago, that you liked me because I never made love to you?'

'Yes!' said Sappho, bitterly. 'You felt you could stay under our roof and not love me. Did you think I could live with you so long under one roof and not love you? You ought to know by this time that the more a man does not love you, the more a woman loves. And you say you do not love me?'

'How can I, Sappho? I love some one else.'

'I thought so. I knew it. I shall be revenged.'

That was all she said, except, 'I forgive you; but I shall be revenged! Let us go back.'

So we went down and walked home in silence; and as I went I thought myself the most unfortunate of men, who was not allowed to love one woman as his mistress, as I loved Arethusa, and another as his sister, as I loved—or liked, if you like it better—Sappho Maurocordato.

When Scatterbrains met us, down below, Sappho seemed to have completely recovered her composure.

'Was it not a good joke to throw your hat over, Lord Duenna?' she said. 'You can't fancy what secrets Mr. Halfacre and I talked about while you were rescuing your hat from the beggar? Did he put it on? If so, pray don't come near me for a week. Dear me! I suppose you will never come to see us as soon as Mr. Halfacre is gone, and your occupation of nursing him and keeping him out of bad company, by your example and advice, has ceased. Do come to see us; we shall be so dull.'

'Sorry I can't,' said Scatterbrains, still thinking of his hat and of me. 'Sorry I can't; but the *Mermaid* sails for the Straits of Messina to-morrow afternoon. It will be a race between her and the steamer, which gets away first. But if I can do anything for you in Italy I shall be so happy.'

'No, thank you, nothing,' said Sappho, doggedly. 'I only wish you had not come here to scare our friends away by your advice.'

'Yes!' I said, when I went to bed that night, 'I am the most unfortunate of men. Here I am, desired to marry Mary Harbury on one hand, and on the other, a young lady—to whom, by her own confession, I never made a sign of love—falls in love with me, and says that she will forgive me, but she will be revenged. A very strange sort of forgiveness that, which pants for revenge. But how can she revenge herself? Can she rob me of my Arethusa? What nonsense! Good night, Arethusa! Good night, darling!' And in five minutes I was lost in dreams of my own true love.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW I WENT BACK TO ENGLAND.

Next morning I was up at daybreak. It is no very heroic thing to do, even at the end of November, and at Athens. How clear, and bright, and pure that daybreak was, and how really glad I was to be going back! My pride was satisfied. I had written my mind to Aunt Mandeville, and I felt like a free man. But I loved her very much, only not so much as Arethusa, or as much only in a different way: that's the best way to put it. Of course I was sorry to take leave of my kind Greek friends; but what Sappho had said the night before was a proof how dangerous a thing it is to play with gunpowder,—I beg pardon, with young ladies who may be falling over head and ears in love with you while you are only 'liking' them. I suppose it is the way of the world; or, at any rate, of that portion of it formed out of young ladies; but it is very inconvenient, that is all I say as I look back at my life.

We all met at breakfast much as usual. I thought Sappho's eyes were red; but she made no sign of grief. She was merry and bitter by turns; and when Scatterbrains came in she did not spare him.

All my things were packed up and ready; under the convoy of the steward of the *Mermaid* they had already been sent down to the Piræus, and put on board the steamer. Her name was the *Péluse*, and she had come last from Constantinople. She was to start at one P.M., and it was now nearly eleven, so that I had little time left. I saw that Sappho wanted to be left alone with me; but we had already had, I thought, explanations enough. Was I not forgiven for something that I had never done, and was she not to be revenged for some wrong that I, at least, had no hand in? Perhaps you will say, you stern moralist,—if any stern moralist has followed me so far—that I had passively done that charming young lady wrong, by staying with her, and throwing temptation in my sister's way; but then, you know, I have always told you that I was a most modest man, with a very mean opinion of myself. What I have repeatedly said in life is—'"Temptation," "Fascination,"—what nonsense! Who can find any such thing in me?' And yet, after all, I may be wrong; for who can account for likes and dislikes?—who can say in what nameless somethings or nothings attraction or fascination, or temptation,—call it what you will—consists? And the toad, that ugly creature, and the basilisk, that monster of romance—have they not, hideous though they be in outward show, great powers of fascination? And 'May's brown bird,' the nightingale, whose garb is as though she were the maid-of-all-work to all the feathered tribes,—has she no power of fascination under her plain attire?

I suppose, then, that I must give up the passive temptation, and confess myself wrong so far; but then you must recollect how young I was. I can assure you—as though that would do any good now—that I would never think of exposing any young lady to such passive temptation again.

But to come back. I saw Sappho wished to be left alone with me,—and I did not wish it. I whispered to Scatterbrains not to leave me; and, I must say, he clung to me like a Siamese link. I only use that simile, because that link seems to be positively the last invention of this inventive age; and to show you that I am not any old fogy living away in Cornwall, and a whole year behind my time. Yes! he stuck to me like a Siamese link, when Sappho proposed to go out to shop, and get some drawings of Athens,—horrid lithographs done by a miserable Bavarian artist, who, not being able to make a living at Munich, followed the fortunes of King Otho to Athens, only to starve. Now-a-days, please to observe, we should have gone and got some of those matchless photographs of Constantinos, which are the delight of all visitors to Athens.

Well! when Sappho proposed to go and get the lithographs, Scatterbrains said:

'Stop a bit; you need not take all that trouble.'

Off he went, like a carrier-pigeon, and in two minutes came back with his hands full of them. He had got them already, and they were quite at the Signorina's service, if she would do him the honour to accept them. You can't think how cross Sappho was. All she wanted was to go out for a walk with me. She did not care one bit for the lithographs; but she had to look at them, and that took up time. It would have done any one good, it was as good as a farce, to see the serious way in which Scatterbrains handed her each wretched print one after another, dilating on the beaüties of each, as though Phidias himself had engraved it on the stone. But it was all to kill time. On that day, at least, he showed that he was as good at killing time as woodcocks. He did not murder it as some people do; he only killed it; so civilly and gently,—just as wives are sent out of the world so softly by their husbands; not by blows, and kicks, and cuffs; but by infinitesimal doses. In justice to both sexes, let me add, and as husbands are sometimes despatched by their wives. No! I am not going to side with either sex. I am above such meanness. I am just, and describe life as I have found it. Six to one, and half-a-dozen on the other, is about the betting in the matrimonial race. There are no odds; it is all even.

So there Scatterbrains sat, killing time so politely, you could scarce see how fast its tide of life was ebbing. At last it was half-past eleven. Then Scatterbrains looked at his watch, and said we ought to be going. He never liked to run anything too close. Besides, I had not chosen my berth. He, too, had to get on board the *Mermaid*. We both ought to go.

'Papa, dear,' said Sappho, 'can't we go down to the Piræus with them, and see them off?'

'Certainly, my love,' said the Signor. I believe he would have said 'Certainly,' had Sappho said to him, in her sweet voice, 'Papa, dear, you must have your head chopped off!'

That was a move which Scatterbrains had not foreseen. He thought, and I thought, that all the leave-taking—all 'the sighs, and sobs, and shrieks,' as he unfeelingly called it—would have taken place at the hotel. He made a protest, but an ineffectual one.

'I think ladies will be very much in the way on the wharf at the Piræus. The port is always thronged with "those brutal British sailors," as Miss Sappho calls them so truly. Nor are the French, or Russian, or, for that matter, the Greek navies, much behind us in bad behaviour. Don't you think you had better stay here, and have your parting here, under this roof?'

'No, I do not think so,' said Sappho. 'I am not afraid of being insulted by any one out of this house.' And, as she said this, her blue eyes glared at Scatterbrains as fiercely as dear Aunt Mandeville's brown eyes had once or twice glared on me. They both had that intense, bright flash in them which can only be likened to a flash of lightning, blasting and withering you up with its intensity. So Sappho glared on Scatterbrains; and if he had not been of a very cold nature, he must have been set on fire, and burned to a cinder.

Against such arguments language was of no avail. The patient Signor got his hat, and Sappho was soon ready. I took leave of the Signora, whose face seemed to brighten as I made her a speech, which, if there had been a penny-a-liner present, would have been described as 'neat, and full of pathos.' Scatterbrains bowed profoundly. The bill had been long since paid; the carriage was at the door. Down we went, amid the good wishes of the landlord and waiters, and we were off. How relieved Scatterbrains was at that departure! and how very much more pleased he would have been, had we two been alone in the carriage!

I do not believe one single word was spoken all the way down the Long Wall. Sappho and Scatterbrains were each waiting to have the last word. Like duellists, each wished to have the final shot, and both were chary of throwing away their first barrel.

Well, we arrived at the Piræus. Of course there was plenty of time—there always is, on going on board ship. Did you ever hear of a man who just missed a ship? But how many times have you heard of people missing a train? Going on board ship means wasting half a day at least. For my part, I wonder how it is that ships ever get to sea at all. So much has to be done to the ship, which seems to take a pride in getting the passengers on board, and then making them wait. The tide, I believe, in tidal rivers, is the only reason why vessels ever go to sea in time; but in the Piræus there is no tide.

We were certain to have to wait then, but for all that we were bound to be on board before one o'clock struck. The *Péluse,* you know, was a French boat; and, on board the French boats everything is done after the laws of the Medes and Persians, and not after the *Code Napoléon.* I believe if a passenger arrived alongside five minutes after one, and the vessel did not start till five P.M., the unhappy wretch would not be allowed to embark.

Well, there we were, on the wharf. There was the Signor, mild and amiable; there was Sappho, lovely and dangerous, her cheeks all aglow, and her eyes flashing blue fire at Scatterbrains. There was Scatterbrains, for him, in a great state of excitement, rubbing his hands. 'So glad, old fellow, to think you are really going. Mind and write.'

There was the steamer, with her steam up, puffing, and snorting, and screeching, and whistling, as though she were going to start that very minute. At her side were lighters, feeding her bunkers with the coals that were to make her snort and puff all the weary way to Marseilles, that were to furnish her passion for travel with fuel. Barges there were, too, laden with heaven knows what!—some kind of cargo; but what cargo the *Péluse* got from Attica, no man can tell. But there they were. Perhaps it was the wool which Themistocles Kakourgos had brought, all the way from Thessaly, for the Signor; who could tell? There, too, dancing on the blue water at our very feet, down a few broken stairs, lay the *Mermaid's* gig. In her was Scatterbrain's coxwain, and her eight A. B.'s, in blue jackets, and drill trousers, and straw hats, with a black ribbon, on which was painted *Mermaid.* There she lay, and in her Scatterbrains had resolved to put me off to the steamer. He would not have left me alone with Sappho for anything. What a good friend he was! yet how little did he know of the workings of my heart! How little does any man know of the workings of another man's heart! Happy are we if we know the workings of our own,—the real, very reason why we do this or that. Yes; the Greek sage was right, who said that 'Self-knowledge came down straight from heaven.' I sometimes think she has been so badly treated by those who do know her, that she has gone back again to the skies, along with modesty, virtue, and several of the ten commandments.

We stood a few minutes—five at most—looking at the busy port, so small and so bustling, crammed with huge men-of-war, the real old matchbox, the sailing three-decker, that most beautiful of all vessels; while ever and anon the gigs and barges shot across from ship to ship, or made for one or other of the landing-places. Overhead was the blue sky and the burning sun, scorching even in the last November days.

Then Scatterbrains said, 'Time's up! We must go. Good-bye, Signor, and thanks for your kindness. Good-bye, Miss Sappho; you will not forget me?'

'No, I will not,' said Sappho; 'you may be sure I shall never forget you, nor him too;' and she pointed at me.

Now it was my time. 'A thousand thanks, Signor,' I said; 'if you ever come to England, I hope to repay you a small part of your kindness.'

The Signor was going to say something appropriate to the occasion, but now again he was not allowed to do more than begin, and he began with his favourite word 'Certainly.'

'You had better not thank us till you know what you have to thank us for,—that is to say, mamma and me. Papa knows nothing about it.' Then she went on: 'Perhaps you would like to know what "it" is. It is a little word, but it means a great deal. There, Mr. Halfacre, I hate scenes just as much as your friend here. But I did wish to give you this packet alone, by yourself. It is not my fault that I have to give it to you here on this wharf in the full glare of day.' Then to Scatterbrains: 'Don't be afraid; there is nothing explosive in the packet. It won't blow up and kill him as soon as he opens it. There is nothing in it but letters. Take it, Mr. Halfacre, and if you will do what I wish, you will not open the packet till you have passed the Straits of Messina. There, good-bye. I shall never see you again. Come, papa: even my looks will not stand this sun. It makes me feel faint. Good-bye;' and with these words she turned, and was gone before I could say a word.

'Shall I run after them, and ask her what she means?' I asked of Scatterbrains.

'Certainly not. You know already what she means. That girl means mischief against some one. Perhaps not against you, but because of you. As for me, she would kill me with her own hands if she could. She is a modern Medea, and I am glad she is gone. There's the steamer's bell!'

With these words he hurried me down the stairs. In a moment I was in the stern-sheets of the *Mermaid's* gig, and in less than no time—which means in no more time than sufficed to open my bag, and throw Sappho's packet into it—I was alongside the *Pelican*.

'Good-bye, old fellow,' I said to Scatterbrains; 'how good you have been to me!'

'Well,' he said, 'I really do think I have done you some service. I only hope it may not be too late. You know I think worse of your affairs—

your love affairs I mean—than you do. Lovers are blind, they say, and so are you. If it were not your own case, you'd look at it just as I do. I say again it's a bad business. Mind how you get up the gangway. Good-bye. God bless you!'

He sat down in the gig, the men gave way, and I was left alone on the quarter-deck of the *Péluse.*

'I cannot understand why he should call it such a bad business. But what an odd girl Sappho is! She was as open and playful as a child at first, and now she is a very Sphynx, with her forgiveness and her revenge. How she hates Scatterbrains! Well! here is her packet safe in my bag, —letters she wishes me to post, I suppose. Why did she say not to open it till I was through the Straits of Messina? Ah, I see; she thinks, if I open it before I have passed the only place at which the *Péluse* stops between this and Marseilles, that I shall throw the letters into the post-office at Messina, and that her friends will have to pay the postage. How like a woman! However, I will respect her wishes. Lie there, O packet-full of a young lady's revelations to some other young lady in France!—no doubt her bosom friend; lie there, safe and untouched, till the time comes when I may open you with a safe conscience. But what a deal of trouble to take about such a small matter! As if I would not willingly have paid the postage on them for her over and over again!'

After these reflections, and with a light heart—for was I not going home to Mandeville Hall? and was I not still true to my Arethusa, who was dearer to me each day?—I sought the steward, chose my berth, made myself as comfortable as I could, and then went on deck to see what was going on around us. They were busy getting the steamer's head round with warps, but she was still fast to the shore by hawsers. Don't suppose there was then any quay in the Piræus, at which ships could lie and passengers walk on board. I am not so sure that there is anything of the kind there now, much less was there all those long years ago. The steam-whistle was screaming more and more shrilly. One or two ships' boats, with letters for the bag, were allowed to come on board, and I remember that one darling little 'middy,' who brought a boat from the old *St. Vincent,* was most brutally treated by the French captain. The poor little fellow, just out of the nursery, could not speak a word of French,—like you, Mrs. Faultfinder, who are holding up your hands that a boy of that age should not be able to speak French, when you yourself can't speak one single word of it. Did I not hear you when you were at Boulogne, only last summer, in a butcher's shop, say to the butcher: '*Choppez moi cet beef.*' Well! like you, this poor little middy, perhaps, knew it when he saw it written, but he could not speak it. He had been sent on board to ask if the *Péluse* had brought a bag for the *St. Vincent* from Constantinople. The Admiral expected despatches. Had the French captain got them? I stood by when the little fellow delivered his message like an officer and a gentleman, and I heard what the French captain said, and what do you think it was, leaving out the swearing? It was very simple: '*Je ne parle pas l'Anglais, et je n'en veux pas.*' That was all the answer the little middy got, and he would actually have gone away without the bag, and, of course, been 'mast-headed' by the Admiral, just as 'middies' always are in naval novels, had I not made interest with the steward and got him the bag.

As for the captain's neither speaking nor wishing to speak English, why, I heard him talking English every day on board, in very bad but very fluent language. Nothing can describe the confusion that prevailed on board the *Péluse.* If the captain had said the despatches had been lost, I could quite have believed him, for what with coals, freight, and passengers, the decks were so lumbered and hampered that there was not a square yard clear.

Not very far from us was the *Mermaid.* She got up her anchor in true man-of-war fashion. There was no lubberly slipping her moorings, which was all the *Péluse* did. No! there were the A.B.'s hard at work heaving up the anchor with the capstan. I am sure I don't know the depth of water in the Piræus; but it seemed, and no doubt it was, very hard work in that sun. Soon after I saw they had, what is nautically termed, 'got' their anchor, and, in a few more minutes the *Mermaid* was being towed out the narrow mouth of the harbour by two of her boats. At that time the wind was light, and we were sure to overtake her. Even at that distance, I still thought I saw the glow of triumph on the hearty, honest face of Scatterbrains, so glad was he to have got me safe on board the *Péluse.*

Yes! there he went, getting up sail after sail, and even setting a balloon-jib to catch all the wind he could. We, too, got out very soon after him, and, of course, overtook him in a little while. We passed quite close to him, and as he saw me leaning over the side, he laughed loud, and called out:

'All right, Halfacre! I 'll race the the *Péluse* to Messina, if we can only get a wind.'

But there was no wind, and we soon left him hull-down.

I am not going to bore you with any more descriptions of scenery. You have been very good to me, reader, and proved yourself 'gentle' in every respect. In fact, I am going to bore you very little longer with the annals of my eventful life. You will soon get to the end now. Of course I could tell you how we had the coast of Attica on our left, and Argolis on the right hand; how we saw Sunium, the famous Attic headland, whence, as he doubled it, the old Greek saw the statue of Minerva standing on the pediment of the Parthenon; just in the very middle, where Sappho had made that strange declaration to me the night before. And so I could tell you stories about Argos and the Treasure House of Atreus, and the site of Sparta, and Taygetus, and Olympia. In fact, I could tell you a great deal about many places famous in song and story in the Morea; for I have seen them all since. But I had not seen them then. They do not come into this story. They belong to another eventful period of my life. There they are, but I cannot use them. How could I do so without wrecking the *Péluse* under Cape Matapan; when all the world knows that she was not wrecked, but had a safe passage to Marseilles.

I do not mean even to tell you anything about the passage. Have you never been anywhere, or on some journey, when every incident that befell you, and every soul you met were as dull as ditch-water? I admit that I have been very lucky in my travels, and have met as little 'ditch-water' as most people; but of this voyage to Marseilles, I must say that a more uninteresting set of people I never met, and never hope to meet again. They ate, and drank, and talked, and slept like other people, and that was all. In the night the wind got up a little, and by morning it blew strong. It was a fine sight to get up early, and see Cape Matapan and the island of Cerigo, the Greekmost, if I may coin the word, of the Ionian Republic. Dear it was to me, a lover of the worship of Venus, which prevailed there in ancient days. When I went to it in after-years, I was glad to find that neither beauty, nor the love of beauty, had quite died out. Two lovers had just had a furious fight for the prettiest girl on the island, and one had stabbed the other. Of course, the lover favoured neither by the beauty, nor by the goddess of beauty,—the uglier of the twain, I mean—was the successful stabber. But it availed him nothing. His rival got well, and married the beauty, while he, the stabber, was working in chains, and trying with other criminals to make a road over the rocky island.

On and on we went merrily, and now we saw

Etna, like a great snow giant, looming away—I am afraid to say how many nautical miles off. I say nautical miles, because I have a very hazy notion of how long a nautical mile is, and I want to make Etna as far off from us as I can. I remember we saw him in the afternoon of the day after we left Athens; just at first like a faint cloud, and he went on getting bigger and bigger as long as we could see that night, and when we got up in the morning, when we were fast closing in with the Straits of Messina, then the old giant was still looking after us and down on us, though we had passed the point whence we might have had our best view of him in the dead of night

Yes! there was Messina, that laughing, joyous-looking town, with its mole, and its harbour, and its quay, and its cathedral, nestled under the hill-side; a nymph of Sicily looking at her own lovely face in the mirror of the sea.

There it was in the real good old dull despotic time, when King Bomba was in full force, and the priests felt too sure that they would never be overthrown to be frightened, and so did not oppress the people very much. All priests and tyrants are bad enough in their natural state; but let them once get unnatural—let them only be frightened—and you will see what they will do.

Some ten or fifteen years afterwards Messina saw what they could do when they were frightened. When Bomba's generals bombarded the quay and the mole and ravaged the fair city with fire, and sword, and lead, the worst of the three. But when we were there, in 183–, politics were still as death. Stagnation was the motto of the town, which seemed to think of nothing but going to church in the morning and evening, and selling coral all day.

We landed — I and some of the dull freight. They were English, coming from somewhere and going, I hope, to some place where I shall never see them again. They spoke neither French nor Italian. They were mean and extortionate; ever desirous of cheating the coralmongers, and ready to run away without paying them at all.

'Look here,' I remember one of them said, 'this is the thing to buy.' And if he did not pull out a bottle of rum, which he drank openly in the streets, and even in the cathedral.

I must say I was quite disgusted with them, and ran away and left them to themselves. 'I say, you sir,' one of them cried after me, 'come back and help us with your lingo.' But I would not come back, and fled. Right sorry was I to see them come back in the afternoon; but not surprised to see that the rum had taken such hold of two of them that they had to be handed up the side like children.

Yes! in the afternoon, so long did the *Péluse* lie off that lovely city. Since then it has been wasted by sieges and bombardments, and decimated by cholera; but wherever I go I think of the smiling city, and of the coralmongers, and—I am sorry to add—the two drunken Englishmen, who, I believe, thought I was a courier out of place, because I was an Englishman, and could speak Italian.

Just as we were getting under way I had a disappointment: a sail came rapidly up the Straits. Long before she dropped her anchor I knew the trim three-masted schooner. It was the *Mermaid*, which had lost the race, indeed, but had just come in in time to see the last of us at Messina.

I suppose you think all this time I was dying to open the packet which Sappho had given me. Nothing of the kind; I was quite content to wait till we had passed the Straits of Messina,—nay, to wait much longer. There was something in it, no doubt, for me, or why should I open it? But I really had no curiosity about it, and preferred to look over the side as we passed through the fabled whirlpools of Scylla and Charybdis, which, I daresay, are sometimes strong tideways, dangerous to the boats of the ancients; but which, when the *Péluse* passed them, were as smooth as the Siren's glass itself, and showed no terrors.

'Yes!' I thought, 'like all evils, worse in imagination than in reality. How providential it is that all pleasure is more pleasant when it comes, and all evil less evil!' Perhaps you will say, some of you, that the case is the same in both—that all pleasure is more pleasant in anticipation, and all evil less evil. I know it is the common belief, but it is not mine. It was not mine on that December evening as we passed through Scylla and Charybdis.

'Yes!' I said 'this is an emblem of my life. I am now at the turning-point of my destiny. I have refused to marry Mary Harbury, I resisted the charm of Sappho Maurocordato. These are my Scylla and Charybdis. I have passed through them safely, and now I shall be happy, and marry my own Arethusa.' As I said this my whole heart and being were lighted up with a glow of peace and good-will towards every one, and I felt as though all the trials which I had undergone—and to me they were trials indeed—had steeled and strengthened me, and made me a better man. But I had quarrelled, or nearly so, with Aunt Mandeville, who had been so good to me. Do you suppose I had forgotten that free gift of the twenty thousand pounds so nicely and generously done? No, I had not; but I always said to myself, 'No, Auntie can never be so unjust. She will give up her idea of rounding off the estate in a ring fence, and, with that idea, Mary Harbury's chance will fall to the ground. I will live with her, and be good and kind to her, and she will let me marry Arethusa. Not this year, or next perhaps, but some time. Yes; that is what it will be. I have faith in heaven, in Auntie, in Arethusa, and in myself. All will go well with a little patience.'

If any man ever went to bed in peace and charity with all men, it was I, Edward Halfacre, that night after passing the Straits of Messina. Yes; I felt at last as if I were entering upon new prospects of pleasure and fresh regions of delight.

Next morning I was up early, still pleased with everything. Why, I could now almost count the hours that were to pass before I saw Arethusa.

It was a lovely day, the sea as smooth as a mirror, and the *Péluse* went through the water famously for her.

'Now,' I said to myself, 'I will open her packet, and try to solve her mystery.' I sat down under the shade of a boat—for the sun was still almost hot enough for an awning—and broke the seal. The packet was like a Chinese puzzle, for it had another packet inside it. There was, besides, a long letter in Sappho's handwriting, which I read before opening the other packet. As you know everything about me, you may as well know this. Here is the letter:

'ATHENS, *November* 29*th*, 183–.

'DEAR MR. HALFACRE,

'Dear Edward, I would much rather say, but you will not let me, still less will you let me thus address you after you have read the confession I am about to make. It is not a confession of love: I have already made that, and you know with what result. It is a much worse confession which I have now to make. You fancy that mamma and I were very kind to you while you were with us, but, for the greater part of the time, we were doing you all the harm we could. Mamma is quite under the influence of my uncle the Count, whom you know in England. When you were coming to Corfu—in fact, long before you arrived—the Count had written to us to take care of you. You little know what care he meant; you little think also that we came all that way to Brindisi on purpose to meet you, and to see that you fell into no other hands. You were as much our prisoner—in fact, all the while you were in Corfu—as any wretch in a dungeon ever was. You did not feel your chains perhaps. I might take pride in that, for I was your gaoler. But why were we to keep you in prison—why were to watch you, and "take care of you," as my uncle said? That you must ask him, if it be not too late, when you reach England. All that I can say is, that we promised—

mamma and I, that is to say; papa had nothing to do with it—to take care that you should write no letters to, and receive no letters from, anyone in England, that we could prevent your writing or receiving, and we kept our word. The other packet will tell you what became of your letters. This is a sad confession to make—saddest of all for a girl to make to a man she loves. Why did I love you? Ask the wind why it blows? I never meant to love you. I meant to repay on you some of the insults which our race has received from yours. That was why my uncle found us such willing tools. Mamma hates the English, and I hate them, but I love you now. I knew all about your fondness for your Arethusa. I only pretended that I knew nothing about the nymph, her namesake, because I could not bear to think that you should love her and talk about her to me. I have forgiven you for loving her. Can you forgive me for loving you? Next to your Arethusa, whom I hate worse than all the English, I hate Lord Scatterbrains. I trembled to think that he might have spoiled all our plans when he came so suddenly to Corfu. Had he stayed there he would have spoiled them; but, like a thorough idle Englishman, he sailed away to shoot woodcocks, and left his friend, you, a prey to our designs. He could do nothing when he came to Athens to save you. It was too late; but I hate him still. There, I have told you all I choose to tell. I am not sorry that my office of gaoler is over; and yet it is not often that the gaoler ends by being in love with the captive. Good-bye, and forgive me for all the injury I have done you. You will not know how great it is till you get to England.'

'SAPPHO.'

There, now I ask you all, did you ever read such a letter? Fancy what I felt when I read it —I who was just then so full of peace and goodwill to every human being.

Still I did not see the very great harm they had done me. She had only alluded to some dark designs of the Count. If he had any on my Arethusa, I defied him there and then to do me any harm with her. I trusted her as thoroughly then and there on the deck of the *Péluse,* after a separation of more than two months, as I had done under the Passion-flower at Mandeville Hall. 'I had better open this other packet. Perhaps I shall understand it all better then.'

Almost mechanically, then, I opened the packet. It contained every letter that I had written to England since I had been in Corfu, except three. The first was the one I had written to Aunt Mandeville after my arrival, and the second that which I wrote to her to say that I was going off to Athens with a Greek family; the third was that I had written to Colonel Chichester telling him the same thing. All the rest were there. They were the only three that I had posted with my own hands. All the rest I had given either to Sappho or the major-domo at Gastouri to post, and there they were unopened and unposted. The packet also contained a number of letters from Aunt Mandeville, which I had not the heart to read then, but which must have been those which she said she had written to me, and to which I had returned no answer. Those, too, had been intercepted. You remember I told you that, so far from feeling guilty of not having written or of having neglected her, it was I that thought I had a right to complain, for that on the whole she had written me very few letters.

Never was man so puzzled. Never was man so grieved. It was plain that I had been the victim of Count Manteuffel's deceit; that he had kept my letters from me for some object of his own. But how could he harm me? Certainly not with Aunt Mandeville, as soon as I got back and exposed him with these letters, in my hand. And still more certainly not with Arethusa, who loves me as I love her.

Now I saw why Sappho had begged me not to open the packet till I was beyond the Straits of Messina. She was afraid, if I did it before that, I might post a letter there, and that it might get to England sooner. That was all!

But now another thing struck me. The only letter that Aunt Mandeville would have had from me for more than a month, would be just that very defiant and undutiful one which I had written, and which Scatterbrains had posted with his own hands. If it had stood as one of a series, the exception to several loving letters, it would have been different, but there it stood alone, hard and harsh. How much I wished that I had never written it! Why did I not take Scatterbrains' advice, who always saw so much better what was good for me than I could see for myself?

My only consolation was that I could fly across France and be in England as quickly as the post; but there still remained the fact that my undutiful letter to Auntie had left Athens ten days before I did, and that it would reach her at least a fortnight before I could get to Mandeville Hall.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW I WENT BACK TO MANDEVILLE HALL.

Oh! how I longed for the hour of my arrival at Marseilles! In vain the steward assured me we should not be long. We were just going through the Straits of Bonifacio, and we should be at Marseilles in twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours! that seemed an age. It would not be less, he said, especially as the Gulf of Lyons would be '*en très mauvaise humeur.*' As I told you before, it has always been in that humour when I have been on it. That time, however, I should rather have preferred it to blow great guns. A tempest would have suited my sad state of mind better than anything else. Do you know what it is when one maddening thought will perpetually return to the imagination; when nothing can shake it off? So it was with me whenever I thought of my visit to Greece; everything connected with it seemed to turn against me. Even the wretched gossip of Major Plunger and Twentyman, which of itself could not have harmed me if my letters had not been tampered with, might do me the greatest harm when it was the only received account—the only account, in fact, of my doings. Then, too, I saw how just those very letters of mine which had reached England would confirm Major Plunger's story, for they were just the very letters in which, as ill-luck would have it, I had written hastily to say that I was going off on a long tour with a Greek family. When they came to hand every kind friend would say, 'Major Plunger's account of Edward Halfacre is quite right. Here are his own letters to prove that he has gone off with a Greek family, and in that family, both the Major and Mr. Twentyman say, there is a very pretty daughter. There's the attraction, no doubt.' Yes! the more I looked at it, the worse the matter seemed, even to my own eyes. How true it was of Scatterbrains to say that it was the greatest mess he had ever heard of!

Well! we reached Marseilles. I flew,—now-a-days I should have flown to the telegraph office, of course, and sent off a telegram to Aunt Mandeville to ease her mind and mine. It would have reached her in a few hours at latest. But, alas for me! there were no telegraphs then, and no railways. You happy people who travel by express train from Marseilles to Paris in eighteen hours, little do you know of what a journey over the same ground by post was in 183–. I am almost afraid to say how long it was. Four or five days, I think. Again, a train will take almost any number; but a diligence could take very few, and the *malle-poste*, or mail, fewer still. One had to take places for days beforehand.—I flew, then, to the post, only to find the diligences and *malle-poste* for that evening quite full. By great luck, however, I got a seat in the *malle-poste* for the day after. So there I was, planted in Marseilles for thirty-six hours. What did I do? I sat down at once and wrote a long and kind letter to my Aunt, in which I assured her of my affection, and told her that owing to some foul play, which I would explain to her when I came, neither my letters had reached her, nor hers me. I said nothing about my love affairs. I was still firm as a rock in my determination; but I had made my protest once, and that was enough. When I had put that letter into the post, and paid for it with my own hands, I felt easier—not happy, far from it, but easier. What I did with myself all that time in Marseilles I hardly knew. I walked along the quay,—the *Cannebière*, I think they call it,—and admired the shipping. I remember the smell of the harbour was horrible, worse than the worst bilgewater on board-ship. I admired the flower-market, and bought a nosegay of orange-flowers.

'Such orange-flowers,' I said to myself, 'shall Arethusa soon wear at her wedding.' Did I do anything more? What could I do but try to eat, drink, and sleep, and long for the hour on which the *malle-poste* was to start the evening after?

At last the time came. They used to think a great deal of themselves, those *malle-postes;* and their guards and the postilions thought much of themselves; but they were wretched things after all. By a great favour you sat side by side with the *conducteur* in a sort of *coupé*. He smelling of garlic and bad brandy, and it open to the air. When it was cold it was very cold, and when it was hot very hot.

I decline to say anything about that journey, except that it seemed endless. Man and horses did all they could for us, but to me we seemed to drag over the ground.

What good resolutions did I not make on that journey, and how more and more plainly did I see that what Scatterbrains had said of my affairs was quite true.

Well! we reached Paris. There I might have had another wait. The *malle-poste* for Calais might have been full. Thank heaven, it was not! We reached Paris at eight o'clock in the morning, and at eight at night I was in the Calais mail, leaving the capital fast behind us. That, too, was a weary journey. How slow the milestones seemed to come, and how hideously the cracking of the postilion's whip sounded in my ears! That wondrous cracking, nay! the very postilions themselves, have passed away, and exist no longer.

We reached Calais. There again I had to wait a night at Dessein's. In what a different mood from that which I started at the end of September!

Next morning came the crossing. How I laughed at the fears of the few passengers, chiefly French! How I scorned their precautions against *mal de mer!* It even gave me pleasure to see them ill. Did I offer any elderly French gentleman brandy-and-water? No!

We had a slow passage, but that, too, was over. We reached Dover in time for the mail to London. 'There was only one inside place,' the man at the booking-office said. 'I would not like that,' he supposed. Yes! I would. I was too glad to have anything. Besides, I might sleep inside. I was now easier. Had I not touched English soil? I know little of that night; I believe I did sleep. I recollected little till the mail rattled along the streets in the Borough, and over London Bridge, then quite new, on its way to the

General Post Office, the haven for which all the royal mails were bound.

It was about seven o'clock in the morning—a damp, raw December morning. There was just time to catch the *Highflyer*, which started at eight from the 'White Horse Cellar.' I caught it. Here again there was only one inside place, but I was glad to get it. Inside there were three old women, or ladies, as I have no doubt they called themselves. If they feel hurt at my calling them women, I beg leave to apologise.

As I was inside, I escaped the observation of the guard and coachman. I did not very often go up to London, and hardly ever by coach. All my coaching experiences were between Warwick and Oxford, by that *Pig* of dilatory memory. But perhaps the guard might know me, and I wanted no one to know me till I got home.

I believe I fell asleep on the way. I know I refused to get out and have anything to eat when the coach stopped to dine. No! I had a biscuit in my pocket, which I had bought on board the steamer, and some sherry in a flask. The biscuit was a real captain's biscuit, that makes your eye-teeth shake in their sockets to look at. I remained inside the coach, gnawing that and taking a mouthful of sherry every now and then, till the coach started again.

I was very cold. How could it be otherwise? I was lightly clad, and had no wraps. Recollect I had come from the broiling sun of Athens about ten or twelve days before.

I do not know whether I told you before that the coach passed a spot nearer by two miles to Mandeville Hall than Warwick itself, where it stopped. It struck me, as we were nearing our journey's end, that it would be better to get out there and walk to the Hall across the fields. It was about five o'clock and nearly dark, but I knew the way well, and I would run all the way to keep myself warm. I stopped the coach suddenly, gave guard and coachman their fees, and said I would send for my luggage to the 'Dun Cow.' I don't think either of them recognised me, but as the coach drove off I heard the guard say:

'He's going to Mandeville Hall! Come down, I suppose, to see after the poor old lady to-morrow. To-morrow's the day, ain't it?'

'Yes, and they say—' That was all I could hear of the coachman's answer.

'To see after the poor old lady to-morrow. What can they mean?' I said to myself.

Then I ran on along the foot-path by the river, passing the very spot where Mary Harbury had fallen into the stream. The Avon ran thick and swollen. 'I should never have been able to do it now,' I said.

Then I left the river-side, and ran up the brow of the hill where I had so often walked with Arethusa. I reached the terrace. The house seemed strangely dark. There were lights in the hall, but in my Aunt's own room, out of the window from which she had so often leant and spoken to me, and looked so lovingly at me, there were no lights.

'Very strange,' I thought as I passed along the terrace.

Here I saw a figure coming towards me in the mist. It looked big till it came near, and then I saw, by the mere shape alone, that it was our rector, Mr. St. Faith.

'Do you not know me?' I said, almost leaping towards him, for I was in that state that my heart yearned towards any one that knew me.

'Do you not know me? How is my Aunt?'

'Good God!' said the Rector in a broken voice; 'do you not know what has happened?'

'I know nothing,' I said. 'I have heard nothing. I have come across France and England as fast as I could, for I wished to reach home and to see my Aunt.'

'Alas!' said the Rector, giving up all attempt at self-control, 'you will never see your Aunt

Mandeville again. She is dead. To-morrow is the funeral.'

I stood rooted to the ground. I said nothing. The shock was too sudden and too great for words or tears. What I felt at that moment no tongue could tell.

How long I should have remained standing there I cannot tell. I remember nothing, except that I stood there face to face with Mr. St. Faith. At last he took my hand. Then I said:

'Can I see her?'

'Alas, no!' he said. 'I have just seen the coffin soldered down. You will never see your Aunt Mandeville more in this world.' Then, as if to turn the subject, he went on: 'But did you not go to the banker's? Did you not get the letter I wrote to you more than a week ago?'

No! I had not. I had come straight through London without losing a minute.

'Poor boy!' said Mr. St. Faith; 'you have been much to blame; but you must not go in there yet. Come with me to the Rectory. I have much to tell you.'

I let him do with me as he pleased. I walked mechanically with him to the Rectory; let him send over to Warwick for my luggage; dressed, and sat down to dinner with him, doing all these things as though I were in a dream.

After dinner Mr. St. Faith said: 'Now let me tell you what happened. I said you were much to blame, and I say so still. To say the least of it, you had no right to leave your Aunt so long without any tidings of you. But when to that is coupled the fact that you had wholly given yourself over to one woman's influence all the while you were away, I do not know what is to be said for you.'

'But tell me about my Aunt,' I said. 'Do not speak of me or of my conduct. Tell me about my poor dear Aunt Mandeville.'

'I am going to tell you about her,' said the Rector. 'When your Aunt, of whom you say you were so fond, though I do not think you have shown it by your actions, could hear nothing of you, she turned for information to others. The only person who could give her any help was Count Manteuffel, that foreigner who stayed at the Hall before you went away. I do not like him, but it is no use denying that your Aunt did. She had a romantic feeling towards him from the first, as being one of the old Mandeville stock, and this feeling your bad conduct strengthened. Even soon after you went, the Count was constantly at the Hall, but latterly he was there every other day. Your poor Aunt used to say, "The Count was here yesterday, and has given me a fine history of Edward's doings in Corfu. It is a bitter grief and disappointment to me. I really thought he loved me too much to disgrace himself in that way." At last she seemed to have summoned up all her courage to write to you strongly.

'"I have written to Edward to-day a letter which will settle matters between us, and upon that letter much will depend."

'She said, "much will depend" in a very determined voice.

'I am sure no one ever prayed more for a soft answer to that letter than I, but what was it when it came, just a fortnight ago? I call it, under all the circumstances, a most unfeeling letter. Your Aunt never held her head up after it, and, humanly speaking, it killed her. She had been ailing more or less ever since you left. She never forgot or forgave your refusal to marry Miss Harbury. But when your letter came she showed it to me, and said:

'"Now see his hypocrisy—the boy whom I had nursed and reared for my own—at the very moment that he is lost in this criminal intimacy with this Greek girl, he writes and says he will not marry Mary Harbury. Why? Because of his unalterable affection for another, meaning me to understand that Miss Chichester is the object of his affections. No! I cannot forgive it. It will be the death of me."'

'Was she long ill?' I faltered out.

'She did not take to her bed till the last two days. Before that she went about as usual, sending for her London lawyer, and settling her affairs. But it was plain to me, at least, that her heart was broken by, what she persisted in calling, your vicious, criminal conduct, and your hypocrisy and deceit. The Count saw her only three days before she died, the last day that any one saw her, in fact; and she told me that his letters from Athens quite bore out her view of the case. Then she took to her bed, when, as she told me, her worldly affairs were settled, and died. Dr. Mindererus could do nothing for her. She simply lay in bed, and died. It was quite sudden. Mrs. Curl went into her room in the morning, and found her dead, with her hands folded across her bosom, looking up with a sweet but very sad expression. There, I have told you my story, and a very sad one it is. To-morrow is the funeral.'

Did I say nothing in my defence to Mr. St. Faith? Ah! yes; I told him my story, and showed him the letters. But, after all, of what avail were any explanations, when she, with whom I wished to stand justified, was dead?

'You have been very unfortunate, but you have been much to blame, for giving yourself over so blindly to one family; and, by so doing, you have furthered any designs which the Count may have had. But we will talk of this at another time. You have much to go through to-morrow, and you need rest.'

Rest! what a mockery that seemed. All I could say was:

'Dead, dead! and I was not with her. My poor dear Aunt Mandeville!'

It was not late, not so late. I put the Rector on one side, and went up to the Hall. He tried to follow me, but I would not have his company. I must be alone.

It was not far from the Rectory, and I soon reached the hall-door. There the lights still burned. I rang, and Brooks let me in.

'Dear me! Master Edward, how like a ghost you do look! We hoped you might come in time, and you have come in time.'

'In time; what do you mean?'

'In time for the funeral—it 's to-morrow.'

'Where is *it?*' I asked.

'Here, in the hall, on the long table. She has been lying in state, like.'

I went in. I thrust Brooks on one side, and then I walked up to the table on which was all that was left of my Aunt. Yes, there it lay, the ghastly coffin, with its trim fittings, and its handles, and its inscription:

ELEANOR MANDEVILLE.
BORN 1780. DIED 183-.

To think that I should never see her sweet face, and those large, bright, brown eyes again! That they had been closed, and, though I was innocent, closed so soon, perhaps, because of me.

There was no one by to see a strong man weep, and I wept.

There were lights,—many lights in the hall, which was hung with black! Yes! there I was alone with the dead; and just above us, looking down on the very coffin, as though her sad eyes could read the inscription, which told her that a new comer was about to be laid in the family vault—was the picture of Lucy Mandeville, the White Lady, in whose fate my Aunt had taken such an interest.

I turned and almost ran from the hall; for I thought of the night when Arethusa, and I, and Mary Harbury had passed through it so stealthily to frighten Count Manteuffel, and all that had passed since came back on me with overpowering force.

I called for Brooks, and I went to my Aunt's room; that morning-room in which I had so often sat with her, ever since I came to her a child of ten years old to be hers, and to be with her always. Now she was gone—gone before I could justify myself, and expose the frauds which had been practised on both of us. How bitter is unavailing remorse! And yet I had done nothing to be ashamed of.

Yes! there was her room, just as she had left it. You might almost expect to see her erect form come in. There was her ebony chair!

There was her writing-table. On it lay unopened the letter I had written from Marseilles, the inkstand she used, and the pen with which she wrote her last letter. I took it up, and looked at it in a dreamy way. Too late! Too late!

'Poor Missis,' said Brooks, who stood by holding a candle; 'she never wrote with that pen after Mr. Quill brought her down her will to sign. 'Twas but three days before she died, poor lady! just ten days ago.'

Then I walked all about the hall. Upstairs to my Aunt's bedroom, and then into mine. That dear room, which had been mine ever since I was a boy. Then I crossed the hall again, quickening my step, and bowing my head as I passed that long table, and not so much as daring to look at the White Lady. I ran up the staircase into the King's Room and the Queen's Room. I even looked into the dressing-room. I looked at all the pictures, as though I were taking leave of them as old friends. It was a state between sleep and waking. I might have been either a ghost or a somnambulist. Why I went round the Hall I can scarcely tell. Perhaps Brooks thought I was the young heir impatient to survey what he might now call his own. But I know none of you who read this book will think so ill of me.

No! I did not go to the Passion-flower.

Then I seemed satisfied. We went down into the hall, where we found Mrs. Curl, my Aunt's maid, and the housekeeper. They were both very fond of me; but I had no heart to speak,—to say more than: 'Good night, I shall be here to-morrow.'

Then Brooks opened the door, and I was gone out into the cold mist.

Had I any comfort in all this woe? Yes! one. I was true to Arethusa, for whom I had brought all this grief and trouble on myself, and I felt sure she would be true to me.

Mr. St. Faith was waiting for me.

'Poor boy!' he said; 'how wan and white you look! Come to bed and try to get a few hours' sleep.'

I went to bed only to toss about. My only hope on earth now was Arethusa.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FUNERAL AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

We were up early. Weddings and funerals are no lovers of sluggards. We dressed ourselves. We tried to eat our breakfast; but it was little use. Lump after lump stuck in the throat.

Then Mr. St. Faith and I walked up to the Hall. It was a very private funeral. Mr. St. Faith had arranged it all. It was well known that he was to be one of the executors. At the funeral were only to be Mr. St. Faith, Mr. Grubb, Mr. Quill, the lawyer, old Dr. Mindererus, and myself. Mr. St. Faith told me that the Count had offered to come, 'as a mark of respect to his deceased friend;' but that the offer had been declined, on the ground that the ceremony was to be strictly private.

'You know, Edward,' he said, 'the will must be read after the funeral, as a matter of form. Mr. Quill, who only made it ten days ago, has got it with him. He came down to Warwick by the mail, last night, and we shall find him at the Hall.'

This he said as we walked across the park.

To all he said I only answered 'Yes!' In fact, I was quite beyond business. I was following my poor Aunt in thought to those blessed regions whither I firmly believed she had departed. I was not on earth, but in heaven, or at heaven's gate, a heart-broken suitor to her forgiveness.

Though the funeral was strictly private, the tenants insisted on coming. There were many of them in the hall when we got there; their honest faces full of grief, for they had lost a good landlady.

'Bless her dear heart,' I heard one of them say, 'she never raised my rent one penny, all these years.'

'No! nor never a-would as many years more,' said another.

There we met Mr. Grubb, and there, for the first time, I saw Mr. Quill, my Aunt's London solicitor, a busy, important little man, who had a bag in his hand, which, as soon as he came, he made Brooks lock up in a cabinet and give him the key.

Well! why prolong the gloomy description of the necessary end? The undertakers approached. Me they came to first as chief mourner. My father was still at Two Rivers, and both my brothers were out of England. I was the only blood relation present—the only Halfacre.

These gloomy men seized me and pinioned me in crape, as though I were going to execution. Yards upon yards of crape they swathed round me and my hat. Then I was ready to take my place in the procession. No! I have forgot the gloves. Why are undertakers' gloves always made for giants? Why is eight and a half the very smallest size that an undertaker ever has? One would think that grief swells the hands as well as the eyes of mourners.

Then Mr. St. Faith, Mr. Grubb, Dr. Mindererus, and Mr. Quill were pinioned in like manner by two undertakers, only they were swathed in silk. Then came the chief tenants, and last of all the servants.

After that the head-undertaker told me that all was ready. It was to be a walking funeral. The tenants in relays bore the heavy coffin to the church, which was in the park, between the Hall and the Rectory. The gloomy procession started, and the old Hall had seen the last of its mistress.

I must hasten on. We reached the church; and as we neared it Mr. St. Faith went before to receive the remains in company with his curate. Never did that most comforting service, that most noble of all the services, sound less comforting to human ears than mine. It was over; thank God! it was over. We had laid her in the vault among the old Mandevilles, and my Aunt was now the grave-fellow of Lucy, the White Lady.

We left her there. I lingered about the vault, and saw the mason's men hard at work, relaying the stones over the hole that had been made in the pavement. But even I had to leave at last. Mr. St. Faith pulled me away.

'We must leave her,' he said. 'We must go up to the Hall.'

We went back to the Hall.

'That's the young heir,' I heard a woman say; 'that's Master Edward. How poorly he do look!'

We reached the Hall. The servants made way for 'Master Edward' as I entered. We went to the library, where the cabinet was in which Mr. Quill had safely locked up Aunt Mandeville's last will and testament. Before opening it, he went to a table, and drank a glass of sherry and munched a biscuit. Mr. Grubb did the same, while Mr. St. Faith, the doctor, and I threw off our trappings of crape.

After he had eaten and drunk, and also uncraped himself, Mr. Quill said, in a serious, medical voice:

'I think we had better now proceed to read the will. Mr. St. Faith, you are one of the executors; and, Mr. Grubb, you are another.'

'I believe I am,' said Mr. St. Faith.

Mr. Quill then drew out the key of the cabinet, with great deliberation, looking at it once or twice before he put it into the keyhole. He unlocked the cabinet. He drew out the bag,—a blue bag,—loosed the strings, and produced the will. It was engrossed on bilious-looking parchment. Even the will had a yellow, jaundiced look.

After a preliminary hem or two, Mr. Quill began:

'This is the last will and testament of me, Eleanor Mandeville, of sound mind, though of weak body. I die in peace and charity with all men, even those who have so grievously offended me.

'I give and bequeath to my nephew, Edward Halfacre, the sum of £5000 consols, in addition to the sum of £20,000, which I have already transferred into his name in the books of the Bank of England. I would have further increased this bounty, had he not so conducted himself as to disgrace the family and himself.

'I give and bequeath Mandeville Hall, and all the estates, manors, hereditaments, rights, privileges, and easements whatsoever thereunto belonging, unto Maximilian, Count Manteuffel, of

His Prussian Majesty's Horse Guards, absolutely and without any reversion.

'I do this because I recognise in him a branch of the old Mandeville stock, and I rejoice to think that the estate will be held by one of the family.

'Appended to this will, my executors will find a memorandum, which I desire they will open and communicate the same to the said Maximilian, Count Manteuffel, in the nature of a wish. I make no condition of this in my will, because I do not desire, when I am dead, to lay on the living a command which the living have already refused to obey while I am alive.

'I give and bequeath to each of my executors the sum of £500, free of legacy duty; and I desire that the Reverend Charles St. Faith, B.D., rector of Mandeville, and John Grubb, Esquire, of 'The Warren,' in this parish, will be the executors of this, my will.

'I give and bequeath to each of my servants one year's wages, free of legacy duty; and I also give and bequeath to Mary Jellybag, Ellen Curl, Thomas Brooks, and John Ribbons an annuity of £50 sterling a-year each for the term of their natural lives.

'I give and bequeath £500 to the poor of Mandeville parish, and £250 towards the erection of a new school in that parish.

'Signed, sealed, and published, this 6th day of December, 183—, by me, ELEANOR MANDEVILLE, of Mandeville Hall, in the County of Warwick.

'In the presence of us:

'JOHN STUBBS, *Clerk to Messrs. Quill & Quill, Pump Court, Temple;* and

'EDWARD SMITH, *Schoolmaster, Mandeville School.*'

That was the will. There it was: signed at the bottom in Aunt Mandeville's clear hand.

ELEANOR MANDEVILLE.

There was a codicil to the will; an afterthought executed on the same day. It gave all the plate, pictures, furniture, wine, horses, carriages, and live stock, in or at Mandeville Hall, to the said Maximilian, Count Manteuffel; and it also revoked the absolute gift of the estates to him without reservation, by settling the estates in tail on him, and the heirs male of his body lawfully begotten, provided he took out letters of naturalisation. The plate, pictures, and furniture were to be heirlooms, and to follow the estate. My Aunt also requested the Count to change his name Manteuffel, if possible, into Mandeville.

How did I bear it? Very well. I showed no sign. When my Aunt was gone, I can truly say I did not care for the estate.

Mr. St. Faith and Mr. Grubb looked very much surprised; but what could they say, especially when all that I said was as coolly as if I had no concern in the matter?

'Mr. Quill, you will of course communicate the contents of Mrs. Mandeville's will to Count Manteuffel.'

'Certainly; it will be my duty to do so,' said Mr. Quill. 'In fact, I will do so this very moment; what is his address?'

'You will find him at Leamington,' said Mr. St. Faith. 'He has been there constantly for some time. That is to say when he was not over here.'

'And now,' said I, 'Mr. St. Faith, there is nothing more for me to do in Mandeville Hall. Let me go with you to the Rectory.'

'I shall only be too happy,' said the dear good man. 'Bless me! I can scarcely believe what I have heard read. I knew nothing of all this. It seems like a dream. Stay at the Rectory, Edward, as long as you like. Make it your home.'

'It will be too near to Mandeville Hall, I am afraid,' I said, bitterly: 'but for a day or two. Don't suppose, though, that I feel the loss of the estate at all. Oh, that I could bring my dear Aunt to life, and have one five minutes' conversation with her all alone, that I might prove to her how cruelly I have been calumniated!'

I left the room, and went into the hall, leaving Mr. St. Faith to say a few words to his fellow-executor and the solicitor.

And now I suppose you all think my cup of bitterness was full. Don't you know, all of you, that the cup of bitterness is never just full? It is always full to overflowing?

As I went into the hall, Brooks came up. 'A letter for you, Master Edward, just come from Leamington.' I looked at it and said to myself: 'How kind! here, at least, will be some comfort, some words of sympathy, perhaps, from her I love and trust more thoroughly than life itself.' You must all admit I needed comfort, and I had a right to expect it then. That letter was in Colonel Chichester's handwriting.

How eagerly I broke the seal! It was half-a-sheet of paper, enclosing a note from Arethusa. Yes!—in Arethusa's own handwriting. The first letter that she had written to me since we had been engaged.

There I stood, in the hall — the old hall, which I was so soon to leave for ever,— opposite to the White Lady,—on the very stones where I had waited, with Mary Harbury, longing for Arethusa's return. Now I was on the same spot, about to read a letter from my own true love; was not that a consolation for the trouble that I had undergone, all for her sake. I broke the seal and read:

'LEAMINGTON, *December* 16th, 183–

'DEAR MR. HALFACRE,

'As I hear that you have returned to England, I write to beg that you will not attempt to see me any more. Your own feelings, after your late conduct in Greece, will have suggested this course as wisest and best for both of us, even without any communication on my part. In fear, however, lest your sense of what is right and proper should have been so perverted by your course of life lately as to make you suppose that I could ever bear to see you again, I write this, with my father's full approbation, to inform you that we can in no case receive you even as a visitor into our house.

'Believe me,
'Sincerely yours,
'ARETHUSA CHICHESTER.

'P.S. Far better would it be for you to marry Mary Harbury, and make some conpensation to your poor Aunt's memory by fulfilling her wishes!'

And now will any of you say that my cup did not run over in streams?

The half-sheet contained the following lines scrawled inside it.

'LEAMINGTON, *Dec.* 16*th.*

'DEAR SIR,

'My daughter has requested me to forward to you the enclosed note. I need only add that I agree with every word contained in it.

'I am, yours faithfully,
'JOHN CHICHESTER.'

What followed? I cannot tell you. I have a dim recollection of standing there with the note open in my hand, under the picture. Then Mr. St. Faith came up to me, as in a dream, and said, 'Come home, Edward, with me.' It seemed to me that he added, 'and marry Mary Harbury.' Every one and everything now seemed either to bawl out or to whisper, 'Marry Mary Harbury.' Had not Arethusa said so?

They led me away to the Rectory. They put me to bed. Some one said,—I think it was Mr. Grubb; some strong man who had hold of me, forcing me into bed:

'Poor fellow! He bore up till then. That last blow was too much for him.'

After that I remembered nothing. It seemed all blank, all dark, all black. Sometimes angels seemed fighting for me, and then black demons drove them away. How I used to rave, they told me long afterwards, of one long, yellow, lemon-haired fiend, who used to torment me! Count Man-devil I used to call him.

But all things must have an end, and even a brain-fever. I was strong. I shook it off. They were all so kind to me,—Brooks and Mr. St. Faith, and the Grubbs, and even Madam Harbury. Mary Harbury was very kind too; she used to bring flowers out of their conservatory. Poor thing! once she brought me a passion-flower. The sight of it drove me mad again, and I had a relapse.

Oh! that Christmas which I was to have spent so happily, where was it? Lost for ever to me. It was mid-February before I came to myself. In March I was much better, and Mr. St. Faith, that angel, used to leave me.

You would not think that there had been anything left for me to suffer. Now would you? But I had. I remember one day in March, when Mr. St. Faith had gone over to Harbury on sessions business, Brooks, who now lived in the village on his pension and his savings, came to see me, and said:

'Master Edward! there be something in the "Leamington Courier" you'd like to see, I know, so I brought it to you,—here it is.'

I held out my long, lean hand, and took the paper, wondering like a child what it could be. It was only a short paragraph, and here it is:

'MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.—On Tuesday last, at the Church of Leamington Priors, by the Rev. Stephen Close, Maximilian, Count Manteuffel, Captain in His Prussian Majesty's Horse Guards, to Arethusa, only daugher of John Chichester, Esq., late Lieutenant-Colonel of His Majesty's 204th Foot.' Then came the comment. 'We understand that the noble Count, who, as our readers are aware, lately almost providentially succeeded to the old Mandeville estates in this county, is about to leave England with his lovely bride, who has been the *belle* of all our balls this winter, for a lengthened tour on the Continent. On his return in the summer the noble bridegroom intends to comply with the request of the late Mrs. Mandeville and apply to His Majesty for leave to assume the name of Mandeville, and take out letters of naturalisation.'

That was all. That was what Brooks thought it would do me good to see. He was right. It did me good. It hardened me and gave me strength; the strength that every man feels who knows that he is guiltless, even when those dearest to him turn against him.

'Dear me!' said good Mr. St. Faith, when he returned from his sessions business and saw the newspaper lying on the table; 'have you seen it?'

'I have seen it,' I said, 'and it has done me good. To-morrow I will get up and be a man again.'

'Poor dear Mrs. Mandeville,' said Mr. St. Faith; 'her dearest wish has remained unfulfilled.'

'Yes,' I said, 'poor dear Auntie; it was all my fault.'

'No,' said the Rector, 'I do not mean that. I am not so unfeeling. Do you not remember the memorandum which she left with her executors? Do you know what it was?'

'No.'

'This. That memorandum contained a request to be conveyed by her executors to Count Manteuffel that he would, if possible, out of regard to Mrs. Mandeville, "round off the Mandeville and Harbury property in a ring fence, by marrying Mary Harbury."'

'But he did not find it possible. He could not marry Mary Harbury,' I said bitterly.

'He never tried, Edward. His heart was lost to Arethusa Chichester long before he succeeded in persuading your Aunt to leave him Mandeville Hall.'

True to my word I got up on the morrow. Each day gave me fresh strength and health.

There are some things, and the human heart is one of them, that grow harder by being trampled on. Go to! Hearts are but clay, like the rest of our bodies. They are hardened in the kiln of adversity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BITTER END.

Did I not complain? Get thee behind me, Satan! I did not. I was too proud to proclaim my wrongs. Besides, what good would it have done? My adversary had killed and taken possession. To whom should I complain? It was enough for me that Mr. St. Faith should quietly let Warwickshire know the facts of the case. Even then some kind people said the facts were much against me. But most people were very kind to me—Lady Meredith most of all. She had gone to Paris for the winter, just after she wrote to me, and before she came back all the harm was done.

Even Major Plunger and Twentyman were in despair at the mischief they had made. Like most stupid people, they were so wise after the fact.

'My dear fellow,' said the Major, beginning to talk, 'if we had only known what we know now.'

'We had better not say anything about that,' I said. 'Let us bury the past.'

'But,' said the honest Heavy, 'such conduct is disgraceful. The whole country ought to cut him.'

'Ah!' I said bitterly, 'perhaps people will say of him as was said of William Penn, that he was "a pen that had often been cut, but never mended." I think he is beyond either cutting or mending.'

Did I accuse her? Never. No word of complaint or accusation against her ever crossed, or ever shall cross, my lips. She was deceived, like all the rest of us. It still gives me a melancholy satisfaction, after all these years, to remember that she wrote her letter to me before she knew of the will in her husband's favour. She evidently was not in the plot to rob me of the estate, for in that very letter she bade me marry Mary Harbury, and round off the estate.

Are they alive? Yes, both. They have no children, and when her husband dies Mandeville Hall will come to my eldest brother, as my Aunt's next of kin.

I have never been near Mandeville Hall since that day of the funeral, and very seldom in Warwickshire or in England. I have been a rolling stone. At the last Warwickshire election I hear they called Count Mandeville, who took an active part, 'Count Lean and Green,' in allusion to his gaunt frame and yellow skin.

Mr. St. Faith is still alive, the dear old man! Major Plunger sold out, and died some years since. He talked to the day of his death of the unfairness of foreigners coming over and buying up all our best horses. Not long ago I saw Colonel Twentyman and his wife at Brighton. He was looking over the new pier into the sea, just as he used to look over the bridge at Warwick. He has been a gallant officer since you knew him, and killed ten men in the Balaclava charge. He has the Victoria Cross, and the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and St. Lazarus, and St. Abraham.

'Madam' Harbury is dead. I think she starved herself to death. Perhaps she has by this time solved that knotty question as to the patriarchs and good men of old, which so distressed her on earth. I pray that she may find more charity, wherever she is, than she showed to those around her here.

Mary Harbury is still Mary Harbury. I saw her last Christmas, when I went down to see Mr. St. Faith. She is a fat, middle-aged woman, very kind and good to the poor, by whom she is much beloved. Mr. St. Faith says she has been sent by Providence to fill Aunt Mandeville's place to the poor of both parishes. She never married, and, so far as I have heard, never had any thoughts of marriage. She is better as she is.

Scatterbrains, the dear old fellow, lives in Ireland on his estates, and has a house full of children. He came back in the *Mermaid* too late to be of any good, and showed his common sense and good feeling by never saying a word of my affairs. He knew that there was no mending them, and therefore he said nothing. I often see him.

I think I have nothing more to tell you. 'Yes?' What is it? 'Was I ever married?' 'No.'

Now, do not any of you lay down this book, and think I am unhappy. I am not. Were that part of my life to come over again, I should act just as I did, except that I would not, if I could help it, fall into that trap so skilfully set for me in Corfu. In all else I should have been just the same. This is my consolation, that I was faithful and loyal to my love. Strong in this feeling, I have lived on still proud and shy. Let no one dare to pity me. I am quite content; nor would I care to call the king my cousin.

THE END.

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