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Walter Katté

Christmas 1914















***By S. G. Tallentyre***

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**The Life of Voltaire  
The Friends of Voltaire  
The Life of Mirabeau  
Matthew Hargraves**



*Spencer  
1/12/14*

# Matthew Hargraves

By

**S. G. Tallentyre**

Author of "The Life of Voltaire," "The Life of  
Mirabeau," etc.

*Author of "The Life of Voltaire," "The Life of Mirabeau," etc.*

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"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for  
thou shalt find it after many days."

**G. P. Putnam's Sons**  
London and New York  
The Knickerbocker Press

1914  
*W*



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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A BEGINNING AND AN END . . . . .	I
II. A COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER . . . . .	23
III. WORK . . . . .	41
IV. CHOSEN . . . . .	63
V. ANTICIPATION . . . . .	84
VI. "MY MIND TO ME A KINGDOM IS".	98
VII. "A YOUNG MAN MARRIED——"	128
VIII. REALISATION . . . . .	152
IX. "FORTUNE'S SHARP ADVERSITTEE"	181
X. AWAKENING . . . . .	208
XI. PASSING THE RUBICON . . . . .	235
XII. ALTONS . . . . .	257
XIII. DOUBTING CASTLE . . . . .	281
XIV. A SEARCHING OF HEARTS . . . . .	305
XV. HUSH-MONEY . . . . .	333
XVI. A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE .	357
XVII. THE DREAM OF A MAN AWAKE .	382



# Matthew Hargraves

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## CHAPTER I

### A BEGINNING AND AN END

IN the year 1807, there was born to Thomas Hargraves, stout and respected landlord of the "Hope and Anchor" inn at Greenwich, in the county of Kent, a first and only son.

A very charming little country village was the Greenwich of those days, with its silver streak of river running through it, its great park with fine old elms, its noble palace, and its historic associations. In 1807, it was still a fashionable place, with Princess Sophia, the jolly, fat, generous, good-natured niece of George III., living in the Ranger's Lodge, and, in the summer, parties of gentlemen from the House of Commons constantly coming down on the ordnance barges to eat whitebait dinners at the "Ship," the "Crown and Sceptre," or on the rose-covered balcony, overlooking the water, of the "Hope and Anchor."

The "Hope and Anchor" was quite a little

hostelry, with its deep latticed windows and the climbing rose putting the red fragrance of her face into them; its garden, prodigally full of common flowers, and a thick yew hedge surrounding it, with a dank, dark arbour cut in the hedge, with a little table in it to invite guests to sit there and drink—no one ever accepting the invitation, the bar itself being so much more cheery and comfortable.

Above that bar, the sign of the Anchor, painted by a tipping artist in lieu of discharging his bill, swung in the fresh breeze from the river, and the Hope was all in the air.

For five-and-forty years Thomas Hargraves had been a fiercely determined bachelor, loudly despising women, and then, of course, suddenly married a very small and quiet one—"just as high as his heart"—who took complete possession of it and whose least wish was a law to him. He was so determined it should be a law to every one else too, that, when she showed him their son—very new and red—lying in the hollow of her little arm, Thomas bore the thing a grudge for having so much inconvenienced its mother, and was only reconciled to it presently because she was so foolishly fond and proud, and because nature is so strong.

Little Mat did, perhaps, begin even less handsome than do most of us. At three, he was a fat thing in a blue check frock, with sturdy, scratched legs, red apple-cheeks, black hair, very twinkling

eyes, and great obstinacy of character. His earliest recollection was of the stuffy little cosy inn parlour at the back of the house, where his mother lay often on a sofa, and where the ubiquitous smell of beer merged into the smell of stuffed birds in a case. Some one—it did not matter who so long as one got there—used to mount Mat, in his little shiny shoes, on a chair to look at them; he stood there hours and hours, as it seemed to him, stolidly entranced. Always, when the unknown at the back lifted him down, Mat kicked out fiercely with the shiny shoes and slowly opened his wide mouth for a roar. Sometimes he sat on a stool by his mother's side and drew the wedding-ring on and off her finger as a game, and once it came off too far and rolled under the sofa, and Mat remembered groping there for it—it seemed to him for years in the abysmal and choky darkness—and when he found it, he pushed it on to her biggest finger, which was already thin enough—poor mother!—to have room for it.

Then came a time when she no longer lay in the bird-parlour, and Mat used to sit on the end of the great curtain-hung bed upstairs, and sometimes have a lovely spoonful of beef tea, or the quarter of an invalid orange; while downstairs he enjoyed himself vastly in the bar with Sally, the barmaid, an excellent, vulgar girl, or with James, the barman—almost always ready to be horses or lions, as requested.

One day Sally, crying a great deal and enjoying



the tears perhaps, told him he had no mamma; and Mat did not understand. Then Mr. Philips, the tailor, came with a yard measure and measured him for his first suit of an inky, awful black; and, very proud and interested in the suit and a cloak that covered it tied with long crape streamers, Mat rode with his father in a dark carriage, and looking out from its windows beheld other dark carriages, some men walking very slowly, and, on horses, six more with some one carrying a great tray of feathers in front of them, being, in fact, the extra mutes with whom old Hargraves did honour to a dearest memory.

In St. Alphege's Churchyard, which was always his favourite walk with Sally, Mat only remembered how cold the wind made his legs at the middle place where his socks left off and his new trousers—very high in the waist and very short in the leg, according to fashion—had not begun.

A day or two, or may be a week or two, later, Mat, playing in the inn yard, hit his little dirty, cold, chapped fist (so it must have been winter) and it bled, and he ran to the back parlour to show it to his mother, and the room was neat and cold and empty; then stumped up to her bedroom, and that was white and cold and empty too. Then he forgot the fist, held out in front of him all ready for condolence, and realised for a moment a deeper hurt. Kind Sally found him on the stairs presently, and took him pick-a-back—a heavenly form of locomotion—into the bar, and he sat there

and sucked one of those fine, old-fashioned, three-cornered bull's-eyes (which, with economy, can be made to last an afternoon), and long remembered how it tasted, saltly flavoured with tears. He remembered, too, as they sat at dinner one day, that his considering infant mind became aware of a difference in his father, and believed afterwards he must have seen those ugly, deep lines grief carves on a fat face made for prosperity and self-confidence.

Once at dinner, Mat on one of his rare entries into conversation, for he was a stolid, silent child, let fall, most innocently, an adjective which was always on James's lips; and a very few days later, when his father had cracked and passed him a walnut, a guileless treble exclaimed:

"Damn my eyes! it's a wrong 'un!"—also a flower of James's speech.

The old publican was not himself mealy-mouthed and was of a coarse age, but the aim of his life was to do what his wife would have wished.

So three days later beheld Thomas and Matthew—Thomas having in one hand an infant valise containing Mat's worldly all and Mat himself in the other—taking the coach for Eastcheap and Mrs. Stinger's Select Establishment for Young Gentlemen, Mat having parted quite unmoved from home, James, and Sally, being, in point of fact, deeply excited about the coach drive, to the exclusion of all other emotions.

Within the coach was one of those thin, acidu-

lated virgins, to be constantly found there, much incommoded and incommoding others by comforts in the shape of shawls, reticules, and cushions and wearing a vast headpiece with a confusion of bows and cherries on it. Mat, sitting forward on his seat opposite her with his legs stuck out straight in front of him, gazed at her with the long penetrating gaze of a child which seems to see through one's faulty body to one's defective soul, until, softened by his infancy and his black suit, she said, rashly:

"Well, little man, do you like me that you look at me so much?"

Whereat Mat, "No, I don't like *you*, but I likes your bonnet." And the old publican, gazing unseeing out of the window with thoughts far off, did not even hear his son's *faux pas*.

At Eastcheap, the immense coachman leaned over himself and the rugs and coats which made a mountain of him, and learning that Mat was going to school, handed him, *via* the guard, a shining new penny, observing tersely:

"Nothing like capital."

The round green stain the penny left on Mat's palm interested him so much that, when Mrs. Stinger washed his hands for him that evening, he held the right one so tightly shut to preserve the trophy that she had to live up to her name and sting the determined little knuckles with a slap before he would relax them.

Still, little Mat was not unhappy at the Select

Academy. Though plain and silent, he was so very innocent that not even Stingers could find it in their hearts to dislike him; while there was there what then seemed to him a magnificent goddess-like woman (he afterwards had reason to think she was a much-snubbed little pupil teacher named Mary Smith) who once gave him a kiss and a pear-drop when he was in bed, and used often to smuggle hot water into the cold bath he was given once a week—mercifully only once, too much washing being considered weakening to the young constitution; in fact, likely to wash it away.

In the holidays, every Sunday, Matthew and Thomas used to go hand-in-hand to St. Alphege's Church, Greenwich, the old publican being co-churchwarden there with his rival, the landlord of the more famous hostelry, the "Ship."

Mat used to stand on a hassock in his high pew and hate young "Ship" with a jealous hate for having the impudence and the height to see out of his without that assistance; and while Hargraves and Ward were dining within doors and quarrelling over the quarrel between the Regent and his wife, the little boys, who were friends and enemies like their parents, were fisticuffing each other in the "Ship" garden for the first use of the swing. Matthew always remembered with pleasure that, though young "Ship" was two years older (and taller) than himself and fiercely hammered his guest's hands, which clung tightly to the rope of the swing, with a hoop stick, Mat won; returned

“bloody but unbowed” to the “Hope and Anchor,” swallowing large sobs; was whipped by the old publican, who was secretly rather pleased with him, and put to bed; and the very next morning, meeting young “Ship” in Greenwich Park with *his* barmaid, Mat evaded his, and fell on “Ship” tooth and nail again.

At ten years old, Mat left Mrs. Stinger’s, and was put to a commercial school in Holborn, where he showed himself dogged and diligent; slow to acquire and very slow to forget; much cleaner and tidier than most boys, but not disliked by them because—a true Briton—he knew how to hold his tongue and use his fists.

He used them once or twice to excellent good purpose in defence of a little weakling lad the other robust young animals teased and bullied as “Julia”; and when Julia was made really ill with their tyranny and lay in the stuffy room which served as an infirmary, Mat would sit and read aloud to him, being certainly the worst reader in the world, all jerks and gallops, and despising the slightest expression as unmanly affectation. Julia soon discovered that Mat’s ugly face was as pliable as india-rubber, and could be at will the melancholy evangelical minister’s, weeping tears over the platitudes of his sermon on to black-gloved hands, or the applewoman’s who served the boys with tuck.

Matthew would sit and make his faces for an hour at a time with perfect patience and stolidity,

satisfied for applause with Julia's clear piping laugh, and having for the child's weakness—the miserable thin little arm and hand on the counterpane—a feeling to which no self-respecting boy can own, compassion. But when some brighter wit had pointed out to Hargraves that their young friend was malingering, and Mat's sturdy common-sense endorsed that opinion, the next time Julia requested a further instalment of the *Mysteries of Udolpho* Mat flung the volume at the bed, said, "Read it yourself," and marched into the playground.

But, all the same, a few weeks later, when some youthful Hercules suggested that to complete Julia's cure he should be dropped over the playground wall, Hargraves came close up to him with his hands in his pockets and simply said, "You'd better." And Hercules, reflecting how thick and strong those hands were and what an obstinate brute Hargraves was, knew he had better not.

When Matthew Hargraves left school for good, at sixteen, his equipment consisted of an admirable working knowledge of arithmetic, and the ability to write and express himself more like the gentleman he was not than many a modern undergraduate of Oxford or Cambridge.

If he had small Latin and less Greek, there is admirable precedent for that ignorance; and if he knew nothing at all of the great modern foreign literatures, your young gentleman, fresh from the finest public schools Britain can produce, seldom

knows any more. It is true that that educated youth will be familiar with the titles of the great classics of his own land (with a familiarity which often seems to breed contempt for anything but the titles), and Hargraves had never even heard of them. But then, literature not being cheap in those days, and the class to which he belonged considering it wicked to waste money on anything so unpractical, he had never, except with *Udolpho*, corrupted his mind with rubbish; and when he left Holborn his whole library consisted of his mother's Bible, which he read because he knew she would have told him to if she had been there; a *Pilgrim's Progress*, whose gloomy woodcuts had been the fearful joy of his childhood; Rowe's *Devout Exercises of the Heart*, also his mother's; and a Shakespeare, a reward presented to Master Matthew Thomas Hargraves for Diligence and Application in Study, which Mat felt proud to possess (the poet being an essentially British possession), but in no way obliged to read.

At sixteen, he was rather a short sturdy boy, with a black bullet head; and those very black, direct, grave eyes, yet with a twinkle, too, now and then, at the back of them, and a wide and obstinate mouth. He was, in a sense, too, what the young schoolboy rarely is now, already a responsible person, prepared to begin his world, and knowing—a bracing knowledge—that if it was to be won he must win it himself.

Having arrived home from school on a Saturday,

## A Beginning and an End 11

he entered the first thing on Monday morning, that no time might be wasted, as something which was politely called a junior clerk, and was not perhaps quite an office boy, the firm of Messrs. Turner and Wiseman, wine merchants of Greenwich.

No one since Hogarth has chanted the pæon of the Diligent Apprentice. There is so little to say about virtue, with its honest head always in its ledger, its mediocre and painstaking mind always on its work. Once only, during the six years he was employed by Messrs. Turner and Wiseman, was young Hargraves late at his post. As there is a natural law which ordains that, whereas wickedness can go on being wicked, undiscovered and with impunity, and if virtue errs but once, it is always caught and punished, on that solitary occasion Mr. Theodore Wiseman, the junior partner, beheld young Hargraves's tardiness and severely reprimanded it. Mat said nothing, but a dark, slow red came into his homely face, and an angry disgust with fate and himself into his soul.

His old father, rousing from a reverie to note the ominous fact that his son was not equal to second instalments of roast beef and apple tart at their four-o'clock dinner, asked him if he were ill. Mat said hoarsely, "No, sir." He was not capable of lightly carrying off the situation by talking of other things. He spoke not one other word till the meal was over, and for much thinking slept



that night not at all. It is not too much to say that he never all his life forgot the reproof, and kept the resolve made that day never to deserve such another.

Meanwhile, things were not going well at the "Hope and Anchor."

In a world where men forget and recover from their deepest losses tragically soon and well, this rough old publican had buried heart and life in his young wife's grave. He had loved money and spent all his days getting and keeping it, and when she died even that lost its zest, and all things, save to do what she wished, came to matter little. Young Mat scarcely ever heard his father breathe her name, yet he knew very well that it was for her sake the old man denied himself the oaths and the deep drinking which were once the common-places of his calling, and for her that it behoved Mat himself to be more than common clean of lips and life.

One Sunday, home from Holborn on a Christmas holiday, Mat, looking up from their pew in church, had beheld a huge, heavy, and most costly monument, wherein Mrs. Hargraves was presented in marble, in the foolish headgear foolish woman wore in the late Georgian epoch, and yet with her angel's wings on her little shoulders all the same. Mat thought the effigy most beautiful. Suppressed emotion made his face look quite fierce and dogged; he did not even dare to look upwards again till old Thomas was sound asleep in the

sermon; and father and son, sitting beneath the monument Sunday after Sunday for years, never once spoke of it, either to each other or to any other person.

Soon after its erection the old man had an illness, from which he recovered enfeebled in mind and body. The reins of the good old business, which he had held taut and firm, grew slack in his weak old hands. James and Sally had, of course, married each other, and were growing portly in their own public-house at Rotherhithe; and Mat, always of slow and just observation, had seen, even when he was seldom at home, that the new brooms did not sweep clean when they thought the old master's eye was too dim and indifferent to note the dirt. Now, it struck him unpleasantly that the house, which had always been sternly respectable and well conducted, though no laws obliged it to be, was actually at times noisy and disorderly; that the parties of gentlemen from the House of Commons chose to eat nearly all their dinners at the "Ship" or the then still more famous "Crown and Sceptre."

There was a great delicacy of feeling in Mat's heart, but in his speech a downrightness he could never overcome.

One day, at their Sunday dinner, he blurted out, "There's too much business going to our rivals, sir"; and the poor old father, knowing the fact too well and getting red over all his thin, old battered face to the roots of his white hair, said,

"Damn you, sir! It's not *your* business. Leave it to your betters."

And Mat, with *his* face red too, sat back stiffly in his chair, drank his wine, and uttered not one word more. Yet it was a bitter thing as he grew, and grew early, from youth to man, to see the money, which he was quite well aware would one day have been his money, going away from their house; and a yet more bitter thing—Mat having decency, regularity, respectability in his bones and his blood—to know that those qualities were no longer associated with the business. Yet, as his father grew more incapable of managing, he grew the more determined not to give up the management. It was the old story of the king and the heir. If Mat made even the smallest suggestion the dull old eyes gleamed angrily and the poor old mouth set obstinately, with an obstinacy Mat somehow respected; there was so much of it deep down in himself.

Then, as ill-luck would have it, at church, old Thomas having long, as churchwarden, grievously muddled the alms-dish, finally one Sunday handed it thrice in succession to one worthy citizen (who was most indignant at the insult), and not at all to a whole pew full of others (who did not resent the slight), with the result that it was suggested by the Vicar that Matthew should hand the bag instead.

Mat was still young enough to be pleased with the office, and to have been hotly red and ashamed when his father bungled it. Rather stiff and self-

## A Beginning and an End 15

conscious in his blue brass-buttoned coat, choking stock, and handsome Sunday waistcoat, he handed it one Sunday only, and tried not to see the rage in the poor old face at his side, and then the sad lines into which it fell.

As they walked home, says old Thomas, "I'm no good now. My day's done," which was so much too much for Mat at his side that he could only grunt something quite inaudible in reply; and before an hour was over, he had marched up to the Vicarage and delivered an ultimatum, which produced that very afternoon a neat letter, in which the Vicar said that he had received so many expressions of regret from the parishioners that Mr. Thomas Hargraves had given up his office of collector, that he must really beg him as an especial favour to resume it.

After that, Matthew made no attempt to save either the honour or the fortunes of his house. If they must go to the devil, they must; and he must set his lips, stand by, and watch them.

He worked at his own work the more thoroughly and diligently. His brains were undistinguished, and he did not oblige Wiseman's business with any startling and brilliant ideas for its advancement. But if he was given an order the thing was as good as done; he was absolutely and entirely reliable, having in fullest measure that *Gründlichkeit* which the Briton shares with his German brother, and to the absence of which the Latin races owe their weakness and their charm.

When young Hargraves was about four-and-twenty years old, Mr. Wiseman made him the offer of a responsible and valuable post in one of their branch houses in Newcastle. "You can give me your answer to-morrow, Hargraves," says Wiseman, not as one who doubts what the answer will be. And it was not, indeed, doubt that kept Hargraves awake that night, for to leave his old father alone and cheated was not within the range of things he could do.

When Mr. Theodore said, "You're foolish, Hargraves; your father would surely have been pleased to part with you—on such terms," Hargraves knew it was but the old serpent of Eden tempting him in the guise of a junior partner.

He was oppressively heavy and silent at the "Hope and Anchor" that evening. At their first dish of tea, he roused himself to remark to his father that the weather was seasonable; at the second, with an absent suddenness, that it was not; and might have gone on to a third interesting contradictory statement only that old Thomas said testily, "We've had enough of the weather for this evening"; and Matthew sat in perfect silence till bedtime, with the newspaper in front of him, not reading a word of it. Time, and his father's growing need of him, softened the disappointment, but on his tenacious soul some faint scar of it was left for ever. Often now, of an afternoon, the old man and the young walked—with the young feet keeping slow pace to match

## A Beginning and an End 17

the old—beneath the spreading elms of that historic park, where tough Samuel Johnson had composed *Irene*, and his arch-enemy, Lord Chesterfield, had strolled from the Ranger's Lodge, the "Babiolo" of the *Letters*, polishing their immortal periods.

One of the chief drawbacks of a limited education is that it robs men of impersonal interests and of any century but their own to live in.

Thomas and Matthew had perhaps never even heard of Johnson and Chesterfield; it is poor fun discussing contemporary politics unless you can quarrel over them; so when they had agreed to condemn that unhappy woman, Caroline, the queen of George IV., who even within Matthew's memory had been their neighbour at Montagu House, Blackheath, and to wonder when the complaints of the decent citizens of Greenwich would be at last attended to and its famous and disreputable Fair abolished, there was really nothing more to say. Mat was always stolidly patient with the old man—and it must always be remembered that it is youth which finds it hard to live with age, whereas age much prefers youth to other crabbed old ages—and had only to reproach himself thereafter with silences.

One clear spring evening, when they came in to their tea, the old man complained of being tired; said he would rest the morrow in bed—a thing he had never done in his life; and, by degrees, slept into another.

Perhaps such slow endings are sent that the quick resentments and jealousies, which too often divide men who love each other well, may die before death. To old Thomas, Mat was a child again; and no woman could have been tenderer, for all his large clumsy hands and fiercely creaking boots, than Matthew as a nurse. He had permission from his firm to be at home as much as he liked, and availed himself of it to return at all sorts of unexpected hours to pounce on the old Gamp he employed, as the best sick nurse he could get, neglecting her duty.

When he came into the bar, its noise shut down suddenly; one night he took a half-drunken customer by the shoulders and put him out in perfect silence. The barman and maid had the strongest idea, though Mr. Matthew had never said a word, that they would be put out too if they misconducted themselves; and at length the bar became so dull and orderly (it was underneath his father's bedroom, and when it roused to the least cheerfulness Matthew went below and quenched it) that the last remnants of custom left the house, and it was run—as the loser was perfectly aware—entirely at a loss.

Growing more and justly suspicious of the Gamp, Hargraves soon sat up himself at night with his father. There was little to do. The old man was sleeping into death as the infant sleeps into life; and ending as naturally and painlessly as it is given to few to end and to most to begin.

Matthew would sit for hours watching the fire and listening to its crackling. He was not asking himself the meaning of death and life; the eternal Whence? Whither? With what end? which, under the same circumstances, his grandson would certainly have been doing. Faith was a simpler thing then, and Hargraves's was quite narrow and sure. When, in the dead of night, the old man in the bed sighed deeply, and the young one sitting by it put his strong hand on a pulse which beat no more, he did not doubt the heaven of harps and angels, the streets of pure gold, and the gate of one pearl, and that midst that garish magnificence his father and mother had found each other again.

Once more, Mr. Philips, the tailor, measured Hargraves for a black suit, saying, with the tape in his mouth:

"A sad time this, Mr. Matthew, a very sad time! I remember how the old gentleman took on when your mother died; I do, indeed." And Hargraves, who hated his mother to be spoken of just as his father had done, grunted and turned the subject to his waistcoat.

That afternoon young Ward of the "Ship" came in as Hargraves was dining—young Ward still, confound him! many inches taller than Hargraves—a handsome, easy fellow. As Ward offered sympathy, Matthew searched for an imaginary fly in the tankard of beer before him; he hated these hands on his bruises, and was not going to be conveyed by a Ship, or any other



medium, within measurable distance of betraying emotion. When Ward went on to condole with Hargraves on the decline and fall of the business at the inn, that was like his impudence; and it was a very steady, fighting eye which encountered Ward's over the top of the tankard.

"Till it's sold, the old place can still give you a good glass of beer," says Hargraves, pushing the jug towards his guest. But Ward could not find out, though he had come with the purpose, what Hargraves intended to do when he *had* sold the business; and said meditatively to his father that night, "He's a determined beast, Mat Hargraves; he'll get on."

The determined beast sold the business—not ill; and presently there were bills of the sale of the furniture and effects of the late Mr. Thomas Hargraves in all the pretty old latticed windows of the "Hope and Anchor." Matthew dismissed the servants, and when old Gamp pointed out, as a reason for receiving a *pourboire* in excess of her wage, how devotedly she had attended to the poor dear old gentleman, Matthew just looked at her. He kept out of the sale the slippery black sofa from the parlour, on which his little mother used to lie, and six horsehair chairs to complete the dreadful suite; her sofa-table, her girlish sampler, and the strange-smelling case of stuffed brown birds; and sold for a song the Chippendale chairs and a cabinet for which his descendants would give the eyes out of their heads.

## A Beginning and an End 21

In that little stuffy parlour, he looked through many old papers, and among them, finding the letters his parents had written to each other before their marriage, sat with them in his hand a great while, thinking and wanting to read them; then, with an instinct finer natures have lacked, put the packet in the red-hot of the fire, held it determinedly there with the poker, and looked steadfastly up the chimney, that he might not see the brown charred sentences which for the moment escaped the burning.

Directly after the funeral—a dreadful affair, awfully rich in hatbands and mutes—he had returned to his work. The good post he had been compelled to refuse was, of course, long since filled by another, who showed no disposition to die or resign it, as would certainly have happened to reward virtue in the just world of the story-book. But the Wisemans offered Hargraves the position of traveller to their firm—also a good post, though the other had been a better—and, as involving change of scene, advised him to accept it, which he did.

On his last evening at Greenwich, he strolled from his dismantled home into the park, and stood there awhile on the terrace looking down at the little town below him, the smoke rising from its chimneys in the thin air, and the fair, shining river.

In every parting there is death; one leaves behind, buried for ever, a part of oneself. Yet he

was glad to go! Liberty is sweet, though the way to it be over graves and regrets; liberty to make one's own life, ay, and, if needs must, one's own mistakes!

The chill exhilaration of spring was in the air; some of it stole into Hargraves's veins and to his grave heart. He had written *Finis* to the first chapter of his life; and with steady hand he turned the page.

## CHAPTER II

### A COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

THE England of eighty years ago is generally vaguely seen by most people as the merry old England of the *Pickwick Papers*—the England of huge practical jokes; of much drinking and little washing; of cheery inns with fat landlords producing from fat cellars sound bottles of port, and treating the guests thereto; of rosy-cheeked landladies and buxom barmaids; of ostlers, all sucking straws, and humorous, like Sam Weller; of streets merry with coaches, post-chaises, cracking whips, and tootling horns; of country towns lively, instead of dead-alive; and of the villagers of smock frocks, long clay pipes, and rustic contentment, coming out of rose-covered cottages, as in a comic opera.

But there was a reverse to that pleasant medal.

In the years Hargraves travelled through his country, he made much acquaintance with inns which were far from cheery; slept in the fustiest beds, with pounds of dust in the great baldachinos above his head, and in the dismal old curtains drawn round the dismal resting-place; ate often

the coarsest, dirty meals, at very high charges; and if he had ever thought it a joke, which he never had, to be upset by a drunken post-boy out of a post-chaise, would have found it a joke which can pall, especially in remote country lanes in deep midwinter. He was interested in his work, and he liked the change and freedom; but otherwise his observing and orderly nature found much that was uncongenial.

When the day's labour was done, there awaited him the commercial-room of the county town's second best inn, and the society of other young men engaged as he was; of a few tipping farmers of the neighbourhood, or some pettifogging local solicitor, driving a bargain with a client. The dinner almost inevitably consisted of a huge piece of red, raw beef, a vast dish of potatoes, and plenty of cheese and beer; and though the fare struck even Matthew's uncritical taste as monotonous, if he had been offered dainties, cooked with the skill and grace of the cooks of the world—the cooks of France—he would have despised and mistrusted them as miserable little foreign kick-shaws, and have told himself (he really thought it) that Waterloo had been won, not only on, but in some sense by, British ale and sirloins.

He did not say much at dinner. It was never Hargraves's way to say much. But now and again that latent sense of humour peeped in his plain face and thoughtful eyes; and if he was short to gruffness, he had that *politesse du cœur* which

shows itself in remembering other people's wants, and not devoting all one's time and attention to fulfilling one's own.

There was, unfortunately, still much drinking in the class to which he belonged—in between the Rechabites and Father Matthew there was no such thing as a teetotaler—and Hargraves used to declare, and really thought, that he preferred your drinker to that miserable weakling who dares not take anything lest he take too much. Yet, when the talk grew loud and the bottles passed freely, he would lean back in his chair and slowly sip his appointed glass, and was not moved by a hair's-breadth from that sober attitude by its unpopularity or the loud adjurations to drink fair. Idiotic convention demanded—and Hargraves deeply respected conventions—that after dinner he should order a bottle for the good of the house; but, though it was as a knife to his practical and thrifty mind to spend money on what he could not use, his self-respect was a stronger thing yet, and his friends finished the bottle for him.

After their dinner, some cheerful spirit would start a song; and Hargraves himself actually obliged the company with *Ye Mariners of England*—not because he knew how to sing, but because he had been asked to; the next night, if so requested, he obliged again; in fact, went on doing so, quite simply, till he was asked no more; when he justly concluded, without any thought of resenting the conclusion, that the company had

had enough of English Mariners and preferred his silence to his song. He listened in that silence, and took, as natural and inevitable, songs and talk with which decent youth in our own age would be disgusted.

Yet, for himself, it was not only the pleasures of the table he knew very well how to resist. Old Thomas had been, in his youth, coarse living and coarse mouthed, and, in his age, redeemed by his love for a good woman. Young Matthew, for the sake of that little mother he so dimly and dearly remembered, and for the sake of that stubborn self-respect rooted within his soul, resisted, from first to last, the burning temptations of the flesh as few men indeed resist them; but which only those who have found resistance impossible for themselves, declare to be irresistible for others. "Si tu es soupçonné d'une faute que tes juges aient pu commettre, tu es un homme perdu."

But though the plump, arch barmaids, throwing coquetries over the bar, extracted nothing from Hargraves but a steady stare, if the landlady had a fat little girl clinging to her ample skirts and looking round that substantial curtain at Matthew, he spied her at once, set her on his knee, and made faces for her grave enjoyment, or strange animals out of his many-coloured bandana handkerchief and his large forefinger. To one small Matty of seven, whom he discovered at that portly, red, smiling, comfortable hostelry, the "Hundred House," at Witley, in Worcestershire

he wrote long comic doggerel verses on big blue foolscap when he had gone away; remembered to bring her a smart doll (when such things were twenty times rarer and dearer than now), and to have a new set of faces and all the old jokes when he came her way again.

After the four-o'clock inn dinner, and the drinking and songs which followed it, there remained often long tedious winter evenings, with really nothing to fill them but more songs and drinking, or perhaps cards. Hargraves played a thoughtful game of whist, and liked it; but he was too prudent to play for high stakes, or to care to lose even small ones, so withdrew presently to the side table, where were last month's greasy newspapers and a dog's-eared number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Sometimes, in default of better, he read these works through till he had them by heart; or went to sleep over them—to the lullaby of the roysterers round the table.

One winter night, he found himself snowed up—"in the worst inn's worst room"—in an arctic Norfolk village, with a black north-easter blowing across the flat white fields and the dreary miles of impassable highway.

The first morning he spent doing his perfectly regular and neat private accounts. They did not even oblige him by coming different at each addition, as a woman's do. So, when he had scrupulously brushed his clothes and counted his handkerchiefs to see how many the shifty-eyed



boots had taken—Hargraves devoted to his clothing much common-sense, which generally means little time or money—there was nothing whatever to do.

The “White Hart’s” literature consisted of a torn book on veterinary surgery; and in Hargraves’s age men were, as a rule, interested in animals professionally or not at all; while the present conviction of their intelligence and moral qualities would have been considered distinctly impious.

By about midday desperation drove him to the Shakespeare in his own short library, with which he always travelled, and into which—the Bible and the *Devout Exercises* excepted—he never looked. He opened the volume, haphazard, at *Measure for Measure*, and, having conscientiously cleared the characters to his mind, began to read.

The edition had no notes and commentaries to fog the meaning. The writer spoke down the ages to the reader as man to man, heart to heart—without middleman or go-between. The disorderly, comfortless room, which had strongly offended Hargraves’s homing instincts, the cutting draught under the door, and the black smokiness of the fire, presently faded away from him. Now and then, indeed, he rested the book on a stout knee, and absently attacked that fire with a poker; and, pondering, astonished, could have said, not irreverently, with her of Samaria, “Behold a man who told me whatever I did!”

By the time dinner came, he ate steadily and

as a duty of the sirloin, and the pudding—pale, tepid, and stout—that followed it, and as it was impolite, as well as indigestible, to read at meals in his walk of life, it was not till the cheese that his principles suddenly gave way, and he propped the volume on the vast piece of cheddar in front of him and went on reading. He was not pleased, and did not look pleased, when the landlord came in to take a glass of wine with him presently, and talk like a fool about the funds and the country going to the dogs (it was always going, and never getting there, even then), and when a couple of attorneys entered the parlour, shaking the snow off them, cursing the cold, and calling for hot bishop, Hargraves scowled at them and hated them, till he found he could so absorb his soul in his author that they were as though they were not.

That night, as he was going to bed, he re-read the great speech on Death—though one did not, if properly behaved, read in bedrooms any more than at meals—and slept, a Columbus who had found a new world.

The next day was Sunday.

Strongly Evangelical, it cost Hargraves something to live up to his principles, and after church open no book but the *Devout Exercises*, and to attend the service as he always did, spruce and well brushed, in blue coat and grey beaver hat, with which tribute to British respectability he sadly, yet gladly, hampered himself on his travels; for though he had repeatedly written in a copy-

book at Stinger's that one should not judge by appearances, he had soon found out that people do, and must, judge by them, because at first they have nothing else to judge by.

Many of the churches he attended were of a kind to vex his decent, orderly mind, with bats in the dirty roof, moth in the decaying hangings, and nobody in the worm-eaten pews; but much more often he found, as he found to-day, a service neither melancholy nor ill-attended, with a band, not tuneful exactly, but cheerful and vastly enjoying itself, in the gallery; a good old white-headed clerk, responding "A—mon, A—mon," in the wrong places, from his desk; and a parson, looking very small in his full black gown in a vast pulpit, preaching a better sermon there than his successor preaches to-day.

If the service was very long, Hargraves liked it long—it was a proof the clergyman was not shirking his business. Throughout it he kept, as he always kept, a very firm eye on the ritual, lest there should be anything Popish in it—his dread of Romanism, as interference with the dearest liberty a man has—leading him all his life to see it everywhere, and in everything.

"The only foundation for tolerance," said Charles James Fox, "is a degree of scepticism, and without it there can be none."

This morning, from the drab pew where the beadle put strangers, Hargraves beheld, with great approval, the squire, with his red whiskers

and shiny bald head, enjoying with his family party the warmth and softness of the well-furnished box allotted to the Manor.

One day, Hargraves himself would be—certainly not landowner and gentleman, for there was too sharp a cleavage (might it remain for ever!) between the classes for that—but prosperous merchant and citizen, with *his* pew to himself, and *his* half-guinea ready for the plate. The half-crown he put in to-day meant some sort of self-denial; but he was rewarded by the chink of it, and the feeling that he was justified in putting it there, and the beadle's audible, "Thank 'ee, sir."

That the poor should be shivering on dilapidated free benches below, was, after all, the natural order of things. "The poor in the loomp is bad," was among Hargraves's suspicions; and, as the son of a publican, he believed he knew the chief reason they *were* poor.

Yet this morning when the service was over, and the "nipping and eager air" was bending the barren branches of the trees in the churchyard, and the squire's landau and greys had driven off to the interest and admiration of the congregation, there was an old granny by Hargraves's side, shivering in such thin rags and with such a poor, little, cold, whimpering red-legged wretch of a grandson in her hand, that Hargraves's own comfortable broadcloth for once actually oppressed him. When he got back to the inn and enjoyed a better fire and dinner than hitherto, to celebrate Sunday,

his thoughts ran obstinately on her; and after his wine, when his companions, the attorneys, were settling down to the warmth and a second bottle, he dragged on his wet boots again, and having made inquiries of his host, tramped determinedly to the old dame's cottage, placed a florin on the table, said something gruff in his throat about the cold, put his thick hand on Tommy's shock head, and a penny—which he had had the weakness to polish with his handkerchief before he left the inn—into Tommy's dirty fist; and went back, feeling better.

That evening, he so far fell from virtue as to get the Shakespeare out of his carpet-bag and to turn the leaves longingly; had the strength to put it back again and spend the evening in the suitable Sunday sleep.

For not less than five years, Hargraves travelled through that England for which the Great Reform Bill had done something (about one quarter as much as it was confidently hoped and prophesied it would do) for the betterment of the middle classes, and nothing at all for improvement of the lower classes; the England muttering the bitter discontent which found loud voice at last in Chartistism; the England where not one poor man in ten could read and write; where children still worked in mines or were the climbing boys of the chimneys; and where the prize and the cock fight and Going to See a Man Hanged were still popular (if, in one case, forbidden) amusements.

In those five years Hargraves saw many and many an example of the southern agricultural village, where families of ten or eleven persons subsisted on eight or nine shillings a week, with the quartern loaf at 1s. 2d., bad tea at 6d. an ounce—nobody had ever heard of a pound,—and salt so dear the poor man had to sell half his pig before he could preserve the other half.

It would be hard indeed to say that he approved of such conditions, but he was certainly ready to maintain—as many comfortable people are ready to maintain now of evils not less cruel—that they were inevitable. Patience to suffer one's own afflictions—and the afflictions of other people—was the besetting virtue and vice of his generation; and he did not escape it. It is true, individual cases, like the old granny's, betrayed him to a softness of heart he could hardly approve. Once also, in a church in Leeds, a young preacher, with a strong, ugly, painful face, beating the ancient dust out of the pulpit cushions in his fervour, pleaded so convincingly for the Society which demanded the abolition of those child chimney-sweeps, that Hargraves, who deeply hated to be moved, was moved; and a few years later, as a new and generally perfectly silent member of the Council of the City of London, himself proposed the grant of £100 which the Council made to the Society in 1840.

Later on, when he came across, in an early *Punch*, Hood's bitter indictment of the manhood

of England in *The Song of the Shirt*, having convinced himself that the poet was not simply making capital by a brutal assault on the emotions, Hargraves decreed that his own shirts should be made in his own house, and wore them, so made—always vindictively tight, he considered, about the neck—for the rest of his life. But himself to rise up and seek to alter base conditions by trying to alter public opinion regarding them, was not in his disposition. He would, at this time, have argued stoutly with anybody that each man, and in a lesser degree each woman, owes his fortune to himself.

“The cruelest man living could not sit at his feast unless he sat blindfold.” But there are two sorts of blindness: the wilful, and the natural or inherited. Hargraves’s was the latter.

As for his politics, one of his earliest recollections was being taken, as a child, by his father, soon after Waterloo, to see the coarse caricatures, in the booksellers’ shops in Piccadilly, of the great and fallen foe; and he remembered looking up from his toys on the floor and hearing the old publican spell out with a vindictive joy the fierce invectives in which even the decent *Times* indulged.

So that he may be said to have drunk in a truculent and aggressive belief in British invincibility, not, certainly, with his gentle mother’s milk, but with the first sip of the paternal beer.

He was, of course, staunchly convinced that the King—naturally, only the English King—can do

no wrong (and, if he try, then so many million Englishmen will know the reason why!), and that the Church is to be steadily maintained, because she is an English institution, and on the understanding she maintains her sobriety and moderation, and allows her children full liberty to judge and think—including the liberty to judge her.

As for the coarse cruelty of the pastimes of these good old days, Hargraves—with the slow deep colour which came into his face when he thought anybody was going to disagree with him—was ready to defend them as virile and necessary, though when he wanted recreation, his own steps turned only in the mild direction of a cricket match, which he watched from start to finish with a deep and solemn joy, sitting profoundly attentive in his tall hat, the players being also attired in that emblem of respectability, to which the Briton then clung from the cradle to the grave.

But when a young Frenchman, whom he met in an east wind on the top of the Ipswich stage, suggested to him the brutality of such a sport as prize-fighting, Mat looked at him with his calm British eye, pitied him for the milk-soppery of such opinions, and only did not quarrel with them because they proceeded from a nation to whom, as so recently and so soundly beaten, a Briton was naturally magnanimous. The Frenchman, a bright-eyed, narrow-chested little fellow, was still talking and gesticulating when the "White Horse" was reached with a clatter, and Hargraves,



who had none of his companion's quickness of intelligence, was still despising and rather liking him, had lent him a neck-shawl, and was no more moved by his shrewd reasonings than if he, Hargraves, had been made of granite.

That night, when the Frenchman joined the circle round the commercial-room fire, Hargraves, saying something inaudible, at once got up and went away; and it did not immediately dawn even on Monsieur's sharp wits that his British friend was not avoiding his company, but simply giving him his comfortable seat.

All those wandering years, Hargraves's work was his chief consolation—a needed consolation, because, as he soon found, he hated travelling and movement, and was before all things a settler and permanent, liking staid and regular ways; strongly prone to attach himself to immobile possessions, an attachment which soon renders a man immobile himself.

He worked, never with a feverish energy, but, year in, year out, with the sober industry which lasts. He would have rested on Sundays if his own religious principles and all the deeply-rooted conventions of his day had not made him do so; and his decent recreations had their proper place. But his business was his life—his first interest and consideration, and if he thought sometimes of a future when it would not be all his life, such thoughts spurred rather than interrupted his industry.

Twice a year, he wrote to a deaf uncle in Shropshire, acquainting him—having nothing else to say—with political and atmospherical conditions which the uncle knew already.

On one occasion, finding himself in Shrewsbury, Hargraves unfortunately took it to be his duty to visit the uncle, and the uncle (old Hargraves's brother) unfortunately took it to be his duty to receive him. Unfortunately, because neither man was of the class which is used to visits and visitings; and the host—a prosperous small farmer—felt obliged to take a reluctant holiday and sit almost all day in his best clothes, in the unused parlour, regarding the guest, also in his best clothes, doing nothing.

Uncle Samuel was in the stage of deafness which hates to be roared at; and Matthew, whenever he did speak, which was seldom, literally shook the Chelsea cows on the mantelpiece with the reverberations of his shouts. At ten and two every day, the pair dismally inspected the live stock, old Samuel longing to be up and at them, and Hargraves thinking how monotonously similar pigs looked morning by morning, and making, it must be confessed, monotonously similar remarks regarding them.

When the time came to part (it was characteristic of both uncle and nephew that neither had advanced it by an hour, being both sturdily determined to do their duty to the bitter end), each was seized with a sudden cheerfulness and cordiality;

Mat was driven off firmly resolved he had taken his last look at the farm and his uncle, while old Samuel was congratulating himself on the doorstep on the *finis* to an engagement never to be repeated.

Hargraves also wrote periodically to young Ward, of the "Ship," with whom he kept up a sort of armed neutrality, which the two parties politely called friendship.

In reply to Ward's information on the *on dits* of their circle in Greenwich and the takings of the house, Hargraves replied—on the blue foolscap in the formal large hand he always wrote—that he noted Ward's information, which came safely to hand yesterday, to the effect that old Brown had had a paralytic stroke, Mrs. Marshall had lost her aunt, and the "Ship" takings for the last week rose to the exceptionally large sum of £—s.—d.

Hargraves did not say he was pleased at this prosperity, because he was not—it reflected on the straits into which the "Hope and Anchor" had fallen; and he did not express a hope he and Ward might soon meet again, for he did not feel one. He really liked to hear news of Greenwich, but he did not say that either, because that came under the head of pleasant, tactful utterances which his tongue was never glib enough to utter.

Every year on the anniversary, or as near as possible to the anniversary of his mother's death, Hargraves went back to Greenwich to inspect the condition of her absurd monument in St. Alphege's,

and if it is stained and ill-kept now, that is because her son is no longer there to see to it. He never told Ward of these journeys; he did not want to talk about his errand.

At the end of 1836, he travelled to Greenwich for the first time by the newly opened railway. Why should one hesitate to say that Hargraves hotly and fiercely disapproved of railways; signed petitions in his firmest hand against them; saw in them a horrible menace to the public peace and morality—when the great centres of British learning and teaching, Oxford and Eton, did exactly the same thing?

Hargraves's travels, of course, never took him beyond his own land, so he continued to regard with the contempt of perfect ignorance the foreigner he did not know, and the foreign customs he had never tried; had the stupidity and the limitation of outlook almost universal then in the class to which he belonged; and, in full measure, the steadiness of judgment and character which once made the Briton the most reliable of human creatures.

It was not his way—perhaps it was not in his power—to make friends as he went. His affections were deep, not easy; it may be, he unconsciously knew them to be so deep that he feared to give them.

He was, then, at the end of the five wandering years, still a lonely man; utterly weary of the too-cheerful inn parlours, noisy and drunken; of the mouldering, deserted ones; of packing and repack-

ing the goodly Shakespeare and his best, tall hat; of starting in thin grey dawns by public stages, which always elected to leave at such chilling hours; of arriving, with nightfall on the darkening land and his own heart, at strange unfriendly places, where he knew no man and no man knew him; and of leaving them directly he had begun to put out slow tendrils and to attach himself.

When he received the offer—on condition of placing in the business a substantial sum which he had made and saved—to become junior partner in the firm of William Leaf, cousin to the Wisemans, and wine merchant of Martin's Lane in the City of London, Hargraves asked for time for consideration because it is a rule that no sensible person decides his life without it; and then formally closed with the proposal with which he had really closed, finally and decidedly, in the heart of him, the moment it had been made.

## CHAPTER III

### WORK

By comparison with the huge, unwieldy giant of to-day, the London of William IV. was a calm and modest little capital, where the British merchant lived above or next door to his shop, or, at farthest, in the gravely handsome squares of Bloomsbury, and when his wife and daughters flagged, took a country house for them in salubrious, single-street Islington, or sent them to walk in the flowering meadows of Highgate or Kilburn.

A very fat, snug, and, in a sense, exclusive society had the City of those days. No young blood of the aristocracy came into it to make a fortune in trade or to marry its daughters. Hops called on Silk and Silk on Tallow; only the parsons of the old City churches spanned the great gulf fixed between business and profession, and that single bridge few crossed. Once admitted to that City's inner circle one discovered there a stout and generous hospitality; presently, well-wearing friendship; and without the circle, in that London with its few decent places of entertainment, with its five-and-twenty clubs, only for the gentleman

born, and its family life a thousand times more cautious and inaccessible than now, solitude and dreariness indeed.

It was in some such *milieu* as this that Matthew Hargraves found himself.

William Leaf had engaged rooms for him in Gracechurch Street, not because they were desirable, but because the landlady strongly desired to let them, and it is only the most just of kindly persons who can resist the temptation to be generous at other people's expense. Mrs. Greenup's stories of the diseases from which her two husbands had suffered—inside and out—so touched Leaf's soft heart that his reason found them a reason for taking the two large and dreary apartments (on the first floor, but having a mingled smell of cellar and tomb) of which Hargraves took possession on a draughty March evening of the year 1837.

He was not disposed to be critical. Whatever his rooms were, they were his own, and at least he would not have to get up and leave them tomorrow. In those days, too, people were infinitely more indifferent to dreariness of aspect than they are now, looking upon sun solely as a destructive agent which faded their carpets and curtains; and fresh air as the cruel corrosive which rotted them. Hargraves would not have thought of complaining of a chocolate-brown wall-paper, or the cold and slippery aspect of horsehair chairs and a great table from which everything would have slid as from ice if Mrs. Greenup had polished

it, which she fortunately did not. Above his mantelpiece—beneath which quite a nice fire was warming the cavernous chimney—hung portraits of the husbands, Greenup and Jenkins, bearing, Hargraves fancied, a kind of fatal likeness to each other. Mrs. Greenup introduced him, as it were, to them both before he had been in the room five minutes, and Hargraves's methodical and tidy mind conscientiously booked which man had suffered from the leg and which had died simply from perversity to leave his widow penniless.

When she had finished standing at the door, amiably smiling under a vast cap and hoping that he would be comfortable, he spent a really interesting evening in his shirt sleeves hanging up a bookcase where the *Devout Exercises* and Shakespeare were joined by a *Pleasures of Memory*, a relic of a former lodger, which Hargraves found under a mat on a table; in suspending on a nail a very bad little drawing, in pencil and without perspective, of the "Hope and Anchor," and a worse miniature of his mother taken as a very young girl. Hargraves polished it carefully with his pocket-handkerchief, and would readily have knocked down anybody who had dared to say they did not find it beautiful.

When he had put on his coat, it was tea-time (he had prudently dined at a cook-shop immediately on alighting from the coach), and he enjoyed his tea and greasy muffins by the fireside, looking round his new quarters now and again with ap-



proval; once getting up and taking one of the two tallow candles which solely lit the room and inspecting a large oleograph at the farther end and a print of the First Gentleman strutting in front of the Pavilion.

If there was a smell of preserved dust in the corners, he chose to-night not to notice it. He returned to his fireside well contented.

There was a Chelsea china cow and the great Duke in plaster on the mantelpiece, looking at him with friendly winks in their eyes; the fire blazed up the great chimney; the noises of the street outside were companionable sounds; the tea was hot, and he had had experience of muffins colder and worse. To-night, he did not even read his Shakespeare, silently enjoying instead the warm sense of having a home, where he could attack and conquer the draughts under the door in his own fashion, and peg the window, if it should rattle more than at the present moment, with his own comb—enjoy, in fact, a British independence and solitude with no man to say him nay.

Even the vast bedroom—full of dark corners and opening from the sitting-room—did not depress him. The tallow dip made ghostly reflections on a wardrobe so huge that it perpetually reproached the fewness of his clothes. Looking in the great toilet-glass embedded in mahogany, an imaginative man would have seen the faces of the lost and gone lodgers in the old house looking over his shoulder; Hargraves saw only his own

homely countenance, made homelier presently by a tall nightcap with a tassel. He stood as usual, in this headgear, and to-night with the keen March draught blowing about his bare legs, and read ten verses—he always read ten and then stopped, whether it was sensible or not—of the Scriptures. He was in Deuteronomy now, and there are more satisfying portions. Then he hung his great silver repeater on the watch-stand above his head in the great bed, and trusted himself as absolutely to Providence for the night as he trusted himself and Providence—in that order, because God helps those who help themselves—for the day.

The office of William Leaf, wine merchant, stood next to Leaf's house in Martin's Lane, Cannon Street, in the City of London. The living house, long fallen to other uses, still stands, a dark and substantial house opposite the Rectory House of St. Martin Orgar—also dark and substantial and also standing now.

The offices were dark and substantial too. Without them, there was a board suspended bearing the name of the founder of the firm, John Leaf, who there sold wines, ales, and porters, since 1780.

The very air one breathed, an air full of rich ports and madeiras coming up moist and strong from the vast cellars, spoke of long standing, just dealing, order, regularity, and, perhaps, of some standing still. The spirit of the place had so infected one clerk that though he had tried to leave and advance himself, he could not, and was there

still a clerk, white-headed and seventy-five. It had been intimated to the new partner that the firm wanted young blood and a tighter hand, and that he was to bring them both.

Leaf was getting a little old for his work; that is, he was sixty, the equivalent of seventy to-day. The son of a wool-stapler and a small attorney's daughter, he was, not the less, by one of those natural accidents not uncommon, a perfectly well-bred gentleman, and with his fine, handsome face, an extreme gentleness and kindness of heart which showed itself in courtly and charming manners, had every sign of good breeding but culture, and as he was much too sincere to pretend to know what he did not and was a very good listener, the fact that his whole education had been obtained at a grammar school and had stopped short when he was fourteen, was rarely apparent. He had the further advantage of being a very tall and well-set-up man, with that commanding aspect which will not often be found to imply commanding character or intellect.

There was certainly the strongest contrast between the senior partner and the junior, with his thick-set figure, his strong-set mouth, and his determined mind; and the pair liked each other from the first.

Hargraves perceived immediately that the reins of government had of late grown something easy in Leaf's gentle hands. The senior clerk came late in the morning because he was so old, and the

junior because he was so young; while Atkins, the junior, further seemed to Hargraves to have taken a holiday to bury a grandmother about once a month, secure in the knowledge that his chief was, so to speak, too much of a gentleman to count up the grandmothers and prove their impossibility; while the office-boy was as every other office-boy has been since time began and will be till time is no more—that is, thirteen years of age and of cherubic countenance; at once extremely wicked and extremely innocent; almost exclusively engaged in breaking his own head and his employers' property, and having a mother so poor, no humane master could possibly dismiss him.

Hargraves was not your fool who supposes that reforms can be peacefully wrought in a moment, and he had a cautious constitutional dislike of changes of any sort. But, as he always arrived at the office—never forgetting that episode of his own youth—absolutely punctually, young Atkins, a self-pleased and well-dressed young man, soon found it impossible to saunter in late and easy with Mr. Matthew's direct eye just raised once in his direction; and Hargraves, who had a great bump of respect for old age, though old age was his servant, certainly *said* nothing to old Barnes which caused that veteran also to come betimes.

One day, when Atkins, appearing with a huge black stock and lugubrious countenance, solemnly besought a day's grace to inter an aunt, Hargraves looked up, said he had found *his* aunts always

buried themselves without his assistance, and relapsed into a ledger; and about a fortnight later offered the bereaved nephew, who was still morally compelled to wear the funeral stock and the tragic expression, a day's holiday in the country to recover from his loss.

If there was not often a twinkle in Hargraves's eye, there was that latent humour in his soul—ininitely removed certainly from *jeu d'esprit*, from wit, from frivolity, but there all the same. When he suddenly entered the office-boy's sanctum and beheld that youth practising the uncertain art of standing on his head, Hargraves's face was awful; but when he returned to his own room and went on solidly with his work, there was a smile inside him and that strange softness which anything gay and young and simple can bring into some hearts.

Every one benefits by a strict rule, and every one knows it at last. Leaf, who was all for mercy, had the kindly tolerance he had for almost all things for his partner's firmness, and generously acknowledged its advantages. A certain pride in the advancement and honour of the firm, which was strong in Matthew, began to infect the counting-house.

Leaf had bought steadily of the wines which had long been the vogue—the ports and lisbons, the deep brown sherries, the mountains and the madeiras—of which our happy grandparents drank so largely and with so perfect an impunity. Hargraves, like Dr. Johnson, despised claret as a

liquor fit only for boys, and certainly did not foresee an era when the rich, strong wines, instead of being recommended by the faculty as curing all diseases, would be damned as causing them; but it did dawn on him slowly, as all things came to him, that degenerate taste was trending in the direction of thin hocks, moselles, and champagnes, and that if his firm was to retain and advance its reputation in the future he must make preparation for it.

He had not been in Martin's Lane six months before he became known in the trade as a shrewd and judicious buyer. As a seller, he was certainly not what is now understood as pushing; but, all the same, he lost no opportunity and no possible customer. The young blood from the West End who strolled into the City to buy a couple of dozen of the port—Croft's vintage, 1826—for which the house was famous seldom left under Mr. Hargraves's régime without being a much more extensive purchaser. As they walked through the cellars, Hargraves pointed out in a very few words the imperative Why for buying Now; showed the client the madeira to be purchased at the moment for so much, and its sure and rapid increase in value; the great bin of sherry, obtained cheaply and to be cheaply sold; and yet, because he was an honest man, left the impression of being one, recommending what he believed to be recommendable because, if he had tried to foist bad wares, the lie would have stuck in his throat.

He had no easy airs of equality with his customer; he was not equal and knew it. Shall it be said he respected in that youth his wealth, his social position, the easy air of breeding? Yes, for he did. But he was quite aware, too, of the significance, even in a favourite of fortune, of a backward slope of head and chin; and if his customer had been a real live lord and had trodden on those prejudices, which in ourselves we call convictions, Hargraves must have up and answered him, from his soul; or, at least, become that dusky red all over his forehead and down the back of his neck in the supreme effort to hold his tongue.

He was always the last to leave the office in the afternoons and then left it with regret. He remained and watched, with a firm eye, young Mason putting up the shutters. Mason was thirsting to be gone—there were friends and marbles in the street, and a narrow, poor, noisy, and not at all unhappy home awaiting *him*. But Hargraves had not even the sport, which, for the good of their bodies and sometimes to the disadvantage of their work, any young man in his position would have to alleviate it now.

Sometimes, as he left, he looked rather enviously at the neat windows of his chief's pleasant house next door. People moved as slowly in their friendships as in everything else in those leisurely days, so that it did not surprise Hargraves in the least that he had been two or three months seeing Leaf every day and all day in business without

receiving any invitation to see him in his private capacity. Besides, though there was nothing in Leaf's courteous manner to tell him so, the new partner was not blind to the fact that he was not the old partner's equal by birth; that there subsisted between them the exact difference there is between retail beer and wholesale wine.

Sometimes, when Hargraves arrived in Gracechurch Street, the pleasant Greenup had run out to a funeral at some City church hard by; funerals were her one amusement, and she enjoyed them equally whether or not she was, so to speak, friendly or related to the deceased, or a perfect stranger; and then Hargraves's dinner was late in consequence. Mrs. Greenup used to hover round him, having placed in front of him the chop on which he inevitably dined, and to forget to go down and fetch the potatoes in the ardour of her descriptions.

Hargraves had soon found out that she was easy, slipshod, and affable; perfectly unpunctual and perfectly tolerant in herself and others of faults for which he had no tolerance at all. But in his heart there had always been a kind of generous and unreasonable chivalry towards women, which made him forgive repeatedly in her faults he would never have overlooked for an instant in the counting-house. When he had tentatively suggested that there was a sameness about the inferior cooking and she dissolved into tears and said that she had suffered so severely under the



régime of Jenkins that the only marvel was she was alive to cook anything, anyhow, Matthew most illogically accepted the statement as an excuse for the chops being always black or pink and never the correct intermediate colour, muttered something gruffly, deep down in his stock, about it not mattering, and retired, worsted.

Being of most orderly habit, he used sometimes to remove from his sitting-room some of the dust, which he had chosen not to notice when he first took the rooms, with his silk pocket-handkerchief; and if Mrs. Greenup came in unexpectedly and, so to speak, caught him, pretended to be blowing his nose upon it; while, at last, after trying for weeks to believe that he himself drank all the sherry which evaporated, he locked up the cupboard which served as a cellar, and then was ashamed to meet Mrs. Greenup's eye, as if he had been the thief himself.

Still, the rooms were home. Between his four or five o'clock dinner and tea at nine there was a long interval, which he partially filled by reading the whole of the little *Times* from end to end, including the advertisements of Dr. Steer's Opodeldoc for Sprains and External Rheumatisms; of Genteel Youths anxious to learn the profession of a printer; and of employers—those haughty employers, before democracy took the bit between its teeth—who were willing to take a respectable and well-disposed young woman into their service at a wage of £8 a year, the well-disposed one to

find her own tea and sugar and the most unimpeachable reference from her last situation.

Like Goethe, the first page of Shakespeare Hargraves read had made him Shakespeare's for life; and he went on with the play which had a marker in it from last night, and looking up absently into the empty spring grate (directly the month was called May it was self-indulgent to think you were still cold), wondered and wondered again at that measureless heart and mind; and, finishing the play wondering still, touched his repeater and found it was but seven o'clock.

One night, after Shakespeare, he took from the shelf the Rogers left by his predecessor, and started firmly and conscientiously on the *Pleasures*, rather respecting the poet for being a banker as well; though certainly if Hargraves's own banker had shown the slightest signs of meandering into verse, Hargraves, like Lord Eldon, would have closed his account the next morning. But there was no place for third rates in his narrow literary tastes; it was only dogged British character which made him read the *Pleasures* to the bitter end before he replaced it in its shelf, quite decided to sleep through the evenings rather than take it down again.

At nine, Mrs. Greenup appeared with tea and conversation, commiserating with Matthew—her monstrosity of a widow's cap bobbing at him all the time—for these dull evenings, which would have "druv," she said, most of the young men she

knew to drink, and leaving Hargraves with a feeling that she would have liked him better if he had so consoled himself.

As the evenings lengthened, he fell into a habit of starting about nine o'clock for a walk. The new feeble gas lights of the City contended inadequately with the long May twilight; the blinds of the cook-shops were drawn for the night, and, almost touching each other, stood the old Wren churches in darkness and six days' uselessness.

Being strongly a man of habit, Hargraves nearly always turned his steps down Cheapside and Paternoster Row, past the closed windows of its booksellers' shops, to St. Paul's Churchyard with the great dome of Paul himself solemn and sentinel in the moonlight. Sometimes, in Cheapside or the Churchyard, he could see into some house where the curtains were still undrawn, a room ruddy with lamp- or candle-light; a child's flaxen head over a book at the table; a smaller child with its curls against its mother's shoulder, and the father at ease after his work, leaning back in his stiff chair, pleased with himself, his wife, his children, and his home, which was his world. Hargraves used to linger as he passed; and once or twice had the weakness to retrace his steps, and pass again. Prosperous, well-clad, and most doggedly respectable, he understood for the first time in his life the feelings of the vagrant and the outcast.

He walked on towards London Bridge—it was

still new London Bridge in those days—and looked over the parapet at the dark and shining water, thinking; pursued his walk on the other side of the river, and coming home again through St. Paul's Churchyard, met often some jolly, trim, rosy-cheeked, little minor canon with a roll of music or his lady-wife under his arm, stepping briskly back to Amen Court after one of those cheerful, witty little dinners for which that Cathedral close was celebrated in the days of Sydney Smith, of "Ingoldsby" Barham, and of Mrs. Hughes.

It cannot be said Hargraves in the least desired admission for himself into that cosy and sociable professional circle; he would as soon have thought of desiring admission at Court, and would have been equally embarrassed and uncomfortable in either *milieu*. No, no! profession must keep to profession, and trade to trade. Once or twice, Leaf gave his junior partner a card for one of those great dinners which "lubricate business" in the City; when Hargraves, silently and thoroughly pleased to go, and dressed in his sober best, sat at the very far end of a very long table, in the humble position where the turtle is always cold and the speeches (an advantage, but he did not know it) inaudible.

Save dining, there were hardly any reputable amusements to be obtained, even in London. If there had been, Hargraves belonged to a class and age which seldom felt justified in spending money to entertain itself, and considered a theatre an

extravagance to be indulged in only on some great occasion, and to be remembered all one's life.

One afternoon, Jack Ward from the "Ship" dined in Gracechurch Street with his old neighbour. Hargraves had ordered almost everything he could think of for dinner—the table groaned with it all at once; and Mrs. Greenup, much more delighted to have company than the host himself, was always putting her head in at the door to see if fresh relays were wanted, and to overhear the conversation. It was nearly always Ward who was talking. One of the simplest and surest roads to popularity is to sit and listen to one's friends discoursing about themselves. Hargraves had that art by nature, and was a most capable and thoughtful listener.

Ward had his old easy swagger, fine coat and waistcoat, and plenty of self-confidence for the future; but Hargraves, who put his faith in facts and figures, and never in hopes and brocade waistcoats, gathered all the same that the "Ship" was doing less well than of yore, and, being perfectly human, found it much easier to like his old rival in consequence.

After dinner, over the wine which had flushed the guest's face, and loosed his tongue, he told his host he was engaged to be married; and, for the moment almost forgetting himself, and becoming conscious of Hargraves's thick, strong figure behind the decanters, and his thick, strong hand slowly fingering his glass, added—

“Dammy, Mat, why don’t you get married yourself?”

No one answers questions like this. But after Hargraves had seen Ship into a hackney coach—certainly more hilarious in spirits and more attached to Mat than he had found himself before dinner—the question came back to him: and the answer was that he literally knew no one, and never had known any one, in his own class and of his own time of life, whom it was possible he should marry. He stood for a few minutes at the wide window, fingering the blind-cord, and looking out into the ill-lit street.

The very next afternoon, after business, he went to a lawyer and drew up a fresh will—for he was fast becoming a man of substance—by which he left all his money to the three charities (he darkly mistrusted, not the *morale*, but the business capacity of all charities) which he thought would waste it least—save only a small legacy which, in default of better, he bequeathed to Ward himself.

He only shook off the subsequent despondency this action caused him, by extra hard work at the office, and the steady determination not to die till absolutely obliged.

When he first came to London he attended regularly, twice every Sunday, the church of St. Bene’t, in Gracechurch Street, long since demolished. But when he had rented his little one-seat pew under the north gallery for about two months, one Sunday a pale young man rose in the

pulpit and spoke quite tolerantly of Tractarianism, which, since 1833, had begun to agitate men's minds, and which Hargraves darkly and deeply hated in his bones and his blood. It is true, he had not studied the question, but "the less you know, the more you are sure"; and that instinct which made him, his old father, and many another John Bull Englishman of the time, fear Rome as they feared little else in this world, rose now in his heart and throat as a fierce mistrust of something yet more insidious than Rome—the wolf in sheep's clothing—the poison in fair fruit.

With a steady hand on his knee, and a direct truculent eye firmly fixed on the pale preacher, Hargraves listened to his timid, audacious suggestion that there were abuses in the Church—the neglected dust of centuries which might well be swept away.

Dust! Mat's angry blood travelled slowly to his forehead. Dust! This was the religion which his mother had taught him, which, through her and with her love, had taught his father, at an age when few men can learn, a cleaner life and a humbler heart.

When the young gentleman, grasping a tassel of his great cushion with each hand as if for support, further added that in the services, as at present rendered, the rubrics were set at naught, Hargraves's upward look, if looks could kill, would have slain him on the spot. He did not precisely know what a rubric was. But he perceived quite

clearly that the fool up there wished to change the familiar old simple service Hargraves had known and liked all his days; and if the great baldachino above that soft head had suddenly descended and crushed it, one person at least would have seen in the fall the just judgment of heaven.

He prayed angrily into his beaver hat at the close of the service. In the afternoon, instead of more church as usual, he wrote to the rector renouncing his sitting and saying why; and when on Monday the rector called to mollify the irate parishioner with tactful explanations, Hargraves listened to the explanations, did not answer any of them, and took a sitting at St. Clement's, Eastcheap.

St. Clement's was the church Leaf attended, Martin's Lane being in its parish. In those days,—before the doubtful benefit of the restoration of the sixties,—it was rather a darkly handsome place, with much black oak, a gallery, and that solid, ugly, and comfortable atmosphere characteristic of the architecture of Wren. At the south-east end sat the little girls from the Ward school, in their dark blue frocks and their white caps and tippets; the best pew was occupied by a prosperous brewer and his family—also of this parish; two portly brothers in the tea trade, rather like those delightfully impossible persons, the Cherryble Brothers, till one came to know them, were amply accommodated hard by; Leaf had a pew looking north; and to Hargraves was assigned a small one,



just in front of his principal, and opposite the great oak shelves where the loaves of bread—bought from the Benefaction of some long dead parishioner—stood waiting distribution to the poor after the service.

Hargraves was at first busy keeping a sharp eye on what the young man at St. Bene't's would have called the ritual; and finding it well conducted—that is, in nearly all points exactly what he was used to—resumed his prayers. Leaf's daughter was with her father; at least, Hargraves supposed the straight, slim figure in the white-ribboned straw bonnet was the daughter of whom he had heard; but as it is rude to turn round and stare, and as, after the service, the Leafs had their friends about them (which caused Hargraves, who had many of those instincts which are invidiously called the instincts of a gentleman, to walk away at once in the opposite direction), he hardly saw her.

A few days later, Leaf—against Hargraves's judgment, but he knew admirably how to say nothing—gave the counting-house a half holiday. At that period, almost all the great national monuments were closed to the nation. The National Gallery was building, not built; and on week-days even St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey were almost always tightly barred and bolted for fear the public should get in and enjoy them. So Hargraves, having tried the inhospitable doors of the Abbey, which he had never seen, went west-

ward to the fields which are now South Kensington. The spring was upon them; a light wind stirred the flowers and grasses and threw the scent of the May hedges across his face. He would have liked some one to share that pleasure. He had even got so far as wishing at times that it was etiquette for him to make a friend of the subordinate and uncongenial Atkins; but it was not, which settled it.

When he arrived home perfectly punctually to his dinner, on his table there was a strange thing—a note, left by hand. In it, Miss Charlotte Leaf, in a neat running writing, stated that she and her father would be very pleased to see Mr. Hargraves to dine on the morrow, and that their dinner-hour was five o'clock.

Mrs. Greenup, at the door, watched Matthew reading the missive, thirsting to be told what was in it. Hargraves, who, though she was weak and a woman, had begun at times even to hate her good-natured slovenliness and lazy curiosity, sternly resolved not to gratify it; ate his dinner in perfect silence; when Greenup, clearing away, said suggestively, "It's not many notes left by hand as I takes in for you, Mr. Hargraves?"—replied sternly "No, it is not"; and when she put the wine on the table, relented, and told her all.

After, he went straight to his bedroom, spread out his best clothes on the bed—not because he was vain, but because he was much too humble,—and even took his brand-new stock a trial trip by

dressing up in it before the glass,—reflecting resignedly that it was not only uncomfortable, which was to be expected, but enhanced the plainness of his features.

He was not under the least delusion regarding his features, or his social position. Over his tea, and with his Shakespeare lying open on his knee, he deeply cogitated as to what he would be expected to say and do. By the time he went to bed, he had arrived at the not uncommon position that, though he had much wished to be asked, he did not at all wish to go. He faintly hoped, as he walked to the office next day, that he would find Leaf a prey to the gout to which he was subject, and be put off.

In the afternoon, when he dressed in his new clothes, they made him feel stiff in mind; and when Mrs. Greenup, facetiously pleasant, said, "You're quite the thing, ain't you, Mr. Hargraves, to dine with a young lady?" became more horribly conscious of them than ever.

He walked, doggedly resigned—in boots which he noticed for the first time had a loud reverberating creak, and, it seemed to him, made the passers-by turn round and look at him—to Martin's Lane.

On the doorstep he would have been quite thankful for a drastic measure like an earthquake. But, instead, the door was opened with the unnatural promptitude with which such doors always open, and the hall engulfed him.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHOSEN

WHEN William Leaf lost his wife, to whom he was tenderly and deeply attached, the dismal necessity of marrying again was removed from him by the competent character of his daughter.

Charlotte was at the time only fourteen years old, very pretty, upright and slender, and with a bright and shrewd little understanding which, for all the practical purposes of life, is much more useful than a large, unwieldy one. She and Anna, the old servant and factotum, put their heads together, and Leaf found himself as well looked after and his home as judiciously ordered and managed as it had ever been. Charlotte, in fact, made him so happy that he even felt it was ungrateful to her to let his thoughts travel back, so often as they did, to her mother, who had really known less and insisted less on what was good for him than little Char did, and had been wont to come to him and confess mistakes (which indeed Char could not do, she so seldom made any) and

who perhaps had really believed in his wisdom more than Char, who was always most dutiful and respectful.

When she was fifteen, Charlotte sent herself to a boarding-school.

No doubt the Misses Pipson, like most of the other instructors of female youth of that day, taught everything "in the inverse ratio of its true importance." "Elegance of mind," and "the true delicacy of the female character," were phrases Charlotte remembered very often upon their lips: they were at once really religious and really worldly; and all the young ladies left them with a very strong impression at the back of their minds that Miss Pipson and Miss Clara would have been equally shocked if their pupils had failed to say their prayers, or to make advantageous marriages.

Charlotte learned just enough French and Italian to mis-translate the words of a song, and to render it highly desirable, should she go to France or Italy, which was most improbable, that she should speak her own language only. She was also nourished on Keith's *Use of the Globes*, and Mrs. Trimmer's *View of English History*, but as she sensibly saw at once that such learning had no useful effect on life, she arranged that it went in at one ear and out at the other. On the other hand, she learned to play and sing very charmingly, and those considerate good manners which our own age never teaches, and even seems vaguely

to mistrust as if they were incompatible with honesty and a good heart.

The first evening Charlotte dined with him as a grown-up young lady, William Leaf thought her slim, neat figure, smooth, parted hair, bright dark eyes, rose-petal colour, and long white neck the prettiest of possible things. Like himself, Charlotte had a quite unaccountable air of breeding. The Young Person in those days was expected to be meek and fluttering. Charlotte was modestly self-assured. She was further really high principled. Leaf and his wife were both religious people, with a religion which made them gentle with everybody. Charlotte had already a narrower and stricter code, and applied it quite as firmly to herself as to every one else. She applied it to old Anna, and the two little maids under her, and was withal so sensibly kind and judicious that they stayed on and liked her.

For two years now, she had escorted her father to church regularly twice every Sunday; once a week had firmly implanted Pinnock's Catechism in the breasts of the little white-capped Ward schoolgirls; had entertained Leaf's friends—fat City fathers, with much fatter wives, all kind and homely people and all talking about what they ate and how much things cost—at excellent good dinners, while now and then, in return, one of the lady-wives (whose husband was wholesale stationery near London Bridge) took Char to one of those fine balls given by a City company, where

the hospitality was as massive as the gold plate, the fiddlers were the finest in London, and the company merchant princes to a man.

Of course, Leaf gave Charlotte the prettiest possible dress for such an occasion, and Char, who had quite an eye to the fashion, had it made in the very latest. Her patrician little head looked charming above the ingénue white of the frock. She wore her one ornament—a round, fat gold locket on a velvet—with such an excellent air, it might have been a circlet of diamonds. It struck Leaf, coming from the card-room to watch the dancers, as a strange and lucky thing that such a pretty Charlotte was still *his* Charlotte, at the ripe age of two-and-twenty. His wife had been eighteen when he married her, and neither of them had found it too young.

When Hargraves, with the boots creaking so loudly they sounded to him like a band, was shown into the Leafs' white panelled drawing-room, he thought he had never seen so charming a room.

The June afternoon lit it through three large, deep windows giving on the street; there was a dark cabinet against a wall, filled with old china and the ornaments no one then left lying about exposed to dust and the heavy hands of housemaids; a shaft of sunshine played on the excessive polish of a neat little early Broadwood, very short in the keyboard, but on which young lady pianists executed, surely, as marvellous trills and runs

as can be done now with twice the space; on the high white mantelpiece stood a nymph under a glass shade clothed decently and sufficiently in her own hair; there were stiff chairs, in many coloured woolwork, a fearsome hard sofa *en suite*, and a carpet whose crude roses and camelias time had softened into colours admirable and harmonious,

Leaf's fine, cameo-like face was bent over a black satin stock and a book, in a chair by the table; and from the piano—Hargraves had heard her music distantly as he entered the house—Charlotte, in her second best white frock, the rose-petal colour deep on her cheeks, the little dark head borne high, as she always bore it, and her eyes bright, came forward, smiling, to greet the guest.

Her presence, as she put a slight, cool hand into his heavy one, only redoubled Hargraves's awful consciousness of the boots and his new clothes. Had the new coat—tight at Gracechurch Street—simply become easier in Martin's Lane through having split across the back, and had the stock really worked up from his spine to the roots of his hair? He spent the bad quarter of an hour before dinner at once trying to solve these conundrums and to be much more polite than any one need be, with the result that his manner assumed an awful gloom and gruffness, and Leaf thought how much pleasanter he was in the counting-house.

But at dinner he began to forget himself—



the first step towards enjoying the society of others.

The dining-room was as pleasant and homelier than the parlour, with its oval dining-table, bright with fine damask and silver, a great mahogany sideboard, where the dessert wines stood waiting in their heavy chased decanters and silver labels; on the wall two bad, dark pictures, in broad thick frames, of a Dutch interior and still life, and on the mantelpiece two bronze warriors capering towards the clock on bronze horses.

Charlotte carved the viands with ease and precision, ostensibly to save papa the trouble, but, of course, really because she felt she did it better. Old Anna handed the vegetables with her trembling old hands, and had her best violet cap ribbons tied round a dear, plain, much-concerned old face. Sometimes she made entries into the conversation, addressed audible instructions to the little maid, and when Charlotte was carving the duck said in a loud whisper, "Give the gentleman some more stuffing, Miss Char," which Charlotte took in quite good part, and did.

After Greenup's sloppy inefficiency, the order, the fresh cleanliness, the well-appointed table would of themselves alone have been delightful to Hargraves. The good wine of the firm, sipped in his usual steady moderation, warmed his heart. He had never in his life sat at table with a girl of Charlotte's class, much less with any young woman of her refinement and charm. He never looked

at her, but he felt them. He had no small talk at all, and when he really had something to say, said it to her father. They had drifted into politics by the removes; it pleased Hargraves that Miss Leaf instantly receded from this conversation; Charlotte, in fact, not only having been prudently instructed by the Pipsons that gentlemen do not approve of women in a sphere so exclusively manly, but having decided for herself that, as it made no personal difference to her whether the good Tories or the wicked Whigs ruled the kingdom, she need not concern herself with the subject.

When she went away after dessert—Matthew did not open the door for her, the rule being in his walk of life that what the able-bodied woman could obviously and painlessly do for herself she was to be left to do—he was almost at his ease.

As a politician, he was eminently what a person who agreed with his views would have called sound, and what a person who did not would have called bigoted.

Once or twice to-night Leaf's gentleness came up against his guest's "solid base of temperament."

Hargraves certainly wished above all things to please his host, but to do so by yielding his convictions was a method that did not occur to him; he maintained stoutly, with that obstinate ugly mouth tight set, that the bread and the Luddite riots should have been suppressed by force; that sedition is in all circumstances simply sedition,

which is crime. But the host perceived perhaps that his guest's heart was something softer than his words—that he had, very imperfectly, the fat selfishness of those who maintain "tout va bien, parce que tout va bien pour eux."

He certainly liked and respected his partner's determined mind, and, as he followed the square blue back and the black head, deep-set on the strong shoulders, out of the dining-room, perceived that he had here, morally as well as physically, the substantial man.

In the parlour, the piano candles were already lit, and presently, after neither too much nor too little pressing, Charlotte played and sang. Hargraves loved music. He had shed almost all his embarrassment now, and had forgotten the new coat, and the ubiquity of his large hands. He sat with them one on each knee, well forward in his chair, in the attitude habitual to him, enjoying himself and expecting to be touched.

Perhaps it was the imbecility of the fashionable song Charlotte had chosen—"Tell me, Mother, shall I chide him?" (for a number of inane actions, one to each verse), or the fact that Charlotte herself was so very pretty, from her neat little sandalled foot on the pedal to the crown of her smooth head, that she distracted his attention from her music—but he certainly was not moved by it, and mostly wanted her to sing again so that he could look at her, and say nothing.

When the tea came in, the excessive polish on

the old silver, Anna's entry with the great locked tortoise-shell tea-caddy, Leaf by the table with his calm handsome face, the background of panelled room, and the soft June evening falling behind the uncurtained windows, made a picture long remembered.

Having decided that ten was the psychological moment for his departure, Hargraves rose instantly the clock by the nymph began sounding that hour, and was so firm about going that he had made his adieu and was in the hall before it had finished striking.

The next Sunday, St. Clement's was hung in yards of the richest funereal black, and Hargraves had bidden Greenup sew a black band on his sleeve; which she did, making the needle rusty with immense, enjoyable tears for the loss of a stupid and short-tempered old gentleman she had never seen.

In Clement's Lane, after the service, Leaf and Charlotte, both habited in black, came up and talked with Hargraves about the new little girl Queen, and Charlotte said—her black bonnet made a white skin the whiter, and threw in beautiful contrast the carmine of lips and cheek—"We were to have a dinner-party next Thursday, Mr. Hargraves, but now shall only ask you to meet my cousins, the Rowes from Tottenham; and the hour is five o'clock as before," and then put her arm into her father's and looked back to nod to Matthew with a very pretty smile.

He walked alone in the South Kensington fields that afternoon—after the second instalment of church—and was not lonely. Thursday was but four days away. He had great natural trust in Providence, but he asked rather particularly every morning after Leaf's gout—not now in hopes, but for fear it might interfere with the festive arrangement.

On Thursday evening, as he reached Martin's Lane—in the best clothes which were no longer actively distressing—there was a shabby gig drawn up outside Leaf's house, and a tall young couple alighting from it.

Hargraves, not knowing the etiquette—if there is one—of such occasions, decided to pretend to see nothing, so he looked straight through the gig and its occupants as if they were invisible, and was not pleased when, about five minutes later in the drawing-room, Miss Leaf introduced him to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rowe, and Rowe said in a loud, lively voice, "Hallo! you're the man who cut us outside," and began immediately to be jolly and familiar.

Richard Rowe was the only son of a mother who had spoilt him, and a father who had done too much for him. He had inherited an excellent practice as a solicitor, in which a competent old clerk worked as hard as he could, and his master as little as he dared, and to which that master rode daily to the City, from a neat little property at the High Cross, Tottenham.

He was tall and good-looking, with a rather shifty blue eye and a jolly English complexion; perfectly kind-hearted and open-handed; had "a taste for neat wines and ankles"; sang very loud out of a fat prayer-book every Sunday morning at the Tottenham Parish Church, and a couple of excellent hunting songs after dinner of an evening.

Hargraves's first impression of Julia Rowe was that she was taller than any woman has need to be. Her deep intelligent eyes were just on a level with his own, and, Hargraves was quite aware, looked him up and down and came to a decision about him at once. She had a very handsome face, rather a hooked inquiring nose, a bunch of brown side curls on either temple, an excellent mind, and a very warm heart.

Hargraves took her in to dinner, and perhaps was not the more drawn to her, because, when he was still thinking what to say at the soup, she took the matter out of his hands and had plenty to say herself. By the fish, everybody naturally was discussing the new reign. Hargraves's whole nature inclined him so to distrust the rule of a woman—his history did not go back to Elizabeth, and Anne had been, he understood, buried in fat and stupidity—that he felt quite convinced that "those ill old men unwept," her uncles, must have been, merely from their sex, wiser and better rulers than their new little niece of eighteen could possibly be.

Besides, his whole conception of a woman was

founded on the generous error—if all error it be—that she was something to be tended and fought for; kept, at all costs, in “the warm, safe corner of the household fire, behind the heads of children”; that if she came into the arena to battle for herself—whether it be as ruler or worker—she must lose that ineffable something which made her, in the tenderest and dearest sense, womanly.

What he said was, shortly, and feeling it a good deal:

“A throne is not a fit place for a woman.”

Whereat Mrs. Rowe replied that to rule seemed to her to be the proper function of any ruler; the veins in Hargraves’s forehead began to swell; and Charlotte, rightly thinking that no topic in the world was worth pursuing if it threatened a guest with apoplexy, introduced the weather.

It may be said that in time, and in the face of a noble example, Hargraves did slowly admit that he had been wrong; deeply resented other people daring to feel the doubts he had strongly felt himself concerning her little Majesty, and served till the day of his death, with a complete and most obstinate fidelity, a Queen who indeed “amid the splendours of Empire based her throne upon the principles of domestic love.”

In the drawing-room, when the whist party was formed, Charlotte prudently arranged that Hargraves should be partner with her father; herself stood by, overlooking, with a slim hand on papa’s shoulder and a very pretty smile for Hargraves

when their side won; while Hargraves, attending solidly to the game, as he attended to everything he had in hand, was soothed by his consciousness of her.

The next event in his history was a pleasant drive with Leaf and his daughter, in the still warmth of a summer afternoon, to Tottenham, where they had a return dinner at the Rowses' in their pleasant shabby house at the High Cross, and had dessert under a great mulberry-tree on the lawn. There the talk unluckily turned on Napoleon, and Hargraves found himself measuring angry eyes with his hostess, who had a weakness for Napoleon's greatness, and the unfeminine audacity to know much more about him than Hargraves himself.

Leaf said pacifically, "Well, well, we can't all think alike"; the cheerful Rowe, "Dammy, Ju, it don't matter a curse what he was like now"; Miss Leaf thought the same, in a bowdlerised form, and Hargraves, swallowing his wrath and his wine—the hand holding his glass actually shook a little—was calmed by her calm sweetness as she went on serenely eating strawberries through the rumbles of the departing storm—the ideal woman who would never argue or know better.

Presently—how, Hargraves did not quite know—he found himself walking with her in the dark damp paths of the shady garden though her shoes were unqualified even for dew, and thus to walk



was scarcely *comme il faut*—while she talked, a slim whiteness at his side, of indifferent things.

He had no arts—and was not conscious of the lack of them—to turn the conversation to personal sentimental topics. But he did dimly realise to-night for the first time on what predestined paths his feet were set. In the midst of his thoughts, he heard her even tones telling him the Rowses (who had two little girls) were far from well off, and what a good manager Julia was. Matthew said, "Oh!" and when Char added, in apologetic voice, as if she felt herself to be taking away her cousin's character, that it was a pity Julia should have—opinions, Hargraves said, "A very great pity indeed!" feelingly.

As they turned towards the house, a bramble caught opportunely in Char's white frock, and that stupid old Mat undid it conscientiously, not seeking to improve the occasion, or even seeing one to improve. But he was so soothed by Char's being always in pleasant agreement with everything he said—balm indeed after Napoleon—that he scarcely resented a certain inquiring expression in the clever dark eyes Mrs. Rowe raised to them from her work as they returned to the drawing-room. She too had walked with a lover in a garden, and had come back less practical and calm.

As Hargraves let himself into his rooms that night, he found himself speculating on the satisfactoriness of the lively Rowe as a husband, rather than on the trend of events nearer his own life,

and would certainly have sternly vanquished any difficulties, if he had had them, in keeping his mind on his work in Martin's Lane next day.

By now, on Sundays at St. Clement's, he had been promoted to hand an alms-dish. When he caught sight of the slightly austere sweetness of Miss Leaf's church face, it greatly pleased him, and he quite divined that she was not trying to appear good and pious, but was naturally so.

It is, of course, always part of the man's creed that the woman should be religious, if only to relieve him of the necessity of being so himself. That was not Hargraves's case. His own steadiness of principle made him respect hers, and he strongly approved that no trifling ailments or excuses allowed her to stay away from church—or allowed her to allow her father to do so either.

One day, after service, he gathered his courage and invited Mr. and Miss Leaf to drink tea with him in Gracechurch Street at nine o'clock on the following evening.

Need one say that, before business on the Monday, Hargraves spent profusely on cakes, buns, and muffins at Wayte's, the famous confectioner of the City, almost next door to his own rooms, knowing all the time he was getting too much, and yet, somehow, not able to stop getting it? He dusted his sitting-room quite thoroughly with two of his bandana handkerchiefs on his return in the afternoon, and severely brushed his own clothes and hair.

Charlotte had in full measure that personal daintiness and neatness which is supposed to be, but is not, the birthright of the woman of the classes; Hargraves also liked in her, though it was to his own hindrance, that she saw the ill-swept condition of his carpet and the ultra profusion of the tea-table; and when she poured out the tea—which was as black as ink from hospitality—he gravely enjoyed her neat arrangement of the tea-tray. When Leaf—it was not, after all, so long since he had been young himself, and one time in his youth had been much in his thoughts of late—took down Mr. Rogers from the book-case and appeared to be reading him at the window, Charlotte, with her face very animated under the white straw bonnet, asked Hargraves a question or so about Mrs. Greenup's ineptitude; punctuated his answers with shrewd nods of her pretty head, and told him, as certain facts, a few ways in which the omnipotent genus landlady got the better of the helpless genus, man.

Hargraves, who had suspected such depredations, listened, greatly interested. Leaf laid Rogers aside and remembered a different courtship. But then Charlotte's mother had never been half so competent as Char!

Presently, as Char was tying the white bonnet strings, preparatory to departure, round her little pointed chin, and looking round at the horrible pictures which adorned the room, Hargraves thought of calling her attention to the pen-and-

ink sketch of the "Hope and Anchor," and telling her (he felt it behoved him to do so soon in so many explicit words) that this was his origin and his home; when she began talking about Lady Jones—the wife of a newly knighted alderman—for whose knighthood she (and Hargraves too) had a profound respect, and he dismissed the moment as unpropitious.

A week or two later, under the chaperonage of the Rowes, Hargraves and Charlotte attended a closely packed Fair in Hyde Park, and Julia, with her arm in her husband's, pinched it as a signal they should draw back and lose their charges. It is a fact that, until Hargraves had hurried Charlotte round to find her cousins for the third time, and heard Rowe say as they came up, "Confound 'em! Here they are again!" he did not perceive they were being lost on purpose.

By this time, he was sure he disliked and respected Julia, and liked the engaging Rowe without respecting him at all; was determined to like him, in fact—his idleness, good-nature, and a cheerful habit of borrowing from and lending to his friends on entirely insufficient guarantees were qualities extremely alien to Hargraves—because he was so much the opposite of his wife.

It is certain that when the cousins walked on in front, Hargraves had sternly to keep—and kept—in check a wink that was latent in Rowe's blue eye, and, perhaps, cheerful quips and innuendoes on the extreme tip of his tongue.

Then came another evening at Tottenham, and another drive back in the moonlight. Two or three times during the summer Hargraves accompanied Mr. and Miss Leaf to one of the pleasant gardens among the Kilburn meadows, where they all had tea in arbours provided for the purpose. He dined now as often as three times a week in Martin's Lane, where the fragrant orderliness of the house appealed to him more and more, and made the contrast of his own drearily dirty rooms the sharper.

Then too he was growing rich—steadily; and had nothing on which to spend his riches. His will still stood, and he often thought angrily—for he valued money as the man who has made every sixpence of it himself, and knows how hard each sixpence is to make, always values it—of his residuary legatees, the charities, managed by sentiment.

One day, when he arrived to dine with the Leafs, Leaf was not as usual in the drawing-room awaiting him; only Charlotte was there, looking out of the window. Hargraves went and stood by her, solid and square. He never could recollect in what stupid and blundering words he asked her to be his wife; but he must have asked her, for she accepted. He knew she was her serene, sweet self; that the soft bloom on her cheeks did not fade or deepen; that she looked up to him with the dark bright eyes and said, smiling, "If you really want me, Mr. Hargraves——"

Hargraves was quite aware that it was altogether incorrect for the lover to ask a young woman's consent to her marriage till he had asked her father's; but he was also aware that in this case Charlotte was, so to speak, the predominant partner, and that, though it was one of his firmest convictions that the woman should always be subservient to the man, here—only—he did not resent the predominance.

Still, it was his duty to say, "I will speak to your father this evening," and his duty to do it.

He was oppressively and depressingly silent at dinner; Charlotte and Leaf carried on a pleasant duologue which he did not hear. Char compassionately omitted the guava jelly and the fairy glass of port she always took at dessert, and the door had scarcely closed behind her when Hargraves came out in words, which he had invented at the fish and improved on at the pudding, with a solemn request for the hand of Miss Leaf.

Then he laid before Leaf a perfectly clear account of his money and its investment, the present yield and possible rise of all his securities, and sketched roughly the settlement he believed himself able to make on his wife, and her prospects in the event of his death. Leaf spoke to Hargraves of his own affairs, and of the portion he would leave his daughter, and Hargraves felt a disappointment—and was not ashamed to feel it—that it would be smaller than he had expected. But he was not marrying Charlotte for her money.

When Leaf said to him, "I can trust Char's happiness with you?" he answered in a gruff voice, "You can"; and the deep red of emotion came over the common face.

Presently Leaf summoned Anna to summon Char, and she came—not feigning any foolish embarrassment—the prettiest young creature, as cool without as Hargraves was deeply moved within. Leaf raised his glass to her, and said, "I drink to the happiness of you both, my dear."

When they went into the drawing-room everything was as usual. Char sang the tinkling ballad, and Hargraves expected to be moved, and was not. But he watched her dainty serenity with a more personal satisfaction than he had known before. When Anna came in with the tea-caddy, and Leaf told her the news as one of the family, she patted Hargraves's shoulder with her gnarled old hand, and said, "I *thought* you came for Miss Char, Mr. 'Argraves," and then she kissed Char and told her to be sure and be a good wife. After that Char made the tea, and Hargraves thought how pleasant it was to know she would make tea for him for ever.

He rose to leave precisely at ten o'clock as usual. Leaf was dozing in his chair, as the considerate father should. But Charlotte only put her hand into Matthew's for a moment and said, "Good-night, Mr. Hargraves," in her sweet, neat voice, and he went away.

If he had been the sort of fool to spend thirty-

one shillings and sixpence on the trash called fiction, and to believe it, he would have known he should have walked home, as on air, through a world transfigured, and with a heart bounding in his breast.

But he was not even aware that any of these ridiculous phenomena were, so to speak, expected of him.

He returned to Gracechurch Street, which looked exactly as usual, a soberly satisfied man.



## CHAPTER V

### ANTICIPATION

THE great news having reached her with a celerity which, in the epoch before steam, telegram, and telephone, was little short of miraculous, at 9 A.M. on the next morning, Mrs. Rowe's shabby chaise (driven by a hybrid retainer, who was a coachman to the waist and a gardener in the legs) drew up at the door of the Leafs' house, and Julia, with a very beautiful colour in her face and a heart full of warm affection and curiosity, broke in on Leaf and Charlotte at breakfast, to be the first to offer congratulations.

Leaf left shortly for the counting-house; and then Mrs. Rowe put off her great bonnet, and came and warmly kissed her cousin (who was a good deal fenced in by the urn and teapot in front of her), and expressed ardent wishes for Char's happiness.

Char smiled very prettily, said "Thank you," and began to make Julia some fresh tea.

Julia drew back a little, and at once entered on a string of shrewd and pertinent questions—when Char was to be married, and where; where she

was to live, and why; questions on the trousseau and the house linen; on Hargraves's prospects and relations; on the cake, the wedding breakfast, and the bridesmaids—to which Char returned succinct answers, as if she had had time to think them out, and where she did not wish to tell the truth evaded the wickedness of a lie with considerable adroitness.

Presently, Julia's keen eye catching sight of the ham, the conversation turned on its curing and boiling; the two charming heads examined the creature; Julia's dark curls nodded over it in answer to Char's sensible instructions; and then, as Mrs. Rowe was getting up to fetch her bonnet, she forgot the ham, put her arm round Char's waist, and said on a quick impulse, almost anxiously:

"You *are* very fond of him, aren't you, Char?"

Whereat Char, slightly detaching herself, replied precisely:

"I have the very greatest respect for Mr. Hargraves."

Julia said impulsively, "Oh, Char dear, *that* isn't any good!"

Char replied, "*I* should like to be able to respect my husband, Julia"; and because she was really kind, and wounded sometimes from a certain moral *bêtise*, but rarely from *malice prepense*, was sorry directly she saw the hurt colour flush into Julia's face.

As the chaise drove northwards through the streets, thronged with great waggons and coaches,

hackneys and cabriolets, Julia quite forgot to instruct Hooper (as she usually did, remembering that one half of him was floricultural) on the management of the traffic, and sat quite passive at his side, with her slender capable hands folded in her lap, and her eyes absent in thought.

That evening, after tea, Hargraves appeared in Martin's Lane with a strong brown-paper parcel and a resolution.

It was said of Coleridge that the moment anything assumed the shape of a duty he felt himself incapable of discharging it. Hargraves, in the same circumstances, found himself incapable of not doing so.

It had struck him the night before that he must now immediately and explicitly explain the lowliness of his origin to Leaf and Charlotte; and he had slept on that resolution, for it is anxiety, which is uncertainty, that keeps men tossing. If he was ashamed—and perhaps, for the first time, he was—of his humble early circumstances, he was ashamed to be ashamed; he had his mother's little portrait in a breast coat pocket; and when he had undone the sketch of the "Hope and Anchor," he laid the miniature by its side on the slippery drawing-room table, before Leaf and Charlotte, and said, pointing to the sketch, in a voice quite fierce and short:

"That was the inn at Greenwich where I was born. My father was a publican."

Whereat Charlotte, who had her arm through

Leaf's and her cheek against his shoulder—Char, whom the Pipsons had instructed not indeed to avoid snobbery, but at least to avoid showing it—said in her even tones:

“What a dear, pretty little hotel!”

And Hargraves, who felt it was no good doing a thing by halves, replied:

“It wasn't a hotel; it was a public-house.”

Leaf, holding up the sketch to see it better, said on a deeper note than usual:

“Well, Hargraves, a Great Man was born in an inn-stable”; and presently, after a close examination of the miniature, added, “A very charming face”; while Char, still looking over her father's shoulder, remarked how soon miniatures faded; which they do.

That, like the rest of the world, Charlotte would have liked her own and her husband's forebears to have been well-born and distinguished people, appeared to Hargraves perfectly natural; as it was.

After this, their courtship proceeded tranquilly on its way.

One day Hargraves took Charlotte to choose the ring in the jeweller's shop in St. Paul's Churchyard; and, setting out with the idea that he preferred pearls, they returned with a neat little circlet of emeralds and diamonds on Charlotte's finger, without her having been in the least forward or positive in the choice, and with Hargraves believing he had himself desired emeralds and diamonds from the first.

As they walked home, with the new ring on the little hand Charlotte had left ungloved on purpose that the public might enjoy its twinkle, he took the opportunity of solemnly stating to her their future financial position; the income they must begin on, and the larger one they might hope for in the future; and her charming dark eyes, constantly turning towards him under the white-ribboned bonnet, were very alert and intelligent. She had, of course, like most women in that day, been brought up to think that money falls like manna from heaven into banks, from which husbands and fathers rescue it by a mystery called (and then spelt) a check, in quantities decided entirely by their amiability, or want of it—but experience and her natural sense had taught her otherwise.

She greatly touched and pleased Hargraves—he liked charity in women, even a sentimental charity he would very much have despised in himself—by saying she would like to have a certain sum to put by for her orphan (an eruptive female orphan at the Ward School) for whose nurture Char's high principles had made her responsible.

She said, "Thank you very much, Mr. Hargraves," very prettily and warmly when they parted in Martin's Lane; the use of the formal name, being common in that formal day, did not strike Hargraves as chilling.

He returned to the counting-house—the buying

of the ring had occupied a midday hour taken, at Leaf's suggestion, from business—feeling calmly satisfied as Charlotte always left him; immersed himself in work at once and without difficulty; and was vexed that his absence had meant Leaf's entertaining a West End customer with contemporary politics, and letting him leave after giving but a small order, and without so much as introducing him to the new old madeira, bin seven.

Before very long, for there was no reason why the marriage should not take place shortly, Julia Rowe began constantly coming from Tottenham to chaperon house-hunting and furnishing expeditions. Hargraves, and most people then, sincerely respected Mrs. Grundy, and were far from regarding her as the *banale* old hypocrite they do now, so he did not resent Mrs. Rowe's accompanying them. But what he did resent was her knowing better than he did himself where he would like to live, and giving the casting vote as to the saucepans he was to pay for.

One day, in a furniture emporium off Tottenham Court Road, when a chair was being selected for Matthew's own special use, Mrs. Rowe had the impertinence—Hargraves and the shopman both mentally applied that word to her conduct—to test its springs by dropping into it suddenly and heavily, to catch it unawares.

The shopman said blandly, "Any springs will groan if you do that to them, madam."

Julia—it shall not be said winked—but at least

exchanged a movement of the eyelids with Char, and formed her lips silently into the words, "Not worth the money."

Whereat Hargraves at once and decisively closed with the shopman, and endured the chair's defective springs—bound to pretend, and pretending, them excellent—for the rest of his life.

There was another day, when they went, again escorted by Julia, to a pantehnicon in Holborn, where Hargraves had stored his possessions from the "Hope and Anchor." How odd they looked—the small, slippery horsehair suite, thick in grey dust, like friends, grown white-headed in one's long absence!—and the case of birds, surely become strangely smaller and insignificant since he had parted from it! He stood square and silent in front of it for a minute, remembering the splendid entrancement with which he had squeezed his infant button nose against the glass, and what firm resistance his dappled legs, ending in shiny shoes, had made when Sally, from the background, forcibly took him away.

He did not see the faint wrinkling of Char's aristocratic little nose as that strange odour of creatures imperfectly stuffed, assailed it; nor even hear her say that the case would be an awkward shape to fit into a room. But he somehow felt that Julia, standing by him, looked for a second not only at the birds, but into a past; and was so softened by that knowledge that when she observed, "I am sure you will fit it in somewhere,

Char; those houses in White Hart Lane are so commodious"—he did not retort that the house in White Hart Lane was not yet decided on, and perhaps never would be.

That night, when, after his dinner in Gracechurch Street, he was going through the list of necessaries for his and Char's new establishment, and the shorter list of objects they already possessed, his adding pencil stopped at the bird-case, and he saw again the little beery parlour, the old china in the cabinet, the sperm candles on the mantel-piece, and, sitting together on the sofa, his parents—his mother with her little arm through her husband's and her curls against his stout shoulder—watching a child at play. That in his thoughts of his own future there was no such picture, struck Hargraves for the first time to-night—suddenly, like an accusation.

It was sultry August weather, and over London had hung, for two or three days, the heavy pall of grey heat it calls summer.

Hargraves went to the window and drew a deep breath of the thick air, resumed his lists and additions, and went to bed, either with something intangible on his heart or conscience, or with a physical sense of impending thunderstorm. About three in the morning the storm broke, and he turned on a restless pillow, and slept—relieved.

About a week later—Leaf in the interval having generously made a wedding present of the solid house in White Hart Lane, Tottenham, to his



future son-in-law—Hargraves and Charlotte were driven by the Rowes, in their chaise, to that pleasing residential suburb, prudently armed with yard-measures and foot-rules, and discussing all the way the sizes of carpets and the advisability of adding a scullery.

As they alighted, Rowe took Julia by the arm—Julia was really thirsting to see that the measurements were correctly taken and to interpose advice—and said, with a large wink:

“Leave 'em alone, Ju; they can't really want to measure things”—a false and offensive observation which Hargraves overheard and resented.

So Rowe and Julia walked about the garden, arm-in-arm—Rowe was generally more in love with his wife than any one else, and in love with her only when she was the only woman available—while Hargraves and Char measured the double drawing-room for its carpet, and Hargraves did the sum of feet and costs in a pocket-book, standing by the mantelpiece. Presently, when they were on the floor, measuring again, his thick hand met Char's light one, and he held it close for a moment; and she looked up at him with a pretty, absent smile, as if he had disturbed her calculations, and was being, as it were, frivolous in business hours; so that he withdrew his hand, and they applied themselves afresh.

When they came into the garden—a pleasant square garden, with high red walls enclosing it—and were discussing the best way of choosing

fruit trees without showing the nurseryman they knew nothing about them, Rowe came up and tapped Hargraves's solid shoulder and said (certainly Rowe was a vulgar person):

"Quite a lovers' walk in that shrubbery there, my boy."

Hargraves disliked him for the moment more than he did Julia, who stood looking at them meditatively, while Char said, quite tranquilly and sensibly—it was not easy to embarrass her:

"I think, Mr. Hargraves, some of that shrubbery wants clearing out. Laurels do catch smuts so"; and Hargraves felt refreshed, as always, by her practical good sense.

By this time August was waning, and the marriage was fixed for September. There remained to be completed the purchase of the house in White Hart Lane; and Hargraves had to arrange that, during his fortnight's absence on his honeymoon, Atkins should not prey on his chief's good nature for holidays and privileges, and young Mason should make some other use of his head besides standing on it.

Then there were the settlements to be drawn up and signed, Rowe being, of course, the acting solicitor. Keep the money in the family, even if you don't like the family, rather than let it go to the sharks waiting gaping-mouthed for it outside, was a principle of which Hargraves thoroughly approved.

The night of the day the business was com-

pleted, as Rowe and Julia were walking in the warm still garden at the High Cross after dinner, Rowe slipped his easy arm about her waist, and said:

"I say, Ju, in spite of that glum old mug of Hargraves's, he must be head over ears with your little cousin; he's come out so uncommon strong in the money line!"

Julia said, "Has he?" In the dimness Rowe could not see her reflective face.

"Of course, she's a doosed pretty girl, and all that," the lively Richard went on, "but, dammy, I'd as soon make love to that statoo" (it was thus Rowe alluded to the lady clad solely but decently in her own hair) "on their drawing-room mantel-piece."

A few days later Miss Leaf went to spend a week at Tottenham, that she might have the assistance of her cousin in the matter of her trousseau.

Hargraves's two love-letters written in this absence still survive, and breathe the most earnest and unselfish consideration in every line of them; the second arranging carefully how Charlotte was to be met and brought home.

When she came, she told him how she had decided to take the advice, not of Julia, but of the great local light, Lady Jones, on the supreme question of the wedding frock itself; a decision Hargraves approved, as offering due homage to Lady Jones's title, and as administering—shall one say?—a smack in the face to Julia's interfer-

ence. Char's pretty red lips closed tightly as she told him the story. She was obstinate, with the perfectly amiable obstinacy of a really good woman to which rock is as clay in the hand of the potter.

The next day, she and Hargraves went, by themselves, to choose their wedding cake at the great Mr. Wayte's, having many times before pressed their dissimilar noses against his window, debating the question. Hargraves highly and respectably approved when to-day Char selected a cake ornamented with turtle-doves, in a suitable condition of bill and coo, and properly discarded that adorned with cupids, lacking even a sugar pair of drawers.

Very shortly Ward of the "Ship" came up to dine with Hargraves and receive instructions on the part of best man. If Hargraves had known any one else he would not have chosen his old friend and foe for that important rôle; but Ward, who naturally became the smarter the less well the "Ship" was doing (for it is only the rich and successful who dare to be shabby and modest) at least looked the part.

Hargraves bore the felicitations and jokes, and being clapped facetiously on the back—a form of congratulation he hated—with a prepared resignation. Before he passed the bottle a second time he warned Ward categorically of unsuitable (or too suitable) things he was to leave out of his speech at the breakfast; evincing so sound a knowledge of Ward's human nature that Ward, slightly

huffed, said, "Dammy, Mat, you'd better make a list of 'em"; to which Hargraves replied simply, "I have," and produced from a breast pocket a neat memorandum on a sheet of the blue foolscap. All the time there was an implication in Ward's manner which Hargraves instantly detected and resented, which suggested that he, Hargraves, was of course marrying to better himself pecuniarily; to climb, by means of his wife, to a higher social station. He was not! He would not have blamed any man for marrying for money—would not have blamed himself. But he had been only mildly disappointed when Leaf had shown himself less well-off than was supposed. One heard often of women marrying for a home—small blame to them when there were few honest means of earning one!—but a man, never; and to the conventional soul the unusual is the impossible.

When Ward had left, Hargraves sat in the waning evening at the disordered table, gazing, unseeing, at the half-empty decanter and the guest's pushed-back chair. The uneasiness he had had on the night of the storm was with him again. He felt like a man with some vague stain on his soul.

Just a week before the wedding-day, one evening at tea-time, Char received a letter—a letter, with posts rare and dear, was still mildly an excitement. Rowe and Julia were dining in the Lane, and Hargraves had come in after dinner.

With her inquiring nose coming forward a little,

and her handsome eyes noting the handwriting on the sheets, Julia said:

“I know who your letter is from, Char!”

And when Char had finished reading it, she looked up and said:

“Yes, Patty can come for the twentieth and stay on here afterwards with papa.”

And Hargraves asked, “Who is Patty?”

## CHAPTER VI

### "MY MIND TO ME A KINGDOM IS"

IN the East of England—in the land of long, resplendent autumns and tardy, nipping springs—there stood in the 'thirties, and stands practically unaltered still, the village of Great Farning.

On one side of it—with the eager and cutting blasts from the North Sea sweeping across it—lay the common; with a pond and a long procession of ducks waddling thereto; a desolate farm; a cottage; and an inn, with a drover's waggon always without, and the drover always within.

The village itself was a single street. Above it, the great grey church—with its fat grey tower and the neglected graveyard where a few sheep were the only gardeners—stood foursquare to all the winds that blew.

A quarter of a mile from the village, behind a belt of trees, stood the rectory—the usual rectory of the Eastern Counties, the house damp and too large, with a prolific, neglected garden and a paddock where the old mare who drew the dilapidated buggy (which was the rectory's sole means of

locomotion) ate thoughtfully, with a fanciful tail sweeping the grass.

David Wyatt was not even the rector of Great Farning. He was perpetual curate—perpetual in the most literal sense, for he came there as quite a young man—gentleman, scholar, dreamer—not without some vague and happy hopes of a happier future—and died there, old and not all unhappy, though scarcely one of those hopes had found realisation.

He had been married on his induction, and, in a year, was alone in the world with a little girl.

Patty always remembered him with a slight stooping figure, a melancholy, delicate eye, and—long before she could define them, if she ever defined them—great weakness of will and real strength of intellect and imagination.

In those days, such life and vigour as there was in the Church of England was with the Evangelical party; their fervent piety and sincerity have been seldom equalled and never exceeded; and Wyatt was not only no Evangelical, but—if he had not kept his opinions to himself and Patty—would have been called, in an epoch when “to be a Christian was to believe in the verbal inspiration of every word in the Bible,” dangerously Latitudinarian.

Few men of any school of religious opinion looked after church or parish in the busy—or busybodying—fashion in which they are looked after now.

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Great Farning Church had a damp, watery smell like a swimming bath. When the holes in the strip of carpet in the chancel actually tripped up Wyatt's shambling feet, the old clerk threw it away; and, after the summer, he swept on to the floor the corpses of bees which lay thick on the Table.

A flute and a bassoon formed the "music" in the gallery; and sometimes, a fiddle, when it was sober. But Patty and Elspeth, in the high rectory pew, listened to sermons, thoughtful, liberal, judicious; instinct with the natural religion of a very truthful nature and a gentle heart.

Elspeth—the good, simple, determined old woman to whose care Providence had committed the rectory and its inmates—taught little Patty her letters; Patty, seated on the great shining kitchen fender in the bare, poor, clean rectory kitchen.

Everything in the rectory was bare and poor. As long as Patty remembered, the wall paper was always curling off the living-room wall from old age; if Elspeth's short, practical fingers could not mend what was broken in the house, it went un-mended. Patty and her father slept under the thinnest old darned blankets; in cold weather, as a matter of course, added their cloaks and coats to keep themselves warm. Elspeth, in her own phrase, "looked at" the coals before she ordered them; little Patty's frocks were all her cousin Charlotte Leaf's castaways, and for Patty's soft

## My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is 101

little body Elspeth stitched the rough coarse undergarments of the cottage child.

The perpetual curate's salary was indeed but one hundred and fifty pounds a year; and some of that he "muddled out"—Elspeth's phrase again—in books and trash.

Debt was not horrible to his indolence; but it was to Elspeth, and she almost always kept him from it; inspired little Patty with some, but not all, of her own fear of it; and taught her to be thrifty, as the poor are thrifty—which means never so thrifty as the rich think they might be.

When Patty could read a story in one syllable out of the Primer, she came into the living-room and read it to her father, rubbing against his leg as she did so, as an ingratiating puppy rubs—a small, warm little person, with a coral on a soft fat neck, and a rag-doll Elspeth had made her, clasped thereto.

Patty put that doll to bed and raised it up in the morning; read it made-up stories from a book turned upside down before she could read; punished it and comforted it; hushed it to sleep with a lullaby; and was in every fibre of her—body and soul—woman, from first to last.

Presently, with the doll still clasped close, she used to sit on the rag hearthrug at her father's feet, and listen, with intent, dark blue eyes fixed on his face, while he read or quoted to her the great things of the immortals.

She loved that noble music long before she

could read a bar or a note of it; sometimes it was Greek—not only Greek to her—and—

The cothurns trod majestic  
Down the deep, iambic lines,  
And the rolling anapæstic  
Curled like vapour over shrines.

Soon her father undertook to give her daily regular lessons; and so he did, till he got tired of them, when he always moved back at once to his chair by the fire, and sat contemplating it, with his thin hand outspread to the blaze; and Patty at the table, with an inky forefinger and her auburn hair rumbled by the throes of composition, tried to condense her knowledge into an essay.

Wyatt had never heard of Trimmer, Pinnock, the Use of the Globes, or the Elegant Accomplishment; so poor Patty at seventeen knew nothing of that which it then solemnly behoved all young women to know; and had instead an excellent rough idea of the rise and fall of the great kingdoms of the world, of the men who fought their battles and framed their laws, and of their noble literatures.

It is true Wyatt did not know a word of any modern language; the unhappy Patty could not even say, "Yes," "No," "Pass the mustard," and count up to twenty in bad Italian like the accomplished Miss Leaf; but there are translations; and there was a rough bookcase on the wall of the living-room with a score of well-worn

## My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is 103

volumes—Milton and Bunyan; Selden, Sir Thomas Browne, Pepys, Boswell, Cowper, Swift, Shelley, Herbert, Coleridge, Molière, Corneille, *Don Quixote*, Gibbon's *Autobiography*, Hume's *History*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, and two thin, newish volumes, cheek by jowl, *The Poems of Two Brothers*, and *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*.

After all, if Wyatt and Patty were poor, they were rich too.

When the lessons were over, Patty went back to Elspeth and cooked or sewed. She turned and adapted Cousin Charlotte's old frocks till they became individual and her own, and set off, not ill, the young roundness of her figure, and lay softly against a white neck.

Elspeth thought Patty at seventeen a lovely creature; but she was not at all. Her curly hair was auburn in an age when red hair was considered not merely hideous, but disgraceful; and mothers and nurses diligently brushed out curls with wet brushes and bear's grease; and she had entirely irregular features when judges of female loveliness were excessively severe about symmetry. But she had, too, a complexion of milk and roses, and the very charm and interest of her face was that it was sometimes charming and sometimes plain, so that one never tired of looking at it, to see which. As for her character, it was like her father's, in that it was too afraid of the salutary hard things which brace and sting—stern truths, stern rules, stern judgments; only while Wyatt

was gently and indolently selfish, Patty was unselfish, from nature as from necessity; diligent, because some one must be; and, while she and her father both found the most merciful excuse for other people's failings, Patty alone did not expect them to find such excuses for her.

As for her intellect—and she had much—it was pre-eminently the woman's intellect. She understood—with her heart.

After their light lunch, on a tray, father and daughter went out, from habit and despite weather, for a walk. The searching easterly air which made the buds and shoots of the inclement spring blacken and shrink, and bit the sky into an ashen grey, blew Patty's old skirt about her, painted her cheeks with carmine, and fluttered Wyatt's grey hair.

Addison speaks of custom's wonderful efficiency in making everything pleasant to us. It is certain Patty and her father took the rigours of their climate equably, and found a continual pleasure in the walk on the wild and wind-swept common, with its long stretches of gorse, its dark belt of trees, and the western sun setting in gold and glory. They stood contemplating in silence—Nature never tires.

Sometimes, as they walked back, they entered the one shop—not to make purchases, for Elspeth did that; and even less with the idea of paying an improving parochial visit; but to see Mrs. Neeld as a friend. Wyatt sat and rested on a keg of

apples—he was always sincere, simple, and friendly—and Patty took the customers' high stool as a chair and the youngest Neeld on her lap; liked the grasp of its moist hand, and obliged it with her forefinger to help a tooth through. The rectory bill was a little in arrears, which neither Patty nor her father even remembered; and it was unfair, but a fact, that when in due course Wyatt was succeeded at Great Farning by an earnest young man who paid ready money for everything and worried himself into a nervous breakdown (a disease Wyatt had never heard of) because his parishioners would not come to church, Mrs. Neeld disliked what she called his "offish" ways; and the rest of the congregation, removing its pipe from one side of its mouth to the other, simply remarked, "Now, the old boy, he *was* a gentleman, *he was*."

After the walk, the pair invariably strolled round the rectory garden. Perhaps, if old Roger—he was sexton, clerk, and bellringer, as well as groom and gardener—had been looked after, it would not have been so wild and run to seed, and would have grown something besides the sort of flowers which appear whatever the gardener does or does not, and uneatable cabbages. But as Wyatt was supposed to order Roger, and, like all weak people, was afraid to relegate his powers lest he should lose them for ever (the strong know they need have no such fears), Roger did as he chose. And after all, whatever he neglected, the spring

came upon the place, with her exquisite, brief smiles and her quick showers of tears; her tender buddings and little sproutings from warm earth; and there was the yew, black against the old grey stone of the house; and, hard by, the soft green of a lilac trembling into leaf.

Wyatt admired every day in a few words or none; he had the faculty of quite shutting his eyes to the undesirable or neglected; was certainly of those who "first wish to be imposed on, and then are"; and to whatever Patty saw around her she had been born.

They dined at four.

Righteous old Elspeth cooked them cheap, coarse food, because they were not justified in having any other. Wyatt soon pushed back his plate, and comforted himself with the wine which even Elspeth then considered a necessity, not a luxury, on the barest civilised table, and in which Wyatt would have indulged, perhaps, even if he had thought it luxurious. He always, in fact, had what he wanted; but then, as the compassionate Patty said, when Elspeth was woefully cross after the arrival of a new book, he wanted so little! She put her soft young face coaxingly against the old woman's rough and wrinkled one; and Elspeth, pretending not to be mollified, pushed her away with, "You'll make a nice poor man's wife, you will!"

The ingenious Patty, seizing the chance to go off at a tangent, replied, "Very likely I shan't marry at all, Elspeth—you haven't."

Whereat Elspeth said, "*Mel!*" with great contempt, and went back to her cooking.

She punished the erring pair sometimes by providing them for dinner with a fearful, pale, tasteless piece of the boiled mutton she knew they both hated; and when the cover came off, Patty said, "You *horrid* old Elspeth!" Wyatt pushed back his plate with a feeble disgust, and the tyrant—the most ruthless tyrant is the one who loves you—hoped against knowledge she had, in her own phrase, "learned them a lesson."

Of course, there was not often the wicked, delicious excitement of a new book to untie and turn about and dip into, in turns, by the light of the candles on the mantelpiece, while Elspeth was clearing the table, muttering to herself the while—like a storm rumbling in the distance.

But it was a custom, when she had left, to move the table nearer the fire, put the two candles on it, and for Wyatt to read aloud, here and there where he chose, from the book in his hand, while listening Patty sat curled up on the rag hearthrug stitching; and then—becoming absorbed—idle, with her small, roughened hands on the work in her lap. Or sometimes she read to her father. It was always she who read the long, solemn, improving things—like the *Decline and Fall*; and even in her girlish voice the rhythm of the sonorous phrases rose and fell in the bare room like the sound of the sea. There were not three rectories in England then which would have permitted the



reading, much less the impartial discussion, of the great chapters on Christianity.

Wyatt always felt it his duty to his cloth and Patty's innocence to murmur, "You see that Gibbon was unfortunately an infidel."

But when, many years later, Huxley divided the clergy into three classes—"an immense body who are ignorant and speak out; a small proportion who know and are silent; and a minute minority who know and speak according to their knowledge"—all Patty's instincts told her that her father had been of the "small proportion."

Sometimes the frozen blasts of April—April, so much deadlier than December in this bleak east—blew hither and thither the leaping flames of the fire, and made the room so cruelly cold and draughty that Wyatt put on his ancient coat, and Patty wrapped herself in the old plaid from the hall. But they were quite fatalistic over discomforts, as the poor always are; it is the rich who resent and try to prevent them.

At eight, Patty put by Gibbon to make the tea; and, after, it was the poets' hour. Neither father nor daughter had ever been anywhere or seen anything; but they looked up with Shelley into the "vault of blue Italian day," or wandered in dim "faery fields"—grey and mystic, like a Corot picture—with Spenser.

None of the books in the shelf had ever been forbidden to Patty. Perhaps there was a dim idea at the back of Wyatt's mind that he had once

## My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is 109

made a rule that *Othello* and *Clarissa* must wait till she was twenty; and when he saw the auburn head of seventeen deep down in the old brown Richardson, he did say feebly, "I don't know that that is quite the book for a young woman": and Patty, not hearing, replied, "What, papa?" absently, and was at once full fathom deep in it again.

When he caught sight of their Shakespeare open at *Othello* on her lap, as she sat as usual on the hearthrug, he leaned back in his chair, recalling, and broke into that matchless love-speech—

"Oh, my soul's joy!

If after every tempest come such calms,  
May the winds blow till they have wakened death!"

and the booming wind in the chimney made fitting accompaniment; Wyatt's thin hand dropped inert on the wooden arm of his chair, and Patty saw that his mind was lost in dreams.

When the candles burnt too low to see any more, the students went to bed. It would have been no use ringing for Elspeth and more candles, because she would have stoutly refused to bring them.

Once, when she was quite a little girl, Patty went to stay, after measles, with Elspeth's sister at Lowestoft; and that was the only visit which, in her childhood, she ever paid. A stronger and more decided character than hers might have

resented the fact that her father never tried to make her young life less lonely; just as a more decided character, knowing—as Patty always vaguely knew—that there would be no provision for her after his death, would have anxiously thought of making one.

But the pair of them had that strange fatalism which keeps the poor poor, and contented. "God will provide" so often means that man does not bother to.

About five times a year, the rectory evenings were broken by a dinner party at the local squire's, six miles distant, whither Patty and her father repaired in their antique buggy, driven by Roger—who could drive just as much or little as he could garden or clean the church—and drawn by the horse with the tail—mildly surprised at being withdrawn from his paddock.

There was seldom a better bred or a better educated gentleman at the squire's table than David Wyatt; but, of course, he had none of the art *se faire valoir*, and sat and listened to self-assertive mediocrity—just turning his wineglass absently in his hand—too generous, too modest, and too indolent to convict it of ignorance.

Patty wore one of Cousin Charlotte's frocks; the white tucker lay softly on her young neck; and the transparency of her complexion, the changes in her irregular and most intelligent face, *did* partly make up for the auburn in the curls.

When the talk turned on literature—it did not

## My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is 111

very often so turn in those days at the tables of the country squirearchy—she was at least a hundred times more at home than the other women, but too sensitive to the social atmosphere round her to say very much, for fear of reflecting on those who had nothing to say at all.

John Stuart Mill regretted to Taine the excessive sympathy of Taine's countrywomen—as even making them *banale* and frivolous when they believed *que les hommes attendent la banalité et la frivolité*; and that was Patty's snare and charm.

In the drawing-room afterwards, she was only conscious of the enormity of her own ignorance as compared with the talents of young women who sang to harp and piano; inquired, in part and chorus, "Who would o'er the Downs so Free?" and had themselves beaded all the slippery footstools and cushions in the house.

When the men came in for tea, the kindly old squire, who had had Patty on his left at a dinner lasting precisely two hours and three quarters, and had spent most of it talking to her about his outdoor sports and concerns, of which Patty (and all women) knew nothing, found his way to her side again. When she said good-bye, and thanked him for a pleasant evening, he said, "No, no, my dear, thank *you* for one," and did not at all realise he had found it pleasant because she had spent it entirely in listening to him.

When father and daughter had gone—a simple, shabby, well-bred pair—the squire's lady, lifting

a substantial silk to warm a substantial foot at her blazing fire, said daringly, "Well, I do think they might take a little from the bishops' stipends and add it to some of these poor curates!"

A guest agreed, and the master, perceiving that if you began mulcting bishops you would hardly stop at squires, said, "That would never do, my dear Anne, never!" and resolved within himself to ride over to Great Farning with a brace of pheasants the next morning.

Going home in the buggy—as Roger was leading the horse at a walking pace in the ruts across the wind-swept moor, and a wild moon peeped from hurrying clouds—Wyatt said mildly, "The young fellow opposite did not know always what he was talking about."

Patty said, "Always, papa?" and laughed a little; and then both feeling their criticism had been something savage, fell back on the general pleasantness of the party.

It lasted them as a topic and a mild excitement till they were asked again; when Patty put on precisely the same old frock, and tied precisely the same black ribbon round her fair neck, and brushed, as usual, Wyatt's antique evening garments, and they set forth—as unwitting as a couple of babes or innocents that hospitality demands its *quid pro quo*; or believing, rightly, they were asked because the squire and squires were kindly disposed and wanted them.

One dark November, about two years before

## My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is 113

the advent of Hargraves, William Leaf, having business in Ipswich, felt it his duty to post on from thence and visit his wife's cousins at Great Farning. He had never seen them; but not only had Char's frocks for some years descended to Patty, but every Christmas Martin's Lane had despatched a fat hamper to the rectory.

All the same, Leaf had had no idea of the nakedness of the land to which he was coming. He perceived that neither Wyatt nor Patty knew how naked it was; that the coarseness of their fare did not strike them; and that they went to bed quite contentedly and naturally as soon as the two appointed candles burnt low.

As the City, by reputation, never read, they were too well-bred even to allude to their readings, and of an evening sat—Patty in her old attitude, with the work idle on her lap and the fire throwing redder lights on her curls, and Wyatt with his thin white hand dropping on the arm of his chair—both listening attentively to Leaf's stories of the great London Wyatt had seen once and Patty never.

Leaf had at first thought Patty rather plain—he had Char in his mind; of course, and, manlike, confused prettiness with pretty clothes. But when he had taken a bleak walk with her, and her deep-bonneted face, full of charm and change, looked up into his, and he found himself telling her something of his early days and of his wife—to Char, he scarcely ever mentioned her mother—

he changed his opinion. Going to bed that evening in a perfectly polar bedroom—he had to coax the tails of the meagre bed-curtains into acting as an extra blanket for his feet—he consoled himself by the consideration that some one certainly would solve her destiny by not being able to help himself marrying her.

Patty, whose sympathies made her far quicker than the keenest barren intellect will make anybody, saw for the first time in Leaf's eyes that church and service at Great Farning were both, to put it mildly, dilapidated. On the Sunday morning he was there, she noted, also for the first time, as possibly indecorous, that when the autumn rain began dripping from the roof, the farmer's wife in the best pew raised a huge gingham umbrella to protect her bonnet, and prayed to the end of the service beneath that canopy.

Patty had hitherto never expected there would be anybody in church but a few old smock-frock gaffers, sent there to be out of the way while the Sunday dinner was cooking; some noisy children playing on the free benches, devotees from the same reason; and a couple or so who found the lanes cold for courting, and that it advanced as well in church.

But to-day she felt the guest's feelings; and when her father came to one of the long pauses in his sermon—during which his mind went dreaming away—herself caught a little of Leaf's embarrassment. A few yellow sheets of the discourse

fluttered from the preacher's feeble fingers to the aisle; he proceeded quite calmly without them; and, walking home through the damply mouldering churchyard, observed to his companions, with a faint twinkle in his dim eye—humour was not one of the good gifts the gods had denied himself or Patty—that he had noticed it was only the great masterpieces that were not much improved by being reduced by one half.

That afternoon, at dinner, the contrast between Leaf's neat and upright figure and her father's stooping, indolent one struck at Patty's heart. The men were exactly the same age, and Wyatt looked the older by twenty years, and of his fine understanding had made not half so good a use as Leaf of his ordinary capacities.

In Patty, weakness and failure roused only profound compassion—not the stirring protest which sometimes (perhaps not often) braces them to be strong. She went up to her father, put her hand on his shoulder, poured him out another glass of port, arranged the thin silver streak of hair on the top of his old head to greater advantage, and thought, "Poor old papa!" with a sigh she stifled.

Leaf left the next morning, carrying with him an impression of bleak wind, wide moor, and a dead level of monotony in life and landscape; regretting that there was that in old Wyatt, with his gentle, old, bleared, blue eye, which made it impossible to offer him money; so that Leaf had to content



himself with bountifully tipping Elspeth and, deciding to add to the usual Christmas hamper a munificent present of wine.

The next spring Patty arrived by coach—with the shabbiest of forlorn carpet-bags, tied round its shapeless middle with a piece of string, and containing her entire wardrobe—to pay a visit in Martin's Lane and make the acquaintance of Cousin Charlotte.

The girls were friends at once. It was not difficult to be a friend of Patty's, and Charlotte was really benevolent, and liked the rôle of giver. She was quite shocked at the meanness of Patty's wardrobe, and to remedy it—and the meanness of the appearance the new cousin would present to Char's friends, of whose opinion she was properly mindful—the two girls spent delicious mornings in those delightful old shops in St. Paul's Churchyard, shopping for such lovely new, crisp, shining things as Patty had never seen in her life.

Considering a silk, through the blandishing persuasions of the shopman, with her white chin in her hand and her eyes very attentive under the old coal-scuttle bonnet, she was quite aware that Charlotte was decking her out partly that she need not be ashamed of her—and not proud nor resentful at the discovery.

In the house, too, Char was most practical in showing Patty how she managed, and in advancing many excellent economical plans, which looked impeccable on paper, and which Elspeth and

Patty had already failed to turn into practice. Patty did not say much; she took it as a matter of course that the rich should find it amusing to save money, because it was not the weary necessity of their lives.

What she liked was to drink in deep breaths of the solid ease and comfort of the house; for a little wholly to forget Great Farning—mean and cold; to sit and watch Char in her pretty new frocks and trim, shiny slippers; to listen to Char playing and singing in the evening, not feeling exactly that she played and sang very well, but deeply admiring her for having the accomplishments at all.

Char, having of course learned deportment and dancing at the Pipsons', one evening in the drawing-room performed a quadrille with a chair as a partner and a perfect, calm accuracy, for the benefit of Patty, sitting on the floor by the fire, profoundly interested.

Leaf came in as his daughter was gravely linking the chain with no one at all—it was the irrepressible Steele who said he had seen an Englishwoman dance a jig with the severity of a vestal virgin—and he thought they made a pretty picture. Patty's presence seemed to him to fill the room with an indefinable something it had missed; it was as if the old china jar in the corner had been empty, and now had in it rose-leaves, whose intangible sweetness was in all the air.

Patty always noticed when Cousin William looked tired—he was, indeed, feeling his work too

heavy for him and already contemplating a partner.

Char said afterwards, very good-humouredly, "Don't ask papa if he is tired, Patty; it makes him think he is," and Patty laughed and said, "Oh, but perhaps he is, Char; and thinks so too."

He was not too tired to show the visitor—with Char, of course, accompanying—all the sights of the town; and Patty—always very easily and simply pleased, all pleasures being fresh to her—was taken to see the mails starting from the old General Post Office at 8 A.M., with the guards in their fine scarlet coats and the horses in their sleek ones; and presently beheld from a window the thrilling rowdiness of a by-election in the simple days when democracy's vote was bribed from it with money, instead of with flattery and promises, and men were coarser, and perhaps honester, in the expression of all their passions. !

Once, after a long wet day indoors, Charlotte beguiled the evening after dinner by reading aloud some of the contents of the "Keepsakes" and "Annuals" which, beautifully bound, ornamented the drawing-room table.

Leaf was dozing gently after about the first two pages of "The Knight of Padua," a Tale, by a Lady of Title; and Patty, needle-working, did not say anything when Charlotte, shutting the volume, expressed admiration; and then, perceiving silence does not always give consent, added, in a tone of respectful finality, that Lady Jones

had recommended the work in question and that "Annuals" were very fashionable.

Fashion and Lady Joneses never made any impression on Patty; and she was too unworldly to appreciate the deep impression they make on the world.

The next day she was taken, at her request, to a bookseller's in Paternoster Row, where she chose, as a fairing for her father, a certain slim volume which had appeared in '35, and whose creeping fame had reached a few ears willing to hear—the *Paracelsus* of Robert Browning.

Miss Leaf had tried to influence Patty to spend the very little money in the very little shabby netted purse more sensibly, by saying, "Wouldn't Cousin David be as pleased with something *useful*, Patty?"

And Patty's eyes began to laugh a little; and she said, "He doesn't like useful things, Char; he likes books."

One advantage of selfishness in one's relatives is that one knows one can never be unconsciously taking advantage of them.

Wyatt had liked Patty to come to London, not thinking, having never tried, he should so much miss her. When he did miss her, and had conquered his indolence sufficiently to write a letter, he hinted—gently melancholic—at his loneliness; and Patty, who certainly had in her something of the character of the ideal woman of the great Jean Jacques, who, as he put it with his inimitable

*naïveté*, exists "to please, to be useful to Us . . . to console Us, to render Our lives easy and agreeable," came down to Leaf with the letter in her hand, and said sadly that she ought to go.

Leaf had become really fond of her, and would miss the auburn head with the blue ribbon across it bent over her work at the table by his side of an evening, her quick look-up, and her compassionate understanding of what he did not say.

But fathers—even selfish ones—have prior claims; and—well, well! there was another thought, that might take shape some day, at the back of his mind.

When she got home—coach as far as Ipswich and then a free journey in a kindly farmer's cart—and she had sat in the kitchen with Elspeth and described how indescribably lovely and new everything was in the house in Martin's Lane, Elspeth said, pointing a thumb over her shoulder at the door to indicate her master, "I think he fails a bit."

Patty did not think so at all the first night, when Wyatt roused himself to listen to all she had to tell, and himself recalled his own one visit to London—more clearly and correctly than if its events were yesterday's. In her absence, he had taken an extra glass or two of port after dinner, for company; to the long reliance on wine in place of the coarse food he hardly ate, the modern temperance reformer might have ascribed some of his feebleness of body and the apathy of the fine mind—and been but partly right.

## My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is 121

In the evening they undid *Paracelsus*; and if Wyatt did not at all realise the self-sacrifice the gift had demanded of the giver, he thanked her by listening—attentive and considering—to him who, if he “touched” sometimes “a jarring lyre” at first, beat out his magic music all the same.

Then Patty told him of the “Annuals” and their sloppy verses, and of “The Knight of Padua,” and they laughed; and Wyatt’s merciful old voice added that people must have different tastes, and sometimes even the “Keepsakes” and “Forget-me-nots” had a gem like *Eugene Aram* cast on their rubbish heaps.

In Patty’s absence, a piece of the roof of the church had fallen and lit on the font; and when, fresh from the decorum of St. Clement’s, Eastcheap, she suggested to her father that something should be done, he said, faintly irritable, that of course something would be done, and that meanwhile Roger managed very well—which he had done, at a baptism, by resourcefully borrowing a pie-dish from the rectory.

Still, after her father’s death, Patty found among his papers—and, being Patty, wept a little, fearing she had been hard—a letter in which, in his scholarly hand and the easy and courtly phraseology which was natural to him, Wyatt had begun to ask—for the letter, characteristically, was but begun—the attention of the rector, cherishing a perpetual asthma at Bournemouth, to the matter.

After that, Patty—as well as Elspeth—noticed

that Wyatt was feebler than usual. But as he was always feeble and there was no money for unnecessary doctors—even rich people then seldom demanded medical advice till they came out in boils or spots, and plenty of them—she put the thought from her.

One night, when she had been reading, and her father apparently listening to the *Adonais*, in which Shelley “dipped his pen in consuming fire” to destroy the destroyers of Keats, he looked up and said, apropos of nothing, in a tremulous old voice, that he often reproached himself, as he sat there, that he had made no sort of provision for her after his death. Patty got up and arranged the soft, scant white hair on his old head, in her old fashion; answered fervently, from the great deeps of her compassion, “Oh, it doesn’t matter, papa!” and saw, even as she spoke, his thoughts had travelled away from her.

Of the eternal mysteries which wrap our fleeting life, which had occupied, as she knew very well, many of his thoughts, he never spoke now. To the last, she sat and read aloud to him as usual, and he seemed to listen and then seemed to dream; and the great wind boomed in the chimney and stirred the threadbare curtains at the windows, and the fire sank into grey ashes, and the appointed candles burnt to their sockets.

Poor Patty was still numb with the shock of her first great grief—it is only the first that surprises, after that, we know—when the old squire

rode over and patted her on the shoulder, and, growing very red all over his out-of-door face, pressed a couple of five-pound notes into her hand; and then Leaf came and made all kindly and sensible arrangements. He would hardly have known this passive and listless Patty, with her white tear-washed face, without one trace of prettiness in it, for the girl with the lamp-light falling softly on her hair, who had sat stitching at his side—only three months ago.

He thought it would be best she should go, in the first instance, to her only relative, Miss Wyatt, her father's younger, sterner sister in Norwich.

"After that," says Leaf in his kind voice, "we'll see."

Patty agreed indifferently, being at the stage when she felt nothing mattered, and being so new to sorrow that she thought nothing would ever matter again.

On her last evening at the rectory, she left Leaf to drink his tea alone in the living-room, and came and sat in the kitchen, and put her young arm round Elspeth's capacious, wooden waist, and leaned her head—physically weary with mental grief—on the broad old shoulder.

For Elspeth was waiting, as for the competent woman in her class there always waits, a doddering old relative to see to; and, taking up the duty unquestioningly, she calculated cheerfully that he would not last too long to prevent her coming to nurse Patty's children.



Patty laughed a little at that; and Elspeth nodded her old head in satisfaction. She knew, though she could not have expressed the knowledge, that natural griefs heal naturally, and that her master, whom she had loved, but hardly respected, was not of the strong souls whose footsteps echo for ever in the lives of those they leave behind them.

The next day Leaf took Patty to Norwich. A raw wind blew over Great Farning, chilling the bones and the soul, and in the garden was a wet and timid spring and old Roger, leaning on the spade he seldom used, sniffing slightly and rubbing his nose with the back of his hand.

The old mare in the paddock just looked up, for sugar, when Patty said good-bye to her; and went on eating.

Wyatt had always shunned plain and positive women. As his sister Ellen came under that heading, helped by fate he had not seen her for years.

Once, when she was a girl, she had written a novel, which was drowned on its way to an American publisher; and perhaps the author would hardly have been human if she had not felt increasingly sure as time went on of the merits of the book. She shared so much of her brother's inertness that she never attempted to write another; only, while he would have talked with a gentle regret of the lost work—and been too just a critic to think it a masterpiece—Ellen never spoke of it again.

When her old home was broken up, she had to face the world on a most miserable pittance; and though accomplished and clever, in that age there were few outlets for a woman's talents, and she lacked the character to find them. She was an agreeable conversationalist and something more than an agreeable musician; but, even with these gifts, a plain, single woman—much too grimly poor to offer return hospitality—is seldom wanted socially. So she ate out alone a warm and generous heart; gave—marvellously, there was so little to give—out of her wretched income; was sour of speech and increasingly bigoted and narrow in opinion.

Leaf's kindness was greatly distressed to leave Patty, with her pitiful, absent air and her small, white face hedged about with the ugliness of a huge mourning bonnet, in that mean, stern house with so unprepossessing a relative.

But then Leaf did not see the strong warmth of the embrace in which Ellen Wyatt presently folded her niece—out of sheer kindness and pity, for she had but once seen her before—nor all the little preparations she had made, and the little comforts she had managed to buy, to make Patty at home.

In a few days, Patty's pity and sorrow had another object than herself; in a few more, she had heard the story of the novel, and found—oh, Patty!—its characterisation life-like. After all, it was poor Aunt Ellen's ewe-lamb, and not the

business of any niece to discover black on its white wool!

Thus, compassionate Patty said she shared many other opinions she did not; when Aunt Ellen, in her aggressively infallible manner, complained of Patty's curls, she brushed them back, and made a slight grimace at her reflection in the dark glass when she had finished.

In three months she had learned to be really attached to her aunt as well as to feel sorry for her; and it was not until William Leaf's letter arrived in which he asked Patty to come to Martin's Lane for Charlotte's wedding and to stay on there permanently, to look after him and his home in Charlotte's place, that she quite knew how imprisoning the prim, dull house had seemed, nor how much she wanted to live, as her aunt had never lived, to feel the warm, human joys—ay, if they brought with them tears, pangs, and bitterness!

She tried to keep the delight out of her too expressive face as Aunt Ellen handed Leaf's neat letter back to her and said hoarsely, "I should like to have kept you, Patty, but I can hardly keep myself;" and perhaps Patty did nearly say, being very touched and grateful, that she would like to have stayed.

Certainly, her warm sympathy and affection, when she bade her aunt good-bye at last, left Ellen Wyatt with the satisfaction of being able to think, and to say to her friends—with a certain

My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is 127

self-complacency which, poor soul! had survived the humiliations of her fate and was one of its best alleviations,—“My niece would greatly have preferred, if it could have been managed, to live with me.”

## CHAPTER VII

### “A YOUNG MAN MARRIED——”

PATTY arrived in Martin's Lane on the 17th of September, and spent the morning of the 18th chiefly in store-cupboards with Charlotte, being instructed on the jams and sauces which would, or would not, improve by keeping.

Miss Leaf, inspecting a top shelf from the summit of the housemaid's steps, looked down with a gallipot in her hand to say, “Papa is sure to *ask* for damson cheese, Patty; but it is not at all good for him.”

Patty said, “Poor Cousin William! That was why Eve wanted the apple”; and Char's charming face stiffened into a slight disapproval of the Scriptural allusion.

Then she introduced Patty to sheets and tablecloths and lists of the same, and, in a stage-whisper in the linen-press, to the shortcomings of the cook and housemaid.

Patty greatly felt her own unworthiness when, in old Anna's presence, Charlotte explained to her the household keys; said rather wistfully to Anna, “I am not nearly so experienced as my cousin, but

I will do my best"; and knew Char was quite right when she observed in a low voice (Anna was conveniently deaf), "You should never let a servant know that you don't know everything."

Then the girls went into Charlotte's bedroom, and Patty was shown all the pretty, neat, suitable things which formed Charlotte's admirably chosen trousseau—from the little silk wedding-gown and the white poke beaver bonnet ("my best next winter," says foreseeing Charlotte) to the little, plain, beautifully stitched nightgowns lying in tiers in a press.

Patty knelt down by it to admire their stitchery; said, "How *wonderful* it must all seem, Char!" and Char, who was engaged at the moment with some slight defect in the make of one of the garments, but who had been taught at the Pipsons' that the delicate young female is always suitably embarrassed at the thought of her marriage, replied, "Oh, yes, it does," and went on to the shelf with the bonnets.

Envy had no part in Patty's nature, and the reflection that she only had one cheap black frock, which she had made with her own untaught fingers at Aunt Ellen's, in which to bedeck herself for the gathering of the clans which was to take place that evening, did not trouble her.

When she dressed in the pompous, comfortable, old-fashioned spare bedroom, she did heave one small regretful sigh of feminine vanity at the inadequacy of her appearance; and the two tall

candles which made darkness visible in the great mirror did not show her how the poor black frock threw up the dead whiteness of her skin and the exquisiteness of the quick rose-colour on her cheeks. She tied a black ribbon into the rebellious curls; did not like it; and left it, reflecting that as all eyes would be on the pretty bride, the subordinates could not much matter; considered how fortunate she was to be taking Char's place; and, finding Leaf alone in the drawing-room, standing on the hearth thoughtfully contemplating the fire ornament, put her round arm into his, pressed it, and thanked him warmly.

In the Fatherland, a wedding-eve means a vast gathering of solid, flaxen-headed young women and worthy, spectacled young men—cousins to the remotest degree of the acting parties; and in France a large reunion—at once gay and businesslike—at an hotel. But in Martin's Lane in 1837—Leaf himself being the only child of only children, and Matthew practically without kith or kin—the meeting resolved itself into a small, admirably considered dinner party, which included Lady Jones and the Rowes, the Rector of St. Clement's, and a comfortable aldermanic couple from Bishops-gate; would have included the best man, only Hargraves objected; and had offered to include Hargraves's Shropshire uncle, Hargraves undertaking positively, when he and Char decided to send the invitation, that the uncle would refuse it.

Hargraves was among the last to arrive, and

the pretty candle-lit drawing-room seemed confusingly full of guests. He was not afraid of his best clothes now—he had lived of late in a world where he was often in them—but he gloomily regarded the events of to-night and to-morrow as severe test-cases of his British phlegm and impassibility, and as offering not only every opportunity for him to make a fool of himself, but the facetious every opportunity to make a fool of him.

It was, therefore, with lips set and compressed and a dogged eye, which looked through her without seeing her, that Hargraves was introduced to Patty, and to Mrs. Clayton—the alderman's lady from Bishopsgate, the dearest of fat, simple, kindly old persons,—and at dinner, which occurred at once, found himself between her and Charlotte.

Char was her composed and charming self; signalling calmly to the new parlourmaid—a stranger, for the occasion only—with her eye when necessary, but not when unnecessary; replying with suitable blushes to Mr. Clayton's compliments; managing to taste the dishes quite critically; and evincing a *savoir faire* which Hargraves profoundly admired and envied.

He and Mrs. Clayton had tacitly agreed by the fish that they had no more to say to each other, and went on with their dinners. Patty was on Hargraves's side of the table, between Rowe and Leaf, and so invisible to him. Lady Jones—a terrible woman with a bird of paradise in her turban and a high nose, powdered—laid down the



law to her host in a large, dominant voice throughout dinner, and having inspected Patty through her glasses and decided at once that she was poor and insignificant—a class of person Lady Jones took credit to herself for despising—ignored her.

Patty knew quite well that no one in the room had the breadth of education or the refinement of birth of her old father, in his shabby clothes, green with years, in the barren room at Great Farning; but she knew, and had inherited, the gentleness with which he would have judged his neighbours, and the modesty with which he would have effaced himself.

Rowe might have attempted a flirtation with her, but he was engrossed just then in a passing *tendresse* for the on-coming little governess of a neighbour's children at Tottenham; and he had felt from the first there was something in Patty which would have made such an attempt vain.

Julia, handsome and self-confident, was deeply engaged in conversation with the Rector, an urbane person who had come for the dinner and the wines and had not expected clever talk—especially in a woman—in such a house, and thought it rather interrupted the primary business of dining.

At dessert, when everybody had taken wine with everybody else, Lady Jones said, in a pause, in her loud, hard voice, "You will miss your daughter, Mr. Leaf!"

Leaf said, very kindly, putting his hand over Patty's, "I have a new one coming to take care

of me, ma'am"; and, far down the table, it struck Hargraves that the parting with Charlotte would cost her father less than one might have thought.

There was the usual immense evening, punctuated, after the entrance of the men into the drawing-room, with the usual thoroughly substantial tea; and then music. Patty, sitting in the shadow by the dark cabinet which held the wax flowers Charlotte's cool, clever fingers had fashioned, thought Julia at the harp, with her tall white figure, her beautiful head, and her large and shapely white hand on the strings, was like Music incarnate; and when she sang, heard through the song the strong feelings and passions of which her determined face gave little indication and her sharply inquisitive manner, none.

Hargraves greatly disliked that the Muse—so to speak—of a person he disliked should have any power over him; but he had found on several previous occasions that there was a danger of it, so he sat very upright, declining to be touched; neither joined, nor pretended to, in the requests that Mrs. Rowe would sing again; and when she had, at once asked Char for "Ladybird, Ladybird, fly away home."

As Charlotte was finding the song, some of her music fell, and Patty saw it was Rowe who came to the rescue, and that Charlotte's lover had no *petits soins*, and merely sat on steadily, perhaps wishing he had.

When Lady Jones had had enough of the party

from her own point of view, she rose and said decidedly, "Well, we must not keep all you good people from your beds!"

The other guests followed her example—Matthew outstaying the rest, for a few minutes only, to make some final arrangements.

As he was letting himself out of the hall door, Charlotte, quite contrary to her usual custom, ran downstairs after him. It was only to say would Mr. Hargraves remind Wayte, the confectioner, of a dish Charlotte had that day decided to add to the wedding breakfast? But the dark quietness of the Lane, and some half-defined sensation that such endearments had been strangely few, made Hargraves suddenly draw the slight white figure to him and kiss the cheek like the petal of a pink rose. Charlotte received the caress quite calmly, as if such things were inevitable, though, between sensible people like ourselves, a little foolish; said, "You *won't* forget, Mr. Hargraves, will you?" and Hargraves, walking home to the accompaniment of the regular tramp of his own steps in the silent streets, felt the autumn evening cold.

He had still his books to pack, for, as it would be rude to read on a honeymoon, they were to go straight to Tottenham.

Mrs. Greenup tapped at the door presently to say good-night, and "'Ow I shall miss you, Mr. 'Argraves!" with a sudden sniff. If Hargraves had first liked her rooms as home, and then hated

their slovenliness and hers, he had come, as we often do, to tolerate what he disliked, and then to dislike it so little as to feel sorry to leave it; while to-night he was grateful for even her slatternly sympathy, and when she said sentimentally—she was odiously sentimental—“You *must* be 'appy, Mr. 'Argraves, marrying such a 'andsome young lady!” bore her, in perfect silence.

He must be! He read—standing as usual—his regular verses of Scripture—he was now in Hosea—perhaps half-hoping to find some special light to his paths. He did not. He added not a petition nor a word to the brief, childish prayers he had prayed all his life; and of the set vow he had ever, like Dr. Johnson, a sort of fear—“a vow is a horrible thing, it is a snare for sin.” But not the less, deeply, in the deep heart of him, he meant that night that come weal, come woe, he would do his duty.

There was a sort of decent excitement in St. Clement's Church the next day. The bridegroom, instead of being the embarrassed superfluity he is on most such occasions, arrived early on the scene—extremely spruce in his blue swallow-tails and handsome waistcoat—and effectively prevented the tremendous old dowagers, with fruit and feathers and flowers all waving together in their monstrosities of bonnets, from determinedly seizing better places than had been allotted to them.

The best man had been so much drilled and

warned that he was sulky, and lolled, cross and handsome, in a front pew, vindictively doing nothing. Hargraves thought it behoved him to keep a strict eye on Mason, whose head—apparently innocent—appeared over the gallery; and kept it—as on the interfering old pew-opener, and, in a lesser degree, on the Rector; Hargraves's opinion of the bulk of mankind being not unlike that of a later philosopher—"mostly fools."

It wanted but a few minutes to the appointed hour, and the square dark church was nearly full and humming cheerfully with conversation, when Rowe and Julia came in, and with them, Patty.

She had put off the black frock for a nun-like grey one; but beneath her bonnet the warmth of cheeks and lips and the quick intelligence of the whole irregular face were not nun-like at all. Hitherto, Hargraves had simply been glad some one was coming to take Charlotte's place with Leaf—he knew how to pity solitude—but now he found an instant's leisure from his pre-occupations to be glad the new daughter was Patty.

Nothing in the world could have been more charming than Charlotte Leaf being married.

Let no woman think the strong emotions aid beauty, or that she can trust herself to feel becomingly; for the only tears which leave the face fair leave the heart calm.

Charlotte was just like an exquisite little piece of Dresden china come to demure life and breathing. The straight, stiff white frock, the firm

poke-bonnet, the smooth bands of the dark hair, the perfection of the neat features, the pink of the cheeks, were as dainty as porcelain; and the little, competent hand on Leaf's arm—he was moved and nervous—was as deliciously cool.

Talking over the events of the day that evening, his bride astonished Hargraves by the accurate observations she had taken of all the bonnets and behaviours; for he knew, too, she had attended to the service and taken her vows religiously.

He was himself inwardly nervous, and so presented the stolidly aggressive appearance of one who would die rather than reveal the slightest feeling of any description. The purist who wants the plain speaking of the Marriage Service softened to his taste, and the parson who thinks he can do better, as admonisher, than St. Paul, were not yet; and would have had short shrift from this bridegroom.

He took both vows and advice *verbatim* and *ad literatim*, and if he had not deeply believed himself able so to take them, would not have taken them at all.

As he came down the aisle with his bride on his arm, he met Julia's eyes, with some softness and shadow in them which he vaguely resented as expressive of doubt it was nobody's business to feel. Then there was the pleasant press and bustle of getting away; and he remembered afterwards that Char, sitting by his side on the very brief drive, said, "Well, I think so far it has gone

very well!" almost as if it had been a play of which they had been spectators.

A wedding breakfast was not then the comparatively light and casual thing it became before its demise.

The few guests,—in this case about five-and-twenty,—who had each given a thoroughly handsome, solid present and were dressed in thoroughly handsome, solid clothes, were come to enjoy themselves, also solidly and thoroughly. The breakfast itself was in long courses, of which turtle soup was the first; and the last of an elaboration the degenerate modern mind, which understands by dessert a pear or an almond, cannot even conceive. The good wine of the house—cooled in great coolers at the side of the room—flowed with an old-fashioned abundance; and the speeches and the cake-cutting were things to be anticipated, not with horror or ennui, but with real pleasure.

Hargraves's speech—he had, of course, written it out and learned it by heart—was such a triumph of *banalité*, saying all the usual things in the most perfectly approved way and never diverging for a second into nature or originality, that Lady Jones expressed the opinion of all the comfortable old City fathers and mothers in the room when she said in her authoritative, loud tones (perhaps meant to be *sotto voce*), "William Leaf is lucky to get such a son-in-law!"

Poor Mrs. Clayton bethought her, with a stout sigh, of *her* son-in-law, who had gambled away

twenty thousand pounds on 'Change in three weeks and returned to his wife with that news which, in romance only, wives receive with tearful joy as an unexpectedly excellent opportunity of proving their devotion.

Rowe, who had taken wine with all the old ladies, said *he* had found marriage a doosed good institution—and looked gallantly across to Julia over the glass in his hand.

Ward's speech, from which Hargraves's warnings had successfully eliminated every scrap of life and spirit, left the speaker sulkier than ever—feeling how apt and witty he might have been and was not allowed to be; and his ill-temper only thawed gradually under the influence of many toasts.

Leaf, at the head of his table, was a quietly courteous host; and, near him, Patty listened and enjoyed herself in silence.

Char had had for some time a practical eye on the clock between the capering warriors on the mantelpiece, and when she went upstairs to change her frock, Patty went too.

Old Anna was in the room—so upset by the emotions of the day and the memories of another such day more than a quarter of a century before that she handed all the wrong things for the bride's toilette, and was so exasperatingly deaf, saying, "What, dear?" perpetually in her feeble old voice, that at last Patty—kneeling on the floor packing a carpet-bag—looked up to say, "Char, I should shake her!"



But Char's good temper and high sense of duty perhaps prevented her even desiring to shake anybody; and Anna's old, ugly, tear-wet face, as she kissed Mrs. Hargraves a very warm good-bye, met the sweetest unruffled one.

When the two girls had left the room, Patty ran back, put her arm round the old woman's waist,—she was standing in the midst of the bridal finery, with a useless box of ribbons in her hand, quite bewildered,—pushed her gently into an armchair, and said, "You stay there, you silly old thing, till I get you a glass of wine"; and did it.

When she came down again, the narrow hall was full of people and farewells.

Patty guessed by the extra stolidity and impassiveness of Hargraves's face that he was feeling a good deal; when he bade good-bye to Leaf, he looked across to her as if he said, "You look after him." The chaise—the bridal pair were to post to Brighton—was at the door. Char's beaver bonnet and neat fawn pelisse seemed to become no more disarranged than Char herself by people pressing on and kissing her, and fools throwing rice and slippers. As Hargraves was following her into the chaise, he heard Ward—who had had enough wine to endow him with Dutch courage and the inspiring remembrance that that glum beast, Hargraves, was, after all, only the son of an unsuccessful rival—say to Patty, who was next to him, with a lightsome air of vulgar gallantry, "Your turn next, miss, I suppose!"

As the carriage drove away, Hargraves was so deeply annoyed with him that he was, for the moment, perfectly unconscious of the pretty little wife at his side, and did not hear a word she said.

Patty and Leaf dined *tête-à-tête* that evening, rather flatly, on the cold meats which had hotly furnished forth the wedding breakfast; Patty feeling rather sad, because she was sympathetic; and Leaf, perhaps, because, like Anna, he had many memories.

The neat drawing-room struck rather cold in the misty autumn evening; Leaf wished it were the time for fires; and Patty—who had never seen any reason not to have a fire if the excellent one that you could not pay for the coals were absent—said boldly, “Oh, Cousin William, why shouldn’t you have one?” And presently, when the awful ornamentation of white fluff and green tinsel, which always clothed fireplaces until October, was removed, they sat watching the wood catch and crackle, and enjoying the pleasant sounds and growing warmth.

After a long silence, Patty said, “I do hope Char will be happy!”

And after another, William Leaf answered, “And Hargraves too. He is a good man, and a very warm-hearted one.”

For the first time Patty fell to considering Charlotte’s husband independently—for himself.

Eighty years ago, Brighton was agreeably free

from most of its present distressing improvements; was a brisk, cheery, little seaport; with the Dieppe steam-packets starting twice a day from the Chain Pier, then at its zenith: Hove being a pleasant walk across fields, and Preston an entirely detached little village, with its dark old church hidden among noble trees.

Hargraves had taken rooms a few doors from the "Ship" hotel, above a famous lace-shop, which still existed not so very many years ago. From the drawing-room apartments, the bridal pair could admire, not only the ocean and the bustle of coaches and company arriving at or leaving the "Ship," but also the new gas-lamps—then an impressive novelty—twinkling very feebly, at immense intervals, on the front.

Half an hour after their arrival, the practical Charlotte had interviewed the landlady, and begun to turn the short-frocked, gaping girl, who was to wait upon them, into an accomplished servant.

The first few days Mr. and Mrs. Hargraves spent quite *en vacances*; listened to the band on the Chain Pier; saw there the last exhibition of fireworks of the season; and several times beheld, with that strange pleasure which is inherent in our fallen nature, the seasick passengers disembarking from the packets in the days when crossing the Channel was by no means the light affliction of an hour or two it is now.

Every one then considered the Pavilion "a

noble and faultless building"; and Mr. and Mrs. Hargraves were by no means ahead of their age in taste. They went on to admire the great bronze statue of George IV. by Chantry in the Steyne; and when they passed Mrs. Fitzherbert's house—her marriage certificate being still undiscovered in Coutts's Bank — Char, true to the teaching of the Pipsons, had to pretend she had never heard of the lady.

Hargraves looked at her a little doubtfully; but he himself—the most straight and honest of human beings—always defended, and believed he really admired, Mrs. Fitzherbert's husband; though if he had met him, without his kingly label, he would certainly have esteemed him a very mean scoundrel indeed.

The next day there was a fine catch of mackerel on the beach, selling to the bystanders at a price so temptingly low that it was really a pity Mrs. Hargraves's eye to appearances could not see herself walking back to their rooms, in the view of all Brighton, with a husband carrying a couple of damp fish by a string through their gills.

Hargraves—though strictly conventional—would have done that for her, or anything. He was, in all points, a husband as unselfish and considerate as Charlotte had known he would be; Mrs. Hargraves, in fact, having so little and so happy experience of life that she very likely thought all through it that all men were as gentle

and considerate to women as she always found the two she had to deal with.

On her side, she took up her wifely duties conscientiously and at once.

Hargraves read the *Times* to her of an evening in their pleasant upper room; and at first thought it was the engrossing nature of her needlework which prevented her paying much attention to the items—the not unexciting items of a year of angry distress and poverty, with Chartism and the agitation against the Corn Laws struggling into fierce existence; abroad, crowns toppling from their royal heads; and everywhere, in Church and State, the painful birth of new ideas, and the hard dying of the old.

Toryism being, as ever, as rooted into Hargraves's soul as the fossil into the rock, he presently expressed some peculiarly determined prejudice—it was, in fact, on the proposed establishment of a cheaper postage, which he, like the then postmaster-general and many another, thought a wild and visionary scheme, chiefly calculated "to burst the walls of the post-office."

Char, contemplating her embroidery with her elegant little head on one side, agreed instantly and completely, and Hargraves perceived for the first of many hundred times that he was being humoured; and that the greatest questions—the destinies of nations and empires, the magnificent discoveries of genius, as the noblest beauties of literature and art—were absolutely nothing at all

to this little person unless they actually and directly affected her own little destiny.

She was quite as agreeable and good-natured when Matthew fell silent as when he read aloud.

His eyes scanned the columns of the little *Times* up and down, not much seeing them. A person who would have taken a different view on the Penny Post, and been a less determined Protectionist than himself, would very likely only have been aggressive about it, and more *au fait* on the subject than oneself, which would have been highly objectionable and Julia-like. And a vision crossed Hargraves's mind of his old father, with his back to the fire, spelling out the news of the day, and the little mother looking up from her work, now and again, with a wise and gentle comment.

He said, *à propos* of nothing, so far as he knew, "Do you think your father will be happy with your cousin?"

Char, instantly interested, put down the needle-work, and answered, "Oh, yes, quite *happy*. Only Patty will indulge him too much—just as she indulged Cousin David. He was dreadfully lazy. Old people *do* want a little bracing!"

And Hargraves, contemplating his thick boots, said slowly, "I suppose they do."

After tea that evening, Mrs. Hargraves drew on a half-sheet of paper a plan, not architectural, but sensible, of their new drawing-room, and assigned—considering, with her pencil at her lips—a place for the piano, at present in Martin's Lane.

"Papa really means to give it me," said Char. "It was my mother's."

Hargraves answered, very gruffly, deep down in his throat, for he was aware he was, so to speak, voicing a sentiment: "Then I should think he would miss it. We had better not have it."

Mrs. Hargraves replied in her clear tones: "I don't think you can miss what you never use"—a highly disputable statement; and Hargraves, looking at the determined little line of her mouth, saw that the piano was as good as moved.

He saw much else, more significant, in his wife's face and nature before their three weeks' honeymoon had ended; for though he understood very slowly, he understood most things at last.

That she gave him duty and affection—already the affection that comes from a community of interests and presently would give him the affection, which can be a strong thing, of habit,—he acknowledged, very gratefully. If she gave no more, who should blame her? Hargraves knew soon she had no more to give—either to himself or to any other; that she had so admirably done her duty by her father, because it was her duty, and not at the compelling decrees of love.

Love! In his courtship, Hargraves had thought even his Shakespeare, in his descriptions of young passion, had taken the poet's licence, and lied.

A week before they were to leave Brighton, the weather changed to storms of wind and rain, and as Char could not, even if she would, have gone

out in her dear little boots of blue merino and her unpractical pelisses, Hargraves tramped by himself two or three times a day into the teeth of the wet and buffeting gale.

He was not without the sensation, as Char rang the bell cheerfully for his Wellingtons and recommended for his wear a thick neck-shawl, that she was glad to get rid of him; she was making out linen and kitchen lists for her house, which involved figures at an epoch when mathematics were so lightly imparted to the young female that some one merely existing and breathing in the same room was enough to upset fatally her addition and subtraction.

He was glad to get out into the free, wild air, and turned his steps—it was a solitary walk in those days—to Rottingdean. On the cliffs the gale was shouting and tearing, and the sea boomed below. One could think better in the great spaces than in the neat room, with Char adding at the table; and physical discomfort is often an antidote to mental.

Perhaps it was but that the honeymoon waned!

Except as a bulwark against invasion and the contamination of foreign frivolity, it cannot be said that, as an element, Hargraves had ever had any particular affection for the sea. He had been away from work three weeks, the longest holiday he had ever taken in his life, and he should certainly be glad to get back to Martin's Lane. Well, that was as it should be! He tried to think



over, methodically, a few of the business items in Leaf's letter of this morning. But he was aware that he considered them only, as it were, with the front of his mind, and the back had still its deeper preoccupations.

Yet, had he ever really thought that Charlotte did or would love him in the sense in which his mother had loved his father? Had he not always known that his wife could put her own convenient, but perfectly conscientious, interpretations on her duties and on the marriage service? just as a thousand, or a hundred thousand, persons can each honestly subscribe to a common creed, because really each one of them believes only his own individual version of it?

The rain beat heavily into his face as he made his way along the barren cliffs, and he had to fight the wind with his strong body to get along at all. The indefinite disturbance of conscience, the vague insistent questioning, which he had felt in his courtship, were still with him when he turned homewards; but something quieted.

Char was admirably to the fore with dry clothes, a hot drink, and no reproaches for the manly stupidity of staying out so long and getting his clothes so wet.

That night, as they sat listening to the storm,—at least Hargraves was listening to it, and Char still busy adding things, now by an excellent patent system of her own,—a wiser and tenderer observer than she was might have noticed an

extra, gruff gentleness in old Mat's manner—the manner less of one who will forgive than of him who has himself to be forgiven.

In the dawn of the next morning, when the angry gale had sobbed itself into peace, Hargraves woke, and, sitting up in the four-poster, in the tall, tasselled nightcap which by no means beautified his plain face, looked down in the white light at the little wife at his side. Char's nightcap, with its close, dainty frills, was very becoming; and sleep became her too, as it does a baby—she was so fresh and young, and slept so softly. They had not been married a month and Hargraves was already used to her nearness and could look at her as if her prettiness had been that of a picture—without one stir of the pulses.

Now, he knew why. As she felt for him, so he for her; and his the greater blame, if blame there was, for he might have dearly cared—and she never could. To know at last what it was that had long weighed on his soul, relieved him, as confession—which Hargraves, and every Englishman of his type and age, held in the deep horror of a great suspicion—relieves the Catholic.

Well, then, since he could not keep one vow, he must keep the others the better: honour and cherish her the more deeply; give in, when his obstinate soul would like to stand out; and be more than common gentle—because it is only lovers who “kiss again with tears.”

He lay awake till the daylight had fully come—thinking; then slept.

The next morning, directly after breakfast, he took Charlotte into the lace shop below, and there solemnly purchased for her a delicate pelerine of blonde, which she had been trying not to want ever since she first saw it tempting her in the window, and to the purchase of which Matthew's commercial instincts had objected as (*a*) unproductive, (*b*) superfluous, (*c*) perishable.

Then, while she was packing—it was their last day at Brighton—he went alone to an emporium in the King's Road and purchased a central ornament for the dining-table, composed of a tall *tazza* whereon rested, in wax, a group of autumn fruits, the topmost pear having a deliciously realistic hole in it, as if eaten by a wasp. The price of this monstrosity was thirty-five shillings and sixpence; and Hargraves paid it like a man. When he told Char of the present, she popped on shawl and bonnet, and ran round to the shop to see it and impress on the vendor the best way of packing it; and returning, to find Mat inserting his large boots into his bag, left on the top of his head a nice little kiss of gratitude, neither more nor less sentimental than she might, under the same circumstances, have given her father.

They had a delightful journey home by stage. Char was naturally looking forward to her own house, and personal intimacy with the three dozen glass-cloths, twelve roller towels, and abundant

sheets and tablecloths which she had been so diligently enumerating. That Hargraves was not the careless idler—like Dick Rowe, for instance—who felt no call to return to work, pleased her own thrifty mind. When on the coach he looked across her indignantly, thinking she was being crushed, at the passenger on her other side,—who was certainly fatter than any person on a public conveyance has a right to be,—she again congratulated her own perspicacity in the choice of a husband; and yet again approved Matthew, and herself for selecting him, when, in London, she beheld him resolutely determined to see with his own eyes every item of their luggage withdrawn from the boot before he tipped guard or coachman.

They posted from town to Tottenham, through country villages and fields.

Charlotte talked pleasantly most of the time, yet not too much, and Hargraves assented; until the chaise turned from the winding High Street into White Hart Lane, when, looking up at him, she became conscious he was listening no longer. Miss Clara Pipson having given her on her marriage a little book in white vellum wherein the young wife was provided with instructions on the management of a taciturn husband, she applied them. Her pretty face continued to smile very good-temperedly, and Hargraves sat like a solid rock at her side, looking straight in front of him, with his steady black eyes, at nothing visible.

So they came home.

## CHAPTER VIII

### REALISATION

ONLY by much effort of imagination will he who, for his sins, knows the Tottenham of to-day, be able to realise the little, snug, calm, pleasant Tottenham, with its winding High Street; its neat Greens, surrounded by solid houses; its farms and paddocks; its worthy, well-to-do society, and its country air of far-famed salubrity, in which Matthew and Charlotte Hargraves began their new life.

Tottenham is what this age calls five miles from London; and that more richly described as "eligible on account of its contiguity to the metropolis"; and even in 1837 was frankly a suburb, though of the highest order.

Many a pious, rich Quaker retired here to enjoy a substantial fortune, made, perhaps, in one of the great banks in Threadneedle Street; and the honourable man of business, who had almost, but not quite, done his work, rode hence twice a week to the City; or demeaned himself—public conveyances still slightly demeaned—to the useful little omnibus that daily plied townwards between hedges and fields.

The bill for the new Northern and Eastern Railway was, indeed, already passed; and the good merchants, stamping their feet to keep warmth in them as they awaited the omnibus on a brisk morning, told each other that Tottenham would see changes when it came. Indeed, it did; more sweeping and drastic, surely, than most of those comfortable, slow-moving prophets suspected.

Dominating the village there stood, as there still stands, Bruce Castle—in the 'forties to be less famous for Bruce of Scotland than for Mr. Roland Hill of the Penny Post. Bruce Grove, hard by, had in it some of the most wealthy and substantial houses which Tottenham contained; and in the High Street, pleasantly private between their red fruit walls, stood other such houses.

Round the Greens—Tottenham was celebrated for its neat Greens—the residences were less imposing. On that of the High Cross, near the Rowes' house, stood the Cross giving it its name—*tempus*, Edward II.—and the Swan Inn, where Izaak Walton stayed (he describes it in the *Compleat Angler*) when he went fishing in the Lea. Also at the High Cross was a terrible erection—Trinity Chapel—chapel-of-ease to the parish church of All Hallows; considered by the natives to be a very "neat structure," and attended by the Green School—forty little charity girls clad in green—by Mrs. Rowe, every Sunday afternoon, and by Rowe, when he had a *penchant*

for the little schoolmistress who escorted them there.

Let no one think philanthropy to be the product of the present generation. Tottenham, in the 'thirties, had its round dozen of charities—some well managed and doing good, and some loosely managed and doing harm; exactly as charities do now.

The Blue School, with seventy little girls dressed in blue, attended All Hallows, and were taught in the week "reading, writing, sewing, and a little arithmetic"; certain of the Tottenham ladies visiting the school in turns, to hear the lessons, inspect the sewing, and throw on the place, perhaps, the lustre once supposed to radiate, insensibly and without effort on their part, from the upper classes.

The old almshouses of Sanchez Reynardson were a picturesque feature of the village street. There was further a Providence, and even a Temperance Society, in an age when other persons besides Hargraves darkly suspected Temperance as the twin brother of that bloodless, canting hypocrite, Total Abstinence.

The Quakers, a powerful body in old Tottenham, had a large Meeting House, and formed a highly respectable and self-respecting Society; and in spite of their religious differences—or because of their religion—lived on terms of pleasant amity with their Churchmen brethren; presently associated themselves with them to illuminate Bruce

Grove, not too dazzlingly, with six gas-lamps, and to protect White Hart Lane with a special constable of its own.

All Tottenham was proud of the fine old church of All Hallows, to which, hemmed in now by mean streets, there still clings "the tender grace of a day that is dead," and in whose old churchyard lies many a good man and true, who loved the old building well, was far from niggardly in subscribing his money to disfigure its north end with a gallery and cover its noble old walls with stone-coloured plaster, and who learned within them many a sound truth—to practise without.

It was a brave sight on a Sunday morning to see those old Tottenhamites—each with his comfortable lady-wife on his arm—proceeding in their stiff Sunday best to the morning service; pitying the Quaker friends they met on their way for their incomplete and unenlightened faith—the Quakers, of course, pitying the Churchmen for theirs.

If, as needs must have been, some of the worshippers had behind them pasts much less decorous than the present, they were for the most part honest, decent, and upright men; or, if sinners, having at least that shame of sin which, if it be John Bull's hypocrisy, is the hypocrisy which has been defined as the tribute vice pays to virtue.

In such a place as Tottenham, everybody, of course, knew everybody; there was much visiting on a small scale; card-parties—where religion did



not forbid—with the pleasantest little hot suppers to follow; and among both Quakers and Church-people a frequent exchange of excellent dinners. All the guests, of course, knew all the other guests' clothes and business; if one dined with the Johnsons one expected the Johnsons' particular party pudding, and had it; and if with the Mores, their inferior lobster sauce with lumps in it—other than the lobster—and was never disappointed.

In a general way, no one travelled abroad; and as the expense and difficulty of coaching and posting made it incumbent on hosts to ask their guests for such afflictingly long periods that they cut the Gordian knot by seldom asking them at all, Tottenham was practically the Tottenhamites' world, and the women, at least, found their whole life in their own homes; were, as a rule, satisfied that it should be so—for few people hanker after what none of their peers possess.

But though their outlook and education were both narrower than their sisters' of to-day, Julia Rowe, who read and formed a clear and vigorous intelligence, had her counterparts, though not many of them; and he who thinks of the woman of the 'thirties as a soft fool in sandals, generalises very dangerously. Then, as now, the wife often quietly righted the injustice of the law by her wits and her character; there were many gentle little persons, in demure poke bonnets, not in the least afraid of saying "Bo!" to a great goose of a husband; who were his goods and chattels only on

paper; had, in fact, though not in theory, the spending and control of their fortunes; and, like Bumble, would have described the law which concludes a wife acts under the influence of her lord as "an ass and an idiot."

As for the menkind, they were no bad specimens of the typical John Bull of old days—stubborn, limited, steady, and sure. "I find the Englishman," wrote Emerson, "to be him who of all men stands firmest in his shoes"; and another contemporary philosopher declared that, of all nations in the world, the English were "the stupidest in speech and the wisest in action."

Over the walnuts and the wine of many a Tottenham mahogany the men exchanged—when they did not keep to themselves—ideas perfectly insular and archaic; were essentially shopkeepers in a nation of shopkeepers, yet, as has been well said, with a revolver under their counters to defend, if need be, those liberties which the Continental peoples bought with blood, and the Briton, by sheer tenacity.

In art and literature they had, to a man, the worst taste, or none. There was not one of them who did not exaggeratedly respect money; or who loved it too well to see that thrift does not consist mainly in saving, but in spending—wisely. If they were less tender than men are now to the sufferings of others, so were they less soft to themselves. No weaklings they! The settled purpose, the slow speech, the unreceptive mind—generous,

dogged, dull—if like likes like, Matthew Hargraves had found congenial surroundings.

His property stood back from the Lane, with a bright yellow drive—suggesting a portly carriage and pair in a near future—and a flight of stone steps leading to the house, garnished by two nymphs, fully dressed, but, all the same, having turned a blackish-blue from the rigours of the British climate, and holding stone trays which, in the proper season, it would be safe to prophesy, would contain geraniums, calceolarias, and lobelias all dreadfully in bloom together.

A verandah ran round the house, which was low and fat, and before the verandah were oppressively neat flower-beds, containing those firm flat plants, looking like sea-anemones, beloved of all gardeners, and endured by many weak employers. A very prolific kitchen and flower garden stretched at the back of the house; at the side were expectant stables and a dog-kennel; and over all the place the air of British wealth, solidity, and reserve—a row of limes securely secluding one from the Browns on the north, and a high wall covered with ivy from the Smiths (and, incidentally, from the sun) on the south.

There was a large double drawing-room, with two fireplaces in it—which will never be the same thing as two fires while unnecessary thrift remains the besetting vice of the good woman.

The rooms were covered to their remotest corner with carpet, the foot sinking with delicious

softness and silence into drab and magenta peonies; the furniture was satinwood in solemn suits of woolwork and velvet; there were vast heavy curtains, proceeding from canopies of golden fringe over windows not made to open; the extreme polish of the intricate steel fire-irons bespoke the age when labour was plentiful and laborious; a large round table, with a tight, worked cover, held ornamental books, and, in the middle, the Tower of Pisa in ivory under a glass shade. On each mantelpiece were Dresden china figures, and a vast clock supported by Cupids in gold sashes—all under shades of glass, and all looking worthy and good, and at least free from the cheap frippery in which a latter-day tastelessness expressed itself.

The dining-room was devoted to dining and mahogany.

In a third room, Hargraves had bought the vast bookshelf with the books in it, as they stood, from the last owner—*British Flora and Fauna*, in twenty-eight volumes; a highly repellent *History of the Thirty Years' War*, in eighteen; two dark rows of sermons; and on the top shelf—there was a perfectly unnecessary flight of steps to reach it—about two yards of the Reports of a Missionary Society to the Aborigines.

The room was further adorned by two marble-topped tables and a marble mantelpiece, which served as réceptacles for the more afflicting of the wedding presents; was furnished with the horse-hair suite from the "Hope and Anchor"; and,

above a low cupboard where Charlotte kept her charity wools, with the old case of stuffed birds.

Charlotte had feared a little that Matthew would propose hanging the sketch of the "Hope and Anchor" in the drawing-room, and that, as a good wife, she would have to consent, and chance the questions it might invoke. But Hargraves, saying nothing, hung it himself in his dressing-room with his mother's miniature, and above it the wooden shelf for his books, which were to read, not to furnish.

Charlotte's bedroom had the solemn gauntness which large dark rooms, bedecked with great four-posters and with flock wall-papers, deeply brown, always had; but it had too that exquisite spotlessness and order characteristic of her, and for which Hargraves was always grateful.

After a few busy weeks, Mr. and Mrs. Hargraves settled down finally and irrevocably into their new life, which was to be their life for ever.

The Pipsons' book in vellum which pointed out the remissness of the wife who came down late in the morning, to give her husband "tepid coffee and blue milk"—without explaining how her lateness affected the colour of the latter fluid—and assured her that the best way to spoil his temper was to trip up his feet with skeins of wool and silks left untidily upon the carpet, was in Char's case perfectly superfluous.

Hargraves, who was himself punctual to a fault, always found her downstairs five minutes before

him—the fresh and charming embodiment of all the domestic virtues behind the tea-urn. If he expressed a wish for the bacon a little drier, the next and all following mornings it crisped sharply between his teeth; and when he volunteered to compound for the Sunday kidneys a sauce of his own invention from the vast cruet-stand in the middle of the table (he *had* been an old bachelor for some time) Charlotte stood by, with a brightly tolerant eye, watching him; and did not neglect to ask for the concoction, which was appallingly potent of cayenne and mustard, every Sabbath; whereas Patty, when she first tasted it, choked convulsively between heat and laughter, and said, “Oh! Mr. Hargraves, is this a practical joke?”

Immediately after breakfast, Hargraves, having placed on coat, hat, and neck-shawl, which were always perfectly brushed and waiting for him on the marble slab in the hall, went round the garden and interviewed the gardener.

It will be found, not very uncommonly, that the man who in his business relations is, if not autocrat, yet absolutely master of the situation, will be easily ruled at home, not only by an imposing cook or even a plausible, short-frocked kitchen-maid—there, sex comes into play,—but will ask the gardener tentatively for a few of his own apples and pears, as if they were the gardener's, and will overlook derelictions of duty in butler or coachman which he would hold himself culpable to pardon in a Mason or an Atkins.

Certainly Hargraves accepted excuses which he knew were not reasons from Symonds for hothouse plants not appearing, or mysteriously disappearing into thin air; set his mouth in obstinate silence when Julia put her interfering nose into his garden and said briskly, "Are you *perfectly* sure Symonds is honest?" while presently, when there were horses in the stables, their master must certainly have remarked that the fat pair developed mysterious diseases when Cummins, the coachman, did not wish to go out, and the perfect immunity from ill-health enjoyed by Peter, the cob, whom Hargraves rode himself and the stable-boy had the trouble of grooming. But while Hargraves was convinced from experience that the world of business and money-making was by its nature prone to deceit and wickedness, he chose to think that in his home he could have the dear luxury of trusting, and that his servants there would be like his wife—and Cæsar's.

He always returned to the house to kiss Char's pink cheek in farewell. When he turned back as he rode or walked down the drive—at first he went up to town by the useful little omnibus—there she was, still standing between the nymphs, seeing him off; and he dimly understood, from the first, that she took this wifely farewell to be her duty; as it was her duty, in the next place, to order the dinner.

She saw briskly to the house all the morning; when *she* demanded plants or vegetables of Sy-

monds, they were forthcoming; and when she entered the stables, tiptoeing gingerly in her little slippers, and, looking rather fixedly at Cummins, said she quite hoped the horses would be well enough to take her out to-morrow afternoon, Cummins replied hastily as he had only told the master it'd be better to let 'em rest to-day; his mistress observed in her neat tones, "Oh, that will do nicely then, Cummins"; and Cummins, watching her retreating form, said, "Damn!"

Very shortly Charlotte became one of the Lady Visitors to the Green School, and instructed little girls in plain needlework—firmly and very well.

Her eruptive orphan, having been now uprooted, by superannuation, from the Ward School, Char bedded her out, not, as most philanthropists would have done, in some one else's kitchen, but in her own; and nobly took dish-breakings and stupidity as part of her, Char's, cross from Heaven. Finding a youth with one arm at the Tottenham Free School, she employed it to weed the yellow drive and support a widowed mother. On Hargraves one day suggesting to her that it was neither real charity nor good political economy—to be sure, he did not use this learned phrase—to keep a boy, who ought to be learning a lucrative trade, searching indefinitely for the invisible, Char's pretty mouth set in that line Matthew had learned to know.

When he returned from town in the afternoon, he found wife and house always perfectly prepared



he must give her all he could was, in  
as in great, the ruling principle of his

Sometimes, after a good day in t  
made her a present of money for her c  
her eyes brightened, and she said, in h  
voice, "Oh, thank you, Hargraves"—  
called him by his surname, *tout cou*  
wives did their husbands then. Yet  
when he gave her—producing it from  
pings and a breast pocket—a cameo  
haustively representing Night by a dr  
a bat, an owl, a crescent moon, and  
sprinkling of stars, she drifted on to  
grateful little kiss like a snowflake.  
evinced a desire to lend money—to b  
upon a minute and cautious scale—  
sponsible elderly lady, who had called i  
selling a furniture polish of her own inv  
needing, she said, merely the capital to  
Hargraves—

o'clock often beheld Matthew buttoning himself sorrowfully into a stiff white waistcoat in preparation for a dinner party; while by eight he was, in a moderate degree, rewarded and enjoying himself, in company with half a dozen other men, all convinced, as he was, that "the first Whig was the devil," and many of them determined (not Hargraves, for he was seldom self-deceived) to prove to each other and themselves that if any change in recent political history had, by some ill chance, turned out to be a reform, it had been suggested by their own political party—pledged to make none.

Perhaps, under other circumstances, Hargraves would have become restive or contrary when Charlotte informed him as they drove home that there was another dinner party next week.

They did not lack conversation at their *tête-à-tête* dinners in their own house—Charlotte lending an intelligent, shell-like ear to Matthew's accounts of the business, and making inquiries after her father.

If Hargraves's homely face was something graver than usual, or he fell silent, Charlotte ticked off, as it were, the dishes of which he had partaken on the previous evening; and Matthew, who had not been aware hitherto that he had a digestion, found it a not inconvenient asset.

When he joined her in their spotless and spacious drawing-room he always—Char domestically stitching—read her the extracts out of the *Times*,

to which she did not listen, and to which he knew she did not listen, but which he read because of the sense—deep in the soul of him—that he must make her share as much of his life as he could. With that view, he even volunteered one evening a scene from Shakespeare—as a reader he had improved but very slightly since the days of his youth—but even the ideal wife was not expected to bear poetry from a husband, and Charlotte said, rather adroitly, and with her Sunday face, that she considered most of Shakespeare unsuitable for feminine perusal.

Hargraves put his marker in his book and laid it aside while they had tea, or Char sang. He no longer expected the singing to touch him; but it sounded pleasantly, like a little rippling stream; and he always asked for a second song, regularly, like clockwork. When that clock, between its Cupids, struck ten, the servants came in, Hargraves read a chapter, and then the famous Family Prayers of Thornton, which have more the air of a series of detached information conveyed to an ignorant person than petitions to the Fount of all Wisdom, but in which Hargraves certainly did not observe such faults; while Charlotte's face was as calmly pious as pretty, till the eruptive kitchenmaid indulged in a loud yawn, when her mistress looked up, fixed her with a firmly corrective eye, and resumed her previous expression.

Sitting alone, when Charlotte had gone to bed, Hargraves—the book still in his hand—could

hear her light footfall in the room overhead, and the opening of a drawer or cupboard. The portly room round him, the large glittering chandelier, the rich curtains, the pair of pictures of very red cattle feeding at a hard stream (which Char had bought from benevolence and a starving artist), satisfied all his bad canons of beauty and his sense of the value of material things. He sat forward in his chair, a forefinger in his page, and looked fixedly at nothing. How proud—and boastful—his old father would have been of his boy's rise in the world! And he, who thought he had no imagination, could fancy his mother's gentle pleasure and bewilderment, at all the fine things—and her deeper bewilderment, when she looked into an empty heart.

Eleven raps from Char's little flat-soled slipper on the floor overhead properly roused Hargraves to the fact that that witching hour, whereat the good man of business, if he *is* to be any good on the morrow, should go to bed, had struck. With his usual methodical regularity, he replaced book on shelf, guard on fire, tested the locks of the windows—it would have been a sanguine nature indeed which would have trusted to the protection of the wheezy old gentleman who was White Hart Lane's special constable—and tramped slowly upstairs to bed.

Hargraves had at once rented a neat pew in the new North Gallery in All Hallows' Church, and Char trimmed it with cushions and hassocks;

and with fat prayer-books praying correctly for her new little Majesty and the Dowager Queen Adelaide.

On the very first Sunday Mr. and Mrs. Hargraves attended, the vicar saw, or thought he saw, in Matthew's square blue back as it went out of church all such sober judicious qualities as go to make the ideal churchwarden. On the second Sunday, Hargraves was handing the plate; on the third, he was taking, through very sincere devotions, a personal interest in the management of the service; and in some ten or twelve weeks, the vicar's churchwarden opportunely dying, Hargraves, both proud and pleased, was nominated for that post.

Perhaps the vicar was slightly less pleased than he had expected to be with the new coadjutor when he found that at vestries or any parochial meeting Hargraves, if he could not be said always to speak his mind, certainly knew it; and having made it up, did not change it by the breadth of a hair for the vicar or anybody else; while, when he was made treasurer of a certain Tottenham charity, which shall be nameless, he introduced into the accounts of that easy body—which had not quite escaped the natural demoralisation which arises from having too much of other people's money—a relentlessly absolute accuracy, to the uttermost farthing.

On Sunday afternoons, Mr. and Mrs. Hargraves attended the chapel-of-ease at the High Cross.

Char's pretty face had slightly stiffened when Matthew had proposed a walk instead; and, indeed, Hargraves had a feeling that it was incumbent on him, so to speak, to keep an eye on the incumbent of Trinity, who was darkly, and most unjustly, suspected by several worthy Tottenhamites of Tractarian leanings.

Walking homewards with the Rows after service, Hargraves and Julia could hardly be expected to miss so tempting a subject for disagreement as the Oxford Movement—Hargraves still knowing next to nothing about it, and Julia, who was fairly well-read in it, only feeling Puseyitish when she came within the zone of Matthew's truculent Protestantism.

To those doctrines of "reserve" and "economy," which a great archbishop called "disingenuous," Hargraves did not at all hesitate to apply a shorter and plainer word. The angry colour crept round his neck and into Julia's handsome face; their very backs looked so quarrelsome that the irrepressible Dick, walking behind them with Charlotte, winked at her—she was not a person at whom one winked lightly—and said, "Come along, they're at it again!" and when he was level with his wife, pinched her arm and observed *sotto voce*, "Good Lord, Ju, what does it matter whether the old buster's Roman or whether he ain't?"—thus alluding to Newman, whom Hargraves, though in language much less dignified and moderate than Lord Acton's, had accused of being "a

sophist, the manipulator and not the servant of truth."

Then—it soon grew to be a Sunday custom—the four walked in the Rowes' pleasant, high-walled garden, with its autumn roses still red among their leaves of dying brown, and in the damp, still air the last moist scents of the departed summer.

The two little girls ran out of the house to meet them—with the long trousers and the unprotected little arms and necks of that day—the elder, Lily, a gay, little attractive creature with fair curls; and the younger, Bertha, about four, with a round, fat, sensible, observing face, and a tendency to some disease of the hip, which made her drag one leg.

Lily went at once to her father—he had that strong natural distaste, not uncommon in the physically robust, for physical weakness; and though he was lavishly kind in the matter of presents, Bertha had quite divined she was not the favourite. Hargraves's large hand closed firmly over hers; and they walked a long path in silence. Then she said, "*Please*, Uncle Mat, the Sunday gamock!" Mat, in a false falsetto, obligingly ran up the scale; and when Bertha had recovered from that delight—she laughed quite silently, with her fat face getting very red all over—she demanded the Sunday faces, and Hargraves, like young Mat of the Commercial School in Holborn, twisted his accommodating countenance into extraordinary shapes and contortions, standing quite still near

the gooseberry bushes, his audience looking up at him entranced.

When they resumed their walk in silence, and were nearing the others, Hargraves said, "What are you thinking about?"

Bertha replied with a deep sigh, "What a long time it is to next Sunday!" and Julia, coming up, took the child's other hand, spoke to Hargraves in a softened voice, and for the moment they buried the hatchet, and Newman.

Going home to White Hart Lane, Mrs. Hargraves observed to her husband, "I should not like *my* drawing-room chiffonier all over finger-marks, like Julia's is. Children are so destructive!"

And Mat said slowly, as one who knew not the race, "They must be."

Whatever mistakes Hargraves had made, thinking he would be glad to resume work was not one. He turned to it now as the prime, solid, infallible interest in life, and put into it, more than he had ever put, all his heart and his soul. Without any of the undignified hustling which is the characteristic of the business methods of newer nations, he evinced more and more the old John Bull's aptitude for concentrating on the profitable markets of the moment, so that the more Leaf left him to his own steady devices, the more they succeeded.

Very soon he had a balance at his banker's which was as an ample blanket in which to roll himself round and round. The bank clerks bristled with politeness and attention when he



approached their little *guichets*; and the portly manager advanced from his private room, to soothe the susceptibilities of so profitable a client with gracious nothings. Hargraves, himself quite without gracious nothings, left the bank buttoning himself into his thick blue coat with a comfortable sense of warmth coats do not supply.

Now, too, he dined much more often at the noble boards of the great City companies—Charlotte much approving, and herself ascetically taking an egg on a tray at home—and had advanced to a position at table where he could not only hear all the speeches, but might possibly, as he reflected with a severely chastened joy, be called upon to make one himself.

The company at such feasts—which, to the irritable nerves of the genius of Charles Dickens, appeared as “sleek, slobbering, bow-paunched, over-fed, apoplectic, snorting cattle”—was really that of excellent, ordinary men, with the usual British faults and a counterpoise of unmoving British virtues; but sometimes Hargraves—himself of them, like them, and respecting them—fell silent at their banquets, ate the fine things as if they were mutton and rice, and was so absorbed in some train of thought that he hardly heard the good portly person at his side arguing politically, and astonished him by responding “Yes” and “No” when he meant “No” and “Yes.”

Char, who had sensibly gone to bed and slept till he came, put her neat head out of the four-

poster's curtains, and asked to see the bill of fare; had the generous company presented the guests, as generally happened, with a fan, or a great box of sponge cakes to propitiate the powers at home; said, "Oh, *thank* you, Hargraves," as he stood by her side and solemnly untied the appetising parcel on the counterpane.

She was calmly asleep again almost at once. Sometimes Hargraves lay long awake, motionless, at her side. When she asked him in the morning if he had slept well, he answered, "No"; and Char, removing her nightcap at the dressing-table, shook her head at her reflection in the glass and said, "You should *never* take lobsters out of your own house"; and Hargraves, who had not done so, replied solemnly from the bedclothes, with a slight twinkle in his eye, "I won't."

It was at this juncture that he became a member of the Council of the City of London, and also a generous subscriber to a great and ancient charity which lent a helping hand to the poor clergy and their hapless wives and children. There was no need to suspect him of any weak sympathies with a class of men whom he regarded as, now, generally making ready to slink off in the direction of Rome; and as ever, culpably unbusinesslike. He surprised his brethren, and perhaps himself (he sat, to some purpose, on the committee which allocated the funds), by rising one day and proposing to it, in a short, deep voice, that, in the case of a girl of eighteen who was to be started in the

world as a governess with an outfit and a Bible and Prayer-book, the committee should hold ten pounds in trust for her benefit, so that should the situation turn out unsuitable, she would have that much between her and destitution.

Several fat fathers were of the opinion that the knowledge of the existence of so weighty a sum would be apt to make the young lady fastidious.

But Hargraves could be as obstinate—as Balaam's ass. When he returned presently to Martin's Lane, through a steady concentration on affairs he radiated the dim sort of triumph the red old London sun radiates, shining through fog; so that Atkins surmised that the governor had put something on the right horse.

He had—ten pounds.

On the following morning, soon after his arrival at business in the room sacred to the two partners and ornamented only with the portrait of the founder of the firm (a manifestly excellent old gentleman, twiddling his thumbs), there appeared, after a tentative tap on the door, Patty Wyatt in her black dress and with her shining aureole of hair.

Hargraves, who was taking off his coat, turned round, surprised.

"Oh, Mr. Hargraves," said Patty earnestly, "you wouldn't mind, would you, if Cousin William took a day off and came with me into the country? It's such a lovely day"—indeed, a thin streak of November sunshine played even in

that dark place—"and I have half persuaded him. It's such a pity," said Patty looking round, "to be always mewed in here, thinking of port—and you have no idea"—and her voice sank to a confidential note—"how nice it is to see him enjoy himself!"

Hargraves, fingering the pens on his desk, said simply there was every reason why he should enjoy himself, and promised persuasion. He was going to inquire of her how she liked her new life, but before he had framed the question her mind had turned to his, and she asked after Char and the new house and garden with something considering in her eyes, which Hargraves did not miss.

Then she added with a sigh, "I think it must be impossible for any one to be happier than I am with Cousin William! If it wasn't for the butter, it would be practically perfect. Marshall"—Patty sank her voice to convey the dread intelligence—"uses twice the amount in the week that she did with Char, and if I said much" (Patty, in fact, meant she had not said anything) "I dare say she would perturb Cousin William by giving notice!"

Hargraves replied steadily, without a smile on his face or in his mind, that the butter was Leaf's, and if he did not object to its use, no one need; then the old far-off humour in him stirred, and he added, "I should let Marshall roll in butter if she likes it"; and they laughed together.

When Patty had gone, it seemed she left behind

her in the busy, dull place some of the sunshine of a softer and lighter mood. Once or twice during that day, Hargraves wondered how the two were getting on at Eltham. They were to drive there in a chaise, and see the old Court and Park, with their noble bodyguard of great trees, resplendent in bronze and gold; dine early at an inn, and be home before the brief glory of the day had fallen in mist and cold. Once or twice, he bethought him too of that other girl—of Patty's age—who so nearly had not even had ten pounds between her—and Fate.

When he got home and told Char of the events of the day, she put down her wool-work to listen, and said, "I was afraid Patty would make papa very idle!"

Hargraves answered, "Your father can afford to take things easily now."

And Char, in just the same, clear, good little voice as she might have recited the *Busy Bee* with her hands behind her back as a little girl, replied, "Only idleness does not make one *happy*"; and added, more shrewdly, "I have always noticed that when people have nothing else to do—they die."

When, a few days later, Hargraves brought down the news that Leaf had an attack of gout, Charlotte permitted herself to say, good humouredly as always, "There! I was right, you see."

Just a week after, in the afternoon—a murky, greasy afternoon, dismally coloured in black and

yellow—Hargraves went into Leaf's house to report affairs to him.

As he came into the drawing-room, he saw the curtains were drawn and the candles lit; the fire blazed on the hearth; in the place where Char's shiny piano had stood there was a round table of well-worn books, and in a pot a little tree azalea, whose sweetness hovered in the air. In his accustomed chair, with his foot on a rest, was Leaf with, Hargraves fancied, something on the mild and handsome face which bespoke an easy contentment—the gout notwithstanding. A little table divided him from Patty, whose head was bent over a book, while on the immaculate white hearthrug at her feet lay,—of all things in the world,—easily licking his paws, a mongrel dog, who had started the world with the idea of becoming a fox terrier. He looked up as Hargraves came in, wagged an offhand greeting with a disgraceful tail, and went on licking.

Patty drew a chair to the fire for the visitor, and said rather hurriedly how raw and horrible it must be out-of-doors; and when Hargraves, moving a large boot slightly in the fox terrier's direction, asked, "Who's this?" answered, quite apologetically, that she had met him in Clement's Lane last Sunday after church—looking *so* cold and homeless—"that Cousin William—you did, didn't you?" added Patty with great earnestness, "said I might bring him back; and he's so good and affectionate—aren't you, Clem?"

(Clem intimated he was)—“that everybody likes him.”

Hargraves, who himself liked dogs, though he by no means regarded them as “candidates for humanity” as people do now, leaned down and patted Clem’s back.

Patty’s eyes looked up and said, “Thank you”; Clem came and lay nearer to Hargraves’s feet, and, incidentally, to the fire; and the party was introduced and complete.

When Hargraves had said what he had come to say, Leaf rounded it with a kindly, “I know I need have no anxiety when my affairs are in such good hands.” Patty added, “Cousin William is one of the people who are perfectly justified in enjoying being ill”; and caught her breath in a sigh as her thoughts went back to her father, who had not been so justified.

Hargraves, whose ideas of what Patty had been like when he first saw her were a little dim—he had had so many preoccupations!—fancied she looked stronger and a little fuller in figure, as if a bud had blossomed into a rose in a new warmth and sunshine.

Leaf asked after Charlotte; then they fell silent a little; till Patty commanded Clement to cease licking his paws, which he did, just to give her time to say admiringly, “Isn’t he obedient?” and then resumed the occupation.

Presently, Leaf and Hargraves touched on politics; and Patty joined in a little too, so entirely

without Julia's tone of conscious superiority (as the only woman in her circle capable of the intrusion), that even Hargraves could forgive her for knowing who was the Prime Minister. When he announced one of those dogmatic opinions for which he was celebrated, looking threateningly at his boots, Leaf temporised with, "Well, well, that's going rather far!" Patty laughed, looked up, and said, "Mr. Hargraves, you have such dreadfully thorny opinions—like Dr. Johnson"; and Hargraves, who would not in a general way have been pleased to be told his opinions were thorny, presently found himself being lent Patty's shabby Boswell that he might make acquaintance with his prototype.

He must have sat for half an hour, instead of his intended five minutes. When he rose to go—Clement rising leisurely at the same time and stretching himself—Patty said, rather anxiously, "And you will tell Char, won't you, Mr. Hargraves, that he's a really *good* dog, and never makes paw-marks on the nice cushions and chairs?" and Hargraves perceived that she really meant she had rubbed them clean with her pocket-handkerchief.

He lingered, standing a moment with his back to the fire. Patty came into the hall with him and helped him into his coat, and stowed the Boswell into one of its capacious pockets. When he looked back as he walked down the Lane she was still at the door, with the house-light on her hair



and face, and the attendant Clement a spot of white by her black frock.

As Hargraves jogged back to Tottenham—through the early raw gloom of the November evening, on Peter's back and at the pace Peter set—the homeless feeling he had thought to know no more crept round his heart. He could see, as he had often seen in the old days, into pleasant fire-lit rooms; but he knew now that homes are made by sympathies, by companionship, the finer intangible things one feels but cannot—or, being British, and dreading above most things to be sentimental, will not—define; and are houses not made with hands.

Then Peter, dreaming too, perhaps, crossed his stupid feet; and stumbling, roused him.

## CHAPTER IX

### “FORTUNE’S SHARP ADVERSITEE”

MEANWHILE, despite the butter, Patty was enjoying the happiest holiday of her life.

Her woman’s instincts to have some one to mother, and to have the exquisite luxury of being herself guarded and cared for, were both satisfied.

She had, intellectually, very little in common with Leaf; but that one can live in a close affinity of heart with persons of perfectly diverse interests, has been proved before. It pleased Leaf to watch her head bent over her book in the evening; and when he spoke, as he did sometimes a little, of his early life, she raised her compassionate, fathoming eyes and the book lay useless on her lap; for she knew how much better are the living romances than all the fancied ones—“that ever were sung or said.”

They did not often talk of Charlotte—and never without praise; rightly, for her practical virtues had made her father, as they were making her husband, very comfortable; and that is much.

One night, speaking of Hargraves, Leaf said, looking across the tea-things at his companion,

"When your time comes, my dear, may you meet as good a man."

A faint colour came into Patty's cheeks as she said earnestly, "Oh, Cousin William, I should like to go on living just like this for ever!"

Leaf answered, "There is a better fate waiting for you, I hope; the best man or woman can have"; and Patty saw his mind had gone back to his own.

If Char had enjoyed being thrifty and saving ninepences for nothing—where they were to be saved in a sensible manner and without meanness—Patty luxuriated in the delicious, rich feeling that it was no longer a crime and a sorrow to have stupidly squandered a few of them.

Leaf gave her money to buy books, and when she unpacked a dull-looking, little, expensive volume, said, well pleased with her pleasure in it, "Well, my dear, if you like it——"

He gave her, too, the new, warm luxury of giving. Elspeth received five pounds—a fortune; and when Patty chose herself a little cheap bonnet to buy her aunt a present with the difference between that and the becoming one, Leaf, most demoralisingly, gave her the nice one the next day. She had the love of pretty things—and to look as pretty in them as might be—without which he would certainly, and in no vague sense, have mistrusted her; not quite wrongly, because "whatever is natural, is right."

Examining the monthly housekeeping books, Patty observed, more rueful than surprised, that

they were quite one third higher than under the rule of Char; came to Leaf, put her arm round his shoulder as he sat writing a letter in the dining-room before going into the counting-house, and said, "Cousin William, I am afraid I am dreadfully expensive!" and Leaf, as he certainly would not have dared to have done to his daughter, replied tranquilly, "It is not of the least consequence, my dear."

Patty, rereading the situation in the fire that evening while Leaf took his after-dinner nap, shook her head at herself reproachfully, knowing that even if she acquired the courage to speak to Marshall on her extravagance, Marshall would divert attention by blood-curdling stories of her brother's leg. Patty could hear Char saying primly, "Your brother's leg, Marshall, will keep for the present"; which, according to Marshall, was just what it would not do; and Patty stifled a small, guilty laugh on the head of Clement, whom she held in her arms.

Nor could much entertaining serve as excuse for the bills.

If one is quite happy, acquaintances are always a bore; and Leaf and Patty invited theirs as seldom as they dared, under a sense of duty.

It was not only Lady Jones, in Leaf's circle, who respected money so much that she could not respect anybody without it; and Patty knew—and invalidated the criticism by not being disturbed at it—that other massive dowagers also

resented her presence at the head of Leaf's table; and in the drawing-room after dinner were intent on putting her in her place by saying how much they missed Char and felt for her father in losing her.

There were flowers in the drawing-room now, a brilliant carmine camelia as well as the azalea, in an age when such an indulgence—is it of the flesh or the spirit?—was generally disapproved; and in the great *épergne* in the middle of the dining-table, which, according to all the proper rules, should have contained a trifle, Patty arranged blooms bought at Covent Garden in the morning. If the guests disapproved of the innovations, not so Leaf. No one could live even a short time with Patty without finding out what may be called the value of the unpractical; and that man does not live by bread alone.

After the dinners, Patty and Leaf did not talk of the guests, as Patty and her father had been wont to do, jogging home in the forlorn buggy, led by Roger. Patty could still see the wild moon and the moor; and hear Wyatt's merciful comments, though his old head had been acute to observe and his old heart had humour in it to the end; while Leaf, as she knew quite well, had none of that dangerous quality, and was in part a gentle critic because he was also a little obtuse.

On the evenings they were alone together, before the nine o'clock tea, Patty used to go and visit old Anna in the little room set apart for her, where

she mended the house-linen with a very shaking old hand, and made Leaf's shirts.

Char had looked kindly and excellently after her comforts, but had seldom had time, being always engaged in the evening in embroidering bell-pulls or making comforters for the poor little climbing-boys, to have time to listen to old Anna's rambling and plaintive stories of great-nieces and nephews who were always, if not exactly borrowing money from her, at least writing her letters so piteous that they amply succeeded in making her feel a brute if she did not send any.

Patty read all the letters, and when she saw it pleased and comforted old Anna to believe in the integrity of the writers, appeared to believe in it herself. Presently, sitting on the edge of the fender, as she had sat often and often with Elspeth in the kitchen at Great Farning, she guided Anna's conversation to old days and Leaf's young ones—Anna had begun life, so to speak, as his nursemaid. When Patty made reply, Anna never heard and always said, "What, dear?" until at the third or fourth time of asking, Patty replied very loud and threateningly, "Anna, how *dare* you be so deaf!" and when it was time to say good-night and go, hugged the neat, flat, old-spinster waist and kissed the ugly old face.

Anna had to confess it as a sin in her prayers, shaking her old curls and nightcap at her wickedness, that she actually liked Patty better than Miss Char.

One day, when Leaf was recovering—it must be owned at leisure and not uncomfortably—from the gout which he had earned by his jaunt to Eltham, Hargraves brought in to see him one afternoon a customer—a most satisfactory customer—who was refilling the large cellars of his country house, with a view to much entertaining after a long period of mourning, and who desired to consult the senior partner on the old-fashioned wines, such as lisbons; the junior partner having satisfactorily supplied, during a long morning in counting-house and cellars, all information respecting the new hocks and moselles.

Francis Darell was about thirty, and being slight and fair, looked less than this (once) mature age.

He had about him the refinement which, in the day when a certain robust animalism was a characteristic of most of the men of his class, was often mistaken for weakness; and belonged, in fact, to a type which, for the good of his country, was too rare in the 'forties, and perhaps, for her strength and greatness, is too common now. That is to say, he had the passive virtues rather than the active; was a lover of the arts without having any creative faculty; himself born with a silver spoon in his mouth (that delightful diet was never yet considered bone-forming), had in no small degree what Steele called "the distinguishing Part of a Gentleman—to make his Superiority of Fortune as easy to his Inferiors as he can," yet did, in some

sort, feel his riches to be a special Certificate of Merit awarded by Providence.

When, going round the cellars, he told Hargraves he was buying for his guests, as all wines were a matter of personal indifference to him, of course the terms Milksop and Mollycoddle stood straight up in Hargraves's mind. He had to lay them before long, however. Though pampered by easy circumstance, Darell had plenty of that courage which before now has made men of his breed face danger—and in the extreme measure, death—so that nothing in life became them like the leaving of it.

His title—he was a baronet—had impressed Hargraves till, in the earnestness of business and conversation, he forgot it. It, very faintly, embarrassed Leaf; and of the little party in the drawing-room, only Patty and Clement, sitting together on the fender stool, were entirely unmoved.

Business discussed and done, the little parlour-maid brought in sherry and cake—the dull precursor of the afternoon tea not yet invented by that woman of blessed memory, Anna Maria, Duchess of Bedford—and the conversation became general.

Darell's place was, he said, at Altons, near Bath. Hargraves volunteered that he had travelled in Somersetshire and remembered the neighbourhood.

Darell, who had a pleasant voice and easy man-



ner, volunteered that he was not only refurnishing its cellar, but, in part, the house itself. Perhaps Miss Wyatt could give him some suggestions as to the wallpapers and "this sort of thing"—he touched the wool-worked cover of the solid chair on which he sat—as his mother's recent death had left him without the necessary feminine advice.

Patty said lightly, "I am afraid mine would be of no use. We were much too poor to have new papers in my old home; and I don't believe I even realised people ever re-covered their chairs"; and she looked round contemplatively at the sober suite which furnished Leaf's drawing-room.

Darell had not been able to make up his mind if it was the firelight falling on it which gave her hair its reddish glow, or if the clear colour on her cheek was firelight too. But he was sure that whereas the normal young woman in the presence of the eligible man was inevitably coy, simpering, and carefully silly, this one was at once perfectly natural and intelligent.

Then he told her of a picture he had been lucky enough to discover in a little Italian town; and she surprised him by knowing something—to be sure, not much and only, of course, through a book—of the work of the painter.

Leaf lay back in his chair listening to them; quite content, having never before heard of Luini, to do without the acquaintance; while Hargraves, stiff and upright, felt a sort of resentment at his own ignorance.

Rising to go, Darell pleasantly apologised for taking up so much of Hargraves's time, and Matthew, being unable to think of any more delicately tactful answer than it was all in the day's work, prudently decided on silence.

About ten days later, just as the counting-house was shutting and Hargraves putting on his coat preparatory to leaving, Darell appeared again, supplementing one order and changing another, and ended by going into the house with Hargraves to see Leaf as before.

It transpired on this occasion that Hargraves was married to the daughter of the firm; perhaps Darell had fancied him a *prétendu* in another direction. Before Hargraves left, late, an invitation to stop and dine had been issued to the newcomer and accepted.

Peter, who always spent the day eating at the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, stumbled lamentably on the way home that night, and was so little kept up to his duties that he looked about him for things to shy at—and found them.

Hargraves told Charlotte, of course, of Sir Francis's second visit and the invitation to dinner. The average woman then being as much taken up with matrimony as, having no other hope in life, it was inevitable she should be, saw a suitor in every man.

Hargraves stopped a remark he perceived to be travelling from Charlotte's eyes to her lips by saying firmly, "Those people don't marry out of

their own class: and for all we know, he is engaged to some one already."

Leaf's convalescence was a tardy one. Patty certainly was no spur to recovery—making the affliction so pleasant a thing. It became a regular habit for her to come into the partner's dark sanctum for about three minutes every morning soon after Hargraves's arrival, with a bulletin of, or a message from, the patient. If she was late, he kept a mental eye on the door, and the physical one perfectly steadily on his papers. It became a not less regular habit that, his day's work done, he should go into the house and sit for half an hour in the room which—with its dark curtains and flickering firelight, Leaf with his leg on the rest, and Patty and Clement respectively reading and sleeping—had always its air of home. Patty had lent Hargraves other books besides Boswell now, and they talked over them as Leaf half listened, or read his paper, or dozed. Or sometimes they fell into silences more companionable than talk. Once, Clement developed a sick paw, and Hargraves, whose youthful acquaintance with an inn yard had given him some knowledge of animals, doctored it as successfully as was possible with a patient who ate the ointment. It became a regular thing that, when he left, Patty should come into the hall and help him into his coat, and, turning at the end of the Lane, he always saw her with the houselight on her shining hair

and Clement a spot of white against her black dress.

In late November, Hargraves and Charlotte came to stay with Leaf for a few days, and there were two dinner parties.

Char, admirably judicious and sensibly realising that one cannot eat one's cake and have it, be married and not married, repressed perfectly justifiable criticisms on Patty's housekeeping errors; and only said in a confidential stage-whisper as she was dressing for dinner on the third evening and Hargraves was brushing his hair in the adjoining dressing-room, "Actually, Hargraves, Marshall has been allowed to *buy* bones for the soup!" and when Matthew, still brushing, had gruffly ejaculated something that might be taken for horror, Charlotte continued very sensibly and tolerantly, "Still, I know Patty is very good to papa; and, besides, she wanted a home."

The phrase occurred once or twice to Hargraves that evening.

There being no party, Clement, banished for the festivities, reappeared in the drawing-room; and Charlotte, who had nobly raised none of the objections she felt to his advent, reserved to herself the right of avoiding him as if he had been the old Serpent of Eden. When he made ready to jump into the best-cushioned corner of the sofa, Hargraves, ready for him, flattened him back into a recumbent position with a heavy hand, and Patty lifted her eyes, with a faint twinkle in their soft depths, to thank him.

"Besides Patty wanted a home."

She and Leaf were reading, Charlotte wool-working, and Matthew's own eyes steady on his book. Did Patty ever think she might soon need a home again? Hargraves turned the question over in his slow mind, and reached the truth. If she were homeless—Leaf would be dead; and there are possibilities from which one shrinks too much to anticipate.

Then, too, experience had taught him that, though only poverty knows its own cramping bitterness, it is only to the rich that it has the awfulness of the unknown—the terror of the ghost in the dark. Patty had certainly inherited some of the fatalism which, to the steady prudence of Hargraves's disposition, was a culpable and an incomprehensible thing; and her vivid imagination had, so far, occupied itself less in the possible cruelties of fate than in things far away and impractical—the worlds Darell had touched.

The thinker paused on the name.

When Leaf had hobbled up early to bed, Hargraves said to his wife, "Your father has aged, I think."

Charlotte replied composedly, "Well, you see papa *is* old."

And Patty, stooping to urge Clement bedwards by the collar, looked up to say quickly, with a sudden flush in her face, "Old! I don't think Cousin William is a *bit* old"; and when she re-

## Fortune's Sharp Adversitee 193

turned to the drawing-room her face was still disturbed.

Presently Leaf and Patty paid a return visit to Tottenham.

When they came back to Martin's Lane, Leaf, though recovered of his gout, did not go to the counting-house, but spent the day in the room which was politely called his study, though he had never studied anything in it, destroying old letters and papers. In the evening, he told Patty that he had been burning the letters his wife had written to him in their two years' engagement.

"I ought to have done it before," he said quietly; "I am not a young man, and these things are apt to fall to the wrong hands and eyes."

He went early to bed, having not yet relinquished all invalid ways and having, he said, a day's business with Rowe on the morrow which he must not postpone. Patty and Clement sat up a little while after he was gone, enjoying their right to half an hour's dreaming after the practical day.

Leaf was late for breakfast the next morning. Patty had made the tea, looked at the *Times*, put the bacon to the fire, and given Clement—who technically and on paper, so to speak, did not breakfast—his toast and milk, and still Leaf did not appear.

She ran upstairs lightly and knocked at his door; and receiving no reply, knocked again, and entered.

The interval between the easy confidence that

all is well and the dreadful certainty of the worst is infinitesimal.

Before she pulled aside the heavy curtain of the bed, she knew that he was dead. She did not even need to look at the handsome face, like a fine cameo on the high white pillow—the dignified and kindly face which being dead spoke, as it had spoken in life, not power or intellectuality, but goodness, gentleness, truth, ay, and something of the sterner virtues—“self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control.”

The little apothecary from London Bridge was in the house in a quarter of an hour; in half, the family physician, a large and splendid person from Bishopsgate.

He saw that Patty hardly listened to him when he told her that death had been caused by the gout suddenly attacking the heart. He was dead! What else mattered? He stayed with her a little, spoke to her with the kindly sympathy, which, in his profession, use seldom dulls; and asked if he could be of service to her. Patty looked up at the clock between the warriors and said, “Mr. Hargraves arrives at ten; they will send him here at once.”

When he came, she saw at once by his face that he knew. He held her cold, small hand in his for a moment and said nothing. He had that gift, valuable at all times, but invaluable at such times as these, that he could say nothing. He sat down heavily in Leaf's old leather chair by the fire, and

looked at it. Presently he asked a question or two, and Patty told him—she spoke calmly—how Leaf had been occupied on the previous day, and to-day had arranged to go to Mr. Rowe's office on business—"so he *must* have felt well?" said Patty, as a question.

Hargraves said in a gruff voice, "He did feel well, and happy. He liked having you here"; and one tear fell down Patty's white cheek. They sat again in silence, and Clement came and put a damp nose into Patty's listless and drooping hand, and rubbed his body against Hargraves's leg, saying, "I know all."

Rising to go, Hargraves suggested that Patty should go and sit awhile with old Anna. They had neither of them mentioned Charlotte, till Hargraves said he had sent a messenger for her and she would be in Martin's Lane in the course of the day. He held Patty's hand in his again for a moment, and left without another word. She sat, with Clement pushing against her unheeded, by the disordered breakfast table, not thinking consciously, but feeling, as one feels an atmosphere, that there was one thing left simple and solid in the confused and storm-tossed world. Then she got up and went and sat with Anna—mercifully dazed, as the old are, by sudden calamity—as Hargraves had bidden her.

Charlotte arrived at the darkened house a couple of hours later. (Patty had forgotten all about the blinds, but Hargraves had not neglected the con-



ventionality he respected.) There were the traces of natural tears about Charlotte's pretty eyes; her luggage bore witness to some strength of mind, in that it contained everything she and Hargraves would be likely to want for a week or two's visit; and, as Patty remembered afterwards but did not exactly notice at the time, Char appropriately wore the black frock in which she had mourned Wyatt.

The two girls clung together for a little; Charlotte recovered her composure first, asked a few questions, and then—Patty had felt their approach and tried to ward it off—quoted, in a religious whisper, a few appropriate texts.

To utter too glibly and too soon even the noblest consolations offered to our race is to turn them to a *banalité* and an offence. At first, the best comfort is to admit there is none.

But Charlotte's good sense was at once bracing and refreshing, and when she girded herself about with a housekeeping apron and went to the kitchen to arrange for the meals, and the preparation of the room for herself and Hargraves, Patty felt a rousing small sting of self-reproach, that those things had not even occurred to her.

At luncheon-time, Rowe came in with Hargraves, and as they stood eating and drinking the sherry and sandwiches, Rowe said in a low voice to Patty, "I am doosed sorry for *you*," as though he were not doosed sorry for anybody else; and Patty saw on his easy and jolly face—for he was very

affectionate and had loved Leaf well—the traces of tears.

That interminable day—could it be but that morning Patty had got up especially early with a light heart to bathe and comb Clement?—closed in at last.

In the afternoon, Charlotte and Patty had written some necessary letters, and it was nearly dinner-time when Hargraves came in from the counting-house to the drawing-room where Patty was alone. She looked up at once, and seeing his face, said suddenly, "Mat, you look very tired!" She had never before so called him, but in sorrow intimacy takes long strides.

At dinner, Char was really kind and unselfish in pressing the other two to eat; afterwards, in the drawing-room, she provided herself with a stout blue morocco volume in which a Georgian Bishop discoursed in sixty pages on *The Right Use of Affliction*—ay, and discoursed not ill, for he wrote from a heavy heart.

Patty laid her book, face downwards, on her knee, and, dull with the fatigue of sorrow, scarcely thought or felt; while Hargraves held up his Boswell, and now and then, for appearance sake, turned a page. Once or twice, if Patty had been normal, she might have felt his steady, thinking eye fixed on herself.

At last he said, "Why don't you go to bed?" and she went.

When she had gone, Charlotte put down the

Bishop, and said, still in the stage-whisper in which she had spoken all day and which had already got upon Patty's overstrung nerves, "I am sorry poor Patty feels it so much; she was only papa's cousin by *marriage*"; as if people mourned according to the Table of Affinity.

Hargraves sat up late that night sorting, as was his duty in his capacity of co-executor with Rowe of Leaf's will, his papers and letters.

Many bore witness to those "little unremembered acts" of kindness which make up such a life; the cursed caution, which lays its forbidding hand on most men's charities, had not prevented this man's; he had found it happier to be sometimes cheated than not to trust; and in one packet of letters Hargraves discovered how, in the very early days of his happy marriage, he had given a home in his home to an old spinster relative—deaf, and, judging from her correspondence, querulous and interfering—for no better reason than that she wanted one.

There was one letter from David Wyatt, and two or three from Patty written after her father's death, which Hargraves put aside with some other papers that were to be dealt with later. One might have said by his face that he put by, as the strong man can, thoughts connected with them—also to be dealt with later.

Char was quietly asleep, not without the marks of tears on the round softness of her cheeks, when he reached their room.

Shading the candle with his hand, he looked for a moment into her face as if he would read her heart.

The arrangements for the funeral were carried out according to Leaf's own simple instructions.

Charlotte, dressing the next morning, said to Hargraves, "Hargraves, I suppose poor papa left a will?" and the Dressing-Room, again brushing its hair, paused noticeably and said, "Yes, Rowe and I are executors; we will go into it with you on Thursday."

On Thursday, at two o'clock, Leaf was buried in the little churchyard, now long disused, behind St. Clement's, Eastcheap; his funeral march the dull rumble of the great City where he had lived, which had accompanied, but never disturbed, the fine serenity of his life.

It was one of those November days which, knowing it must so soon get dark again, had apparently not thought it worth its while ever to grow light; and a chill and sooty rain fell on a company of mourners, larger than Hargraves had supposed possible. But, indeed, to be well loved one does not need the stern great qualities, which save souls rather than win hearts. With Leaf, too, as with many others, his very limitations of intellect had well served his character; for if it is hard for the rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, it is harder still for the shrewdly clever.

In that day, women never attended funerals, so

Patty and Charlotte sat the while in the Martin's Lane drawing-room; Char reading the Burial Service to herself by one candle at the table, and Patty—Clement had been removed for the day to the scullery—sitting at the window, looking, dreary and tearless, at the dark houses opposite. When her father died she had felt almost as if she had lost an invalid child—greatly dependent; but on Leaf she had also depended, and found dependence sweet.

Charlotte, having had an eye on the clock for some little time, closed the Prayer-book, said, still in the whisper, but briskly, "They will be back in five minutes," and went to interview the funeral feast substantially set forth in the dining-room.

At it, Hargraves, who took the end of the table and carved a ham and a pie in perfect silence, found Patty a place on his left, where she was thankfully unnoticed; Hargraves's face only looked heavy and tired; and Patty remembered those mourners who "slept for sorrow." He poured her out some wine and put food on her plate; and, as his eye was on her, she ate and drank, from gratitude.

When the guests had gone, and the blinds had been drawn up to admit the feeble remains of the dreary day, Rowe, who had stayed behind, turned to Hargraves and said tentatively, "I should think Charlotte had better see the will now?" and they went into the room which had been called Leaf's study.

Hargraves had rescued Clement and brought

him to Patty in the drawing-room, and she sat there, by the darkening window, holding him, her chin on his head, or sometimes his kind, licking tongue on her face.

Rowe lit the candles in the study, slightly whistling, which Charlotte felt to be unsuitable, as it was. In truth, he had been greatly moved and was in the natural process of feeling much better.

On the table, there were two brief documents, which even Char's uninitiated eyes saw to be wills. Hargraves went and stood by the mantelpiece, and Rowe—who had evidently been deputed spokesman—said with the careful ease of one who wishes to make a slide over difficulties:

"There are two documents here, Charlotte. The first will your father made five years ago; the second he made last week; he was to have come up to my place and signed it on the morning he died. The first—which is duly signed and executed"—he pointed to the signature and the names of the witnesses—"leaves everything to you (that is, everything he had not already settled on you at your marriage), with the exception of a hundred to David Wyatt—he's dead, so that falls into the estate—and fifty to Patty. The second will, which he meant to sign on the day of his death, leaves everything to you with the larger exception of three thousand to your cousin. You'd better read them both."

Charlotte drew one of the heavy candles to her, and read.

The crisp burning of the fire, and the steady tick of the large clock on the mantelpiece by Hargraves alone broke the silence. Rowe, restraining a recurrence of the whistle with some difficulty, instead absently admired his leg, which was admirable, of a neat shape.

Charlotte looked up presently and said in her trim voice, "Yes, I quite understand. This is the legal will, the one poor papa signed?"

"Not a doubt of it," said Rowe. "The other's, legally, so much waste-paper. The thing is—Hargraves and I thought we would put it before you—as your father meant to leave your cousin the larger sum, if you'd like to make her a present of it all the same? Of course, you know that in law a married woman's property is her husband's, so, technically and legally, this money, as it does not form part of your marriage settlement, is Hargraves's. But he considers that morally and virtually it is yours; and that you must decide what is to be done with it. It's an uncommon ugly thing, you know," added the irrepressible Dick, as it were, on his account, "for a single woman to have nothing to live on. But it is for you to say."

There was a silence. The momentous moments are drab and fleet like the others; if they lingered with state and trumpet, one might recognise them—in time.

"I think," said Charlotte, "I should like to do exactly what dear papa said."

The whistle got the better of Rowe again as he

flicked one of his boots with a black-bordered pocket-handkerchief.

"In this case," he replied, "what he said and what he meant, ain't the same thing."

Charlotte looked across at Hargraves, who had stirred a coal in the grate with his boot, but had not spoken.

"When Mr. Morrison died," she said with her clearest enunciation (Morrison was a Tottenham acquaintance), "and there was some doubt about his will, Hargraves said that if you once began trying to do what you thought people meant to have willed, instead of what they did will, there would be no end to it."

The coal fell in the grate, and Hargraves said simply, "Yes, I did."

Rowe winked slightly at nothing in particular—Charlotte saw him—and said, "Old Mat's game enough to do it, though. But he don't think he ought to give away your money for you. Uncommon pleasant thing, though," added Rowe reflectively, "being generous on other people's"; and he flicked his boots again.

Hargraves turned his back to the fire and faced the other two squarely.

"I am very nearly a rich man now, Char," he said, "and I think, bar accidents, I shall soon be a richer. Whatever I make is yours; and you're a clever manager, and we have neither of us extravagant tastes. If you like to carry out your father's wish and give that three thousand to your



cousin, you shall not miss it. As Rowe says, it's a hard world"—there was a note in Mat's voice as if he had seen, or foreseen, how hard it could be—"for a woman without any money. But it must be your own wish and decision."

A very shrewd observer might have detected even a kind of appeal in the deep, short voice; and a shrewder, that the appeal was made to qualities which did not exist.

Charlotte, with her little white hands composedly folded on her lap, faced the two quite fearlessly; and courage is a fine quality, even if it be not employed to a fine end; while on the straight line of her mouth came that look that Hargraves knew.

"I still think it would be better," she said—and the tone of her voice effectively put Hargraves and Rowe into the position of tamperers, for their own ends, with a plainly authenticated testament, and herself into the *rôle* of the strictly righteous person who would permit no interference—"to carry out papa's *real* will, without improvements. Of course," she turned to Rowe, "Hargraves and I should never let Patty want, and shall be ready to help her in any way; so that it will be much the same thing."

Hargraves, turning round to the fire again, said suddenly, "It will be a very different thing. It will not be independence."

There was no weakness in Charlotte, and she never harked back, so she only said, "Then there

is nothing else, Richard?" (Alone out of all the world she could consider Rowe by his full name.) "Because, if not, I have a good many things to see to." And having successfully snuffed one of the candles which was guttering, she left with a faint rustle of new mourning, and full honours.

Rowe, with difficulty, refrained from the expression of several sentiments bubbling over in his mind—having the perfectly correct intuition that old Hargraves, even if he judged that cool little cat (this was Rowe's designation) his wife, in his own mind, would never permit the slightest disparagement of her on any one else's lips.

So the only satisfaction left to Richard was to open the study door and call out, "Here, I say, Patty! Are you there? Just come in here for a minute!" (the solemnest conventions regarding Christian names had no effect on Dick)—which Patty did.

Grief had not proved becoming to her. Perhaps, if it is genuine, it is not becoming to any one. There was a lack of interest in her manner as if, still, nothing mattered.

Rowe explained the whole business of both wills to her, pretty explicitly, and in as few words as possible. When he came to Charlotte's part in the matter, he looked up at Hargraves's broad back at the fireplace—"that back too broad to be conceived by any narrow mind"—and judiciously moderated his phraseology.

He was, perhaps, disappointed, and attributed

it to the astounding ignorance of women in business matters—the ignorance which would have been more astounding if it had not been always most carefully cultivated—that Patty seemed scarcely aware of what she had missed, and simply said, with the quick tears in her eyes, “How extremely kind of Cousin William to even *think* of leaving me so much!” which was not precisely the point.

Rowe, following the unprofessional but not unprecedented course of telling Julia that night the events of the day, described this attitude of mind as getting hold of the wrong end of the stick. Whereat Julia—husband and wife were sitting over the fire—laid her hand on his knee and shook her head a little, without answering. When Rowe relieved his feeling by alluding to Charlotte by several uncomplimentary adjectives, of which “confounded avaricious” was one, Julia said meditatively, “No, she isn’t, Dick. She wants that money to do lots of kind things with, only she isn’t quite large-minded and generous enough to do one kind thing with it, all at once. That’s really it.”

And it really was.

When Rowe had left Leaf’s study, Patty came up to Hargraves, who was still standing by the fire, looking steadfastly into it, touched his sleeve to attract his attention, and said in a moved voice, “Fancy, Mat! Cousin William thinking of giving me three thousand pounds!”

Fortune's Sharp Adversitee 207

Whereat Hargraves, something under Rowe's delusion as to Patty's business acumen, answered, "The will wasn't signed, so it comes to the same thing as if he hadn't thought of it."

And Patty replied, warmly, "That's just where you're wrong! You see"—she touched his sleeve again with one light finger and looked up into his face—"wherever I am, or however poor I am, I shall always be able to feel all my life that Cousin William would have made me rich—if he could."

By a leaping flame, she saw suddenly that one other person would also have made her rich—if he could.

## CHAPTER X

### AWAKENING

IN a very few weeks, the affairs of William Leaf were settled, the old house dismantled and put up for sale, and the Hargraves, accompanied by Patty, Anna, and Clement, had returned to Tottenham.

Hargraves and Charlotte had gone several times to the churchyard of St. Clement's, and as they stood by the grave—Hargraves perfectly silent, and Charlotte making sensible suggestions, in a lowered voice, about the tombstone—it struck him that, if he lay beneath it, she would stand there, equally composed and sensible, with his successor.

Well, no crime in that!

If the stone-mason reckoned on tears to blind the eyes to the preposterous height of his charges, in the case of the neat little lady who accompanied his present customer he had reckoned without his host, and Charlotte's engaging tones and fearless sense of justice considerably reduced the price of the monstrosity which was presently erected above Leaf's head.

Patty never went to see the grave, and could

not even be persuaded to attend St. Clement's on the Sunday after the funeral, and the funeral sermon in which, in carefully selected phrases, the rector paid tribute to a better than himself. Few self-inflict pain if it be entirely painful; the wearer of the hair-shirt comforts his soul by afflicting his body, and those who indulge in grief find some indulgence in it.

Patty remained indeed what certainly Charlotte, and at times Hargraves, felt to be culpably listless and indifferent; would sit for an hour with her ruddy head against old Anna's knee, doing nothing; or, with Clement, looking out of the window, doing nothing still, till one day Hargraves, finding her alone, said—it may be he had slowly and carefully thought out that consolation, as the only one—"For himself, you know, I am sure it was a good thing. He had more to gain by death than to lose."

He paused a long time, and added simply, "It was so with my father and mother. It does happen sometimes."

The idea appealed at once to Patty's unselfishness and to her imagination.

After that, she went round the house and helped Charlotte ticket the furniture which was to be put into the sale, and the furniture which was not; was very grateful to her for many small presents reminiscent of that happy home, and, presently, for saying that Clement might accompany Patty for the very long visit Patty was to pay to Totten-

ham, until her future settled itself—on condition only that Clement became a yard-dog and was housed in the vacant kennel near the stables.

Patty whispered apologies in Clement's ear for this approaching degradation; but she had not expected anything else; what she had fully expected as a matter of course, and perhaps showed she had expected, was that old Anna should end her days in Charlotte's home.

Charlotte's sense of duty was much too high not to do hers in the matter, but when she said to Hargraves, "Patty has not any idea how much inconvenience an old woman, getting weak-minded, causes in a house, and upsets the other servants!" Hargraves was able to reply truthfully, "No, she has not."

Old Anna was indeed—happily for herself—more bewildered than distressed by the break-up of the home which had been hers as long as it had been Leaf's. Hargraves used to come into the little room, where the shaking old fingers were stitching at *his* shirts now, and sit with her for ten minutes—not talking, but occasionally saying something; yet so far conveying kindness and sympathy that, when he had been gone a little while, the old brain confused him with her master, and she told Patty long stories of "those two young things in there," pointing to the drawing-room, and thinking they were Leaf and his wife.

Patty mercifully humoured all these delusions.

When Anna, after long stitching in silence, shook

an agitated old head, and said, "I don't think that baby"—meaning the little Charlotte of five-and-twenty years ago—"ought to be left up there all alone," Patty shouted, "I'll go and see to her"; and went—into the adjacent pantry, where she marked time for a decent interval, and then returned to say, in a voice which must have roused the profoundest of infant slumbers, "She is sound asleep and quite all right!"

Whereas Charlotte conscientiously tried to clear up relationships, which made confusion worse confounded, and said to Patty, "You see, I do not like to tell lies about it!" which made Patty laugh a little, and reply, "Most luckily, Char, I don't mind at all!"

Two days before the little party were to leave Martin's Lane for ever, Patty received, for the first time in her life, a letter from a foreign country. It was from Darell who, travelling in Italy, had but just heard the news of Leaf's death.

Though his acquaintance was, he said, so short both with the dead man and his cousin, he was emboldened to write to her because he believed he had seen that there existed between them no common affection, and that the loss would also mean to her the loss of a happy home.

Patty read the letter twice; then, with some softness in her dark eyes, passed it to Charlotte and Hargraves.

Hargraves could no more have accomplished its tactful and easy phrases—they had in them the



ring of complete sincerity and sympathy—than he could have written *Hamlet*. He returned the letter without a word. Charlotte also said nothing; but, every now and again during the evening, she contemplated the unconscious Patty with a considering eye; in about twenty-four hours' time inquired if she had replied to the letter, Patty, the putter-off, replying, "Oh dear, no, Char! not yet"; Charlotte gave it to be understood, but not in a vulgar manner, that she considered persons with a title deserved to be more promptly answered than others not so blest; that evening, when Patty was out of the room, said to Hargraves, "Patty *is* so like Cousin David! He always missed all his chances"; and Hargraves, reading, was resolute not to inquire what chances Patty was missing on the present occasion.

During the first few weeks at Tottenham, no mention at all was made by Charlotte of the post of governess which must eventually be found for Patty, and Patty seemed for the moment to accept the present and regard the future with a fatalism, or perhaps, a trust in Providence, which Hargraves, much more religious, could never have accomplished. Once or twice, as he rode up to town on Peter,—with the reins dropping loosely about that sensible animal's neck,—he asked himself if the ideas he was always refusing to see in his wife's mind were also in Patty's, and all his instincts—stronger and surer than reason—told him they were not.

Meanwhile, she had settled into place; helped Charlotte a little in the house; would have assisted to teach needlework to the little girls at the Blue School, only they were so very much better at it than she was herself; surreptitiously saved bones for Clement at dinner, and, muffled in an old pelisse, gave them to him afterwards in the bleak and dripping stable-yard, apologising to him, with kisses on the top of his head, for his cold and derogatory position. When, later in the evening, that position afflicted him to tears—as it did not seldom at first—Hargraves rose silently from his place at the fireside; presently in the yard there ensued silence; and, when he returned, Patty, perceiving the crumbs of a biscuit on his blue breeches, raised grateful eyes to say, "Thank you."

Between her and Julia Rowe there sprang up soon a friendship based on something sounder than intellectual affinity, though there was that between them also; and Patty was one of the few women Rowe liked without admiring.

She became fond, too, of the little girls; walked up to the High Cross sometimes on a wet or snowy afternoon,—her life at Great Farning had made her much less in awe of weather than most women of her generation,—sat in the nursery with them, and dressed and played at dolls, not so much remembering her own love of them as renewing it.

Those afternoons were much more to her taste than the fine ones when she and Charlotte drove in a slow and solemn grandeur in the new barouche;

and Patty had to remind herself that a condescending air of dignity is sometimes found in persons born to barouches, and without any of Charlotte's excuse of their being a novelty.

Christmas was rather dismal, because Charlotte, like many other people, vaguely felt that a turkey, stuffed, and a plum-pudding, on fire, were commanded in the Bible; and the three sat at that feast, making a would-be cheerful conversation, "with one mute Shadow watching all."

On New Year's Day, Charlotte, having taken relationship and the festal season into account, considered that it would not be improper to invite the Rowes and the children to dine, *en famille*.

Old age is the past incarnate, and children the cords to draw men to hope and the future.

There was the most beautiful, long, grown-up dinner. Lily, in a pink sash, sat on a tall velvet chair between her father and Charlotte; and Bertha, in a blue, on an exactly identical chair between Hargraves and Patty.

At dessert, when the Shrewsbury cakes—the finest of chefs cannot make those cakes now as Aunt Charlotte's perfectly plain cook made them then—and Aunt Charlotte's particular damson cheese had been consumed, a hint or suspicion of port wine was poured into the fairy decanter in front of each little girl and much filled with water; each sipped the decoction with a solemn joy; and when Bertha beheld Uncle Mat hold his glass up to the light and critically admire its colour, she

held up hers; Hargraves said, "Do you approve of the vintage, madam?" and Bertha replied, with great gravity, "Yes, Uncle Mat, I do," and they all toasted Her young Majesty, the Queen.

Presently, Hargraves fell into a profoundly deep absorption; in the midst of it stretched an absent hand to take a pear from the beautiful Brighton tazza of sham fruits in the middle of the table; Lily's laugh rang out as clear as a bell and her rejoicing legs kicked the table underneath (so that Aunt Charlotte laid a calming hand upon them), and Bertha's round face got red all over in delight. Then Uncle Mat made an old man out of an orange, with almonds for his eyes, his nose, and his mouth; and took him a fearfully realistic Channel crossing in a finger-bowl. The children laughed so much that Patty, taking, as she always did, colour from her environment, laughed almost as much; and the sadness of her face softened into youth again.

In the drawing-room, Rowe sang one of his two hunting songs, Julia accompanying it, at the cheerfully erratic pace he set, at the piano.

But one's parents' accomplishments are always tame, from familiarity.

The barometer rose to Set Fair again when Hargraves took a child on each knee, sang, *Ye Mariners of England*, which had more than once (moderately) entertained a bar-parlour, and then that far more delightful ditty—

“Miss Myrtle is going to be married:  
The gossips may say what they can:  
But she’s the most charming woman,  
And he’s the most fortunate man!”

Bertha repeated, “And he’s the most fortunate man,” with a rapt delight at the end, and asked for the whole song—it had eight explanatory verses—all over again.

When the party was finished, and the children had taken a parting look out of the window of the hackney coach to see if Uncle Mat, standing at the top of his great flight of steps, would repeat his last delightful contortion of face, which he obligingly did, Charlotte, returning to the drawing-room and righting it—children are very destructive,—said, “I am not sure if we ought to have allowed *quite* so much noise—with dear papa’s death so recent!” and Patty, still out of breath from the last game, and putting back rumbled curls, replied impulsively, “Oh, Charlotte, I am sure Cousin William would like us to laugh—if only we can!” While Hargraves, the solemn chief source of the mirth, followed his usual judicious plan, and said nothing.

In a few days, the entirely unexpected happened, and Charlotte, who had all her life enjoyed stronger health than was considered perfectly refined in a young lady, fell ill, and the cheerful, dapper little Dr. Browne, who lived next door to the Rows at the High Cross and doctored everybody who

was anybody in Tottenham, was sent for by Hargraves.

Dr. Browne,—he wore an old-fashioned tie wig to match his name, and his neat legs were encased in worsted stockings,—who had neither more nor less than the usual medical accomplishments of the day, was in one sense an ideal doctor in that his patients were directly better from what he was, independent of what he did.

He was so cheerful and pleasant about the pains from which Charlotte was suffering, with a good deal of fortitude, that she was as much surprised as he was himself when they resolved themselves into a really bad attack of rheumatism which would necessitate several weeks in bed.

To that large class of persons who think that all illnesses but their own are imaginary, slight, or might have been prevented by a little common-sense, Patty certainly did not belong. Her abundant compassions were ready for the small, as for the great, misfortunes of life; and she very likely gave Charlotte more sympathy than was needed—not quite realising at first that Charlotte only suffered the actual pains of the moment, and never the much worse ones of to-morrow.

When the nurse discovered that what pleased the patient best was not, primarily, that she herself, but that the house should be properly looked after, Patty, with a sigh, attacked those duties; took down on a slate Char's ideas about the dinner; made a special memorandum on a special

sheet of paper as to how many candles and sausages she desired to the pound, and lost the paper immediately; while, in the kitchen, she humbly entreated the cook, as a favour (which was quite the wrong way about, though it was successful), to keep things as her mistress would like them.

Hargraves, who had supposed Charlotte's serene health immune from illness, was greatly distressed at it. He came straight to her room directly he returned from town.

On Tuesday, he bought her a little ring; Charlotte tried it on, admired it, thanked him, and issued from her pillows minute directions as to where he would find her jewel-box, and in what part of it the ring was to go. On Wednesday, he brought down a book, *The Omnipresence of the Deity*—that appalling, early effort of "Satan" Montgomery—which Hargraves had designed to please by its handsome coat, and which the invalid conceded would nicely trim the drawing-room table; while on Thursday and Friday he produced respectively a pint of turtle soup, and of special port from the Martin's Lane cellars.

After dinner, every night, he arrived in her bedroom with the inevitable *Times*, sat by her side, and took it to be his duty to read her extracts from it as usual—whether it bored her or not; and knowing that, in point of fact, it did.

Once he asked her if she would prefer something else. She replied in a resigned voice, "Oh, no! I don't think so, thank you."

Now and then, when he had finished the leading article, he perceived her eyes had closed; and having put a light shawl over her feet—there were many ways in which he was as gentle and thoughtful as a woman—regarded her attentively for a few minutes, and then left the room, on the tips of his large boots, creaking dreadfully.

Sometimes Charlotte's eyes then cautiously opened; more often the soporific properties of the leader had proved effectual.

As she grew better, her sensible desire that her illness should not discompose the household became stronger; she sat up and sewed with great spirit, and awfully awed the kitchen-maid, who would have preferred to wash dishes for ever, by having a special private bedside Bible-class for her three times a week.

Meanwhile, downstairs, Patty gave Hargraves his breakfast every morning as she had given Leaf. Then she wrapped herself and her shining head in an old shawl, and sometimes went with him round the wintry garden and the hothouses with their summer warmth and their Southern balm and scents; and as it was certainly not her business to note what had not come up, put her face deep into what had, and said rapturously, "Mat! I think Italy and Heaven must smell like this!" whereat Matthew—in these days he sometimes surprised himself—replied, "I have never been in either, so I can't say."

Peter knew, but not—then—his master, that he



came home from the City now at a pace something less leisurely than before.

What Patty had achieved in Leaf's house, so in Hargraves's house here now. He, who had always great difficulty in putting his thoughts into words, would have been deeply puzzled to say what she did to the solemn magnificence of the drawing-room. Only he knew that when he had been upstairs to see Charlotte, and came down into it, it was a pleasant place, with his usual chair turned to the fire waiting for him, Patty's work thrown on a corner of the sofa, her book face downwards on the prim table, and herself—in that idleness fire-light necessitates—looking up to ask and to tell him the events of the day.

After dinner, when he returned from reading to Charlotte, he did not resort to Shakespeare or Boswell, after his usual habit; though always cautiously putting one of them ready at his side.

Sometimes, it was of books they began to talk. Patty had read a hundred times more than he had, and in that age when in art and in literature conventionality had "usurped the place of life and truth," the mild pair at Great Farning had been as little afraid to laugh, very gently, at what was famous and bad, as to appreciate what was obscure and good; and after a time Hargraves acknowledged that he respected Rogers and the "Annuals," *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, and Alison's *History of Europe*, only technically and on paper,

and had shown his real opinion by never reading a word of them.

Not more fond than Mr. Tulliver of being "told the rights of things" by his own fireside, he never found in his companion the slightest tincture of that consciousness of superior knowledge which often makes an educated woman more boring than a fool; while, though it would be profane and ridiculous to compare Patty to Moses striking the rock, thoughts he had hardly known he had, and feelings he had never thought to express, came—even now slowly, seldom, and with difficulty, but came—to his careful lips, and he acknowledged in her, with a humility not easy to him, the livelier imagination and the quicker brain.

He would certainly not have been himself if he had renounced at her bidding any of his principles. He was always steady, simple, and sure. Unbemused by any cleverness of his own, or other people's, he only saw two ways in this tortuous world—the right and the wrong.

Patty, looking up at him, considering, knew in him the wiser heart. It seemed to her he steadied her judgments. He was not always right, but she was surprised, when she recalled the little he said, to find how right it was.

One night, they discussed the sheep and the goats. Hargraves was all for knowing now, and for certain, what pen to put them in; you were good or bad, but not both at once.

And Patty, with her elbows on her knees and

her chin in her hands, said: "You can't divide them, Mat!" Then, with a femininely sudden descent from the abstract to the concrete, "I am sure I don't know where you would have put papa and me, because if duties were very unpleasant (as they generally are!) we could nearly always find a reason why we need not do them, while you, I suppose"—she turned the reflectiveness of her eyes on him with a sigh—"if you knew what you ought to do, would always do it!"

Whereat Hargraves, having searched his soul, said, gruff and simple, "I suppose so. You must."

In her character he was not at all blind to that pliability and indecision which he regarded as weaknesses and regrettable, because, in her solitary position in life, they would militate against her happiness, and which, while he regretted, he liked. For the feeling that the woman has a supreme need of him will be powerful to draw the man to her so long as men and women are men and women; and protection is at least as sweet to the protector as to the protected.

The consideration of her future they both tacitly postponed—Patty without great difficulty, Hargraves not easily—until Charlotte was better.

Since the scene in the library with Rowe, Hargraves had never again spoken, and never again spoke to Patty all his life, on Charlotte's part in regard to Leaf's two wills. But for Rowe, and her own informing heart, she might have thought he approved Charlotte's action and had instigated it.

When the tea came in, Hargraves milked and sugared a cup with great precision to Charlotte's liking, and took it up to her. He knew that he would have stayed with her if he could possibly have thought his staying gave her pleasure.

When he returned to the drawing-room, he saw sometimes that Patty's dreaming mind had hardly perceived his absence, and they went on with the conversation as if there had been no break; or she stretched to the sofa for her needlework—because stitching helps thought and clarifies it—and the clock ticked, the fire crackled, and the cows, by their unliquid stream in the hard pictures, looked on a comradeship which could bear the test of silence.

At half-past nine it was Patty's duty to administer to the patient one of those preposterous doses then frequent even in the simplest maladies.

She forgot the duty several times; Hargraves pointed to the clock with a forefinger; Patty jumped up from the fender-stool with, "Mat! what a brute I am," and Matthew, with just a ripple on the surface of his gravity, replied, "The word is too strong."

The stroke of ten was the trumpet call to devotion which Hargraves answered immediately; the servants filed in; he read a denunciatory chapter in a voice which defied his audience to contradict it; the kitchenmaid's inattentive eye wandered round the stately splendours of the drawing-room, and Patty's thoughts much further away; and old

Anna—shaking head and curls bent over the Bible in her lap—murmured the good words after her master.

He was quite grateful to Charlotte if, as he was undressing in his room, she called from her pillows to him to do a commission for her on the morrow in one of those good old shops in the City.

Once he matched some wool for her there—naturally wrong, but with a deep conscientiousness; so that Charlotte, showing the result to Julia (who had come to visit the sick in her affliction), said, "I think Hargraves is stupider even than most men in those ways!"

Julia answered, from experience, "But, then, Char, he is so much more patient and unselfish!" whereat Charlotte, a little virtuous and improving, "I believe, Julia, most men would be so if one treated them with tact and judiciousness!"

"One feels always," wrote Mrs. Carlyle, "one could manage other women's husbands so much better than they do—and so much better than one manages one's own husband!"

It was March before Charlotte was convalescent; and April before she was downstairs again.

Hargraves and Patty did not talk much on their last evening *à deux*; Patty tidied the deep drawer of a work-table which would not reach Charlotte's standard of order, and after tea—Hargraves taking up his book—she went and sat an hour with Anna, not much hearing what she said, till Anna showed a disposition to weave in inextricable confusion

Hargraves with Leaf and Patty with Leaf's wife; when Patty jumped up, and, contrary to her usual custom, shouted an explanation, saying to herself for her own satisfaction, "Idiot!"

There was quite a fête when Charlotte, looking beautifully fresh, like a very pink rose after the cool of a night and a shower, came down the next day to dinner. Hargraves got up a bottle of his best Madeira, and they drank the invalid's health, and at dessert Patty took Anna a glass in which to drink it too.

When she came back to the dining-room, Matthew was saying that on the Monday following he had arranged with old Barnes (under Hargraves's rule a St. Martin's summer had come on that aged prop of the house, and he was no bad aide-de-camp) that he, Hargraves, should take the day off and go to Greenwich for his annual visit.

Charlotte, fearing he would ask her to go too, hastened to say that she did not feel strong enough as yet for a long expedition; also that on Tuesday she had thought of asking a few friends to dine—quietly—which would make Monday busy.

"But, perhaps," says Charlotte, "Patty would like to go with you."

Patty liked it above all things. She had never seen Greenwich, or been anywhere, and surprised herself by hoping as eagerly as a little girl before school-feast that the weather would be fine, and Fate—in whom she had, as usual, a good deal of trust—propitious. Hargraves, considering destiny

as liable to trickiness and requiring management, tapped a falling barometer with an anxious finger; and, when the day dawned, exquisite in April smiles, having wept its light showers of tears through the night, shook his sober head and said, "It *was* falling," in answer to Patty's "I *felt* it could not be so disagreeable as to be wet!"

At breakfast, Mrs. Hargraves manifested a faint sense of relief in getting the scene clear for her preparations—born in a different class of life, she would certainly have been one of those excellent managers who relegate a husband perpetually to his stocking-feet or the scullery for fear of soiling the house—and said presently, "I should like you, Hargraves, please, to order the salmon for to-morrow for me at Nutt's"—Nutt's was a famous fish-shop at Greenwich—and she entered into technicalities of price and weight, to which Patty did not listen, and Hargraves, who despised any note-book but his mind, wrote there securely.

They were to drive up to London in the gig Hargraves had lately bought himself.

When it was brought round to the door (Charlotte had gone off, with the household keys jingling at her round waist, to the kitchen), the astonished nymphs with the trays beheld Clement ensconced on the seat—jumping and barking distractingly. Through the din, Hargraves said, "I thought you would like to take him," and as they were driving away, Patty put her hand

through Mat's arm and gave it a grateful squeeze, and exclaimed, "Mat! you're an angel!"

. . . . .

"Il n'y a pas de vie heureuse," said Sophie Arnould; "il y a seulement des jours heureux."

The road from Tottenham to London was a pretty country one then, and, with all things budding and beginning under the April sunshine and in the thin morning air, would have cheered even drooping spirits.

Patty, warm in her old winter pelisse,—secure that Hargraves would see no difference between that and her new thin one,—held Clement in her arms; and if her enjoyment had silences, his was vociferous—only pausing sometimes to turn and lick her face in a great hurry before looking eagerly round to gloat over low dogs, who had no carriage and perforce went on paws.

Hargraves drove without speaking till they had passed the Rowes' house and Dr. Browne's—fat, ivy-covered, and self-contained—when their way led them past more modest dwellings, with creepers or a timid rose stealing up their white faces, and before them compact and well-cared-for little gardens.

In one such garden, at its gate, a man—a City clerk, perhaps—in the stiff and preposterously respectable dress of the man of the day, was saying good-bye to his wife, and the sturdy, jolly, ugly little boy clinging to her skirt. The woman, in a



light gown, with an old bonnet hanging by its ribbons on her arm, had no beauty but youth and contentment. . But, together, the three typified the ideal trinity of human life—in which, alas! there is not always happiness, but outside of which the supreme happiness can never be.

Hargraves inclined the butt end of his whip in the direction of this picture, and said—perhaps referring to it as a whole, or only to the neat house and garden, and very likely not knowing which himself—“That doesn't look so bad!”

He could not remember afterwards what they talked of, or if they talked much at all on that drive; and very likely the quality and quantity of the conversation were both negligible. But he did remember that, though he could not and never did modify any of those strict canons of female beauty in which he had, so to speak, been grounded and trained, he found in the face near his own—deep in its cavern of black coal-scuttle—a perpetual change and charm.

Peter was put up at the “Boar's Head,” Eastcheap, as usual. Hargraves did not propose visiting Leaf's grave in St. Clement's churchyard hard by, for he knew Patty would rather never think of Leaf there, but always as the dear and living self she had known.

Her mind turned to him, as Hargraves's had done, and she said, “*Wouldn't* he have enjoyed a day like this? I so often wish now I had persuaded him to take more holidays! People

seem to think, when you come to die, you only regret the duties you left undone, but I am sure," said Patty earnestly, "I shall regret the innocent pleasures I might have taken, and did not!"

Hargraves considered this unusual view of a death-bed repentance in silence.

Patty said, "Mat, you're too sternly dutiful! You really need me as a corrective!"

And perhaps he did.

They went down Swan Lane—which, if it is greasy and murky now, was greasier and murkier then—to Swan Pier; and took one of the new steamboats which had only begun to run a year earlier, and were already much frequented.

But it was a working hour and day, and their companions were few. The river was dancing in sunshine; the black barges and wherries made effective foil to the lightness of the day; for once the great dome of the old Cathedral stood out clear and firm, undraped with mists.

Hargraves felt it his duty at first to give Patty, who was not scientific, a short account of the workings of steam-power; till he found himself as inattentive to his own words as she was, and she said with a sigh, "Don't let us bother how we are going! Let us just go!" and they went.

Charlotte had packed them up a light lunch, and as they sat and ate it Hargraves said—Patty had detected that it was not easy to him to talk of his wife, and that he never failed to do so when an opportunity for appreciating her came—how

thoughtful and clever a manager she was, and how if he expressed a wish, on the subject, for instance, of the bacon—Patty smiled a little—it was gratified at once.

“It is a great change after lodgings,” said Hargraves gravely—and she knew he had told himself the same thing many times before—“and I am most grateful to her.”

Patty said warmly, “I know you must be!”

The rest of the lunch they finished, with great help from Clement, in silence.

The five miles of river seemed as one. When they landed at Greenwich, Hargraves pointed out the various objects of interest—the “Ship,” from which Jack Ward was fortunately away on his wedding trip—and remarked simply, as an original discovery, what Dr. Johnson and others had observed before him, how much narrower and shorter were his native streets than he thought he had left them as a boy.

To-day, he felt a kind of pride and proprietary interest in the place.

On Charlotte’s one visit there with him, the lowness of beer as compared with the refinement of wine had been perpetually present to him; and when he had shown her his mother’s monument in St. Alphege’s, she had taken out her little pocket-handkerchief, briskly rubbed a black mark from the marble, and inquired in a clear church whisper if the erection had been expensive.

He and Patty stood looking at it in silence.

Patty's old pelisse touched Mat's shoulder; he half fancied that, but for the fraction of a second, her hand lay on his rough one, and was sure of the understanding sympathy of her heart.

Then they climbed up to the Park, where the old trees were budding, the lilac showed its delicate green, and the song of birds was in the air. In the South, spring comes warm and generous, her lap full of gifts, grown at once to ripeness and beauty, like Juliet; but in our Northern lands there is always something austere and virginal about her; her delicate hand cool to the cheek; her passion and fulfilment for the morrow.

Hargraves found a seat under a great tree, and, presently, as he and Patty sat there, he found himself telling her something—more than he had supposed possible he could tell any one, and more than he had thought he knew—of his parents' history. He told it in the fewest prosaic words, severely economical of emotion. But the eternal charm of the love-story is that every man can give it personal application—past, present, or to come.

Clement, who had been following his nature and the glorious scents of the place and the day, came back presently, lay down,—fatigued, with his tongue out,—and contemplated thoughtfully a master and mistress who had given up talking.

They all rose after a while and went to look at the Ranger's Lodge. Patty thought she remembered that General Wolfe and Lord Lyttleton had both lived in Greenwich Park. Holborn happened

to have given Hargraves a little, but correct, information as to the identity of the General; and Patty recalled my lord's famous couplet:

“Be plain in dress and sober in your diet;  
In short, my deary, kiss me and be quiet.”

“That would be your Advice to Women too, Mat, I suppose?” she added, looking up at him.

And Hargraves replied stoutly, “It would not.”

Presently his silver turnip of a watch, which had been his father's, reminded them it was three o'clock. They were to dine at the “Hope and Anchor,” and beforehand, with permission of the owner, Hargraves showed the little house to Patty; the trim garden, and the earwiggie arbour; the charming, most insanitary, little latticed windows; a rose he had himself planted; the parlour, still stuffy; and the bar, still beery.

They dined on the balcony, overlooking the river—silver and shining in the afternoon sun. The dinner was the large red beef and the leathery apple-tart which formed then, forms now, and seems likely to form for ever, the staple product of the English inn.

Hargraves explained gravely, when the serving girl left them, how much better everything had been in his day; and Patty smiled and said, “Of course it was!”

When a great cheese, into whose cavernous depths previous guests had mined so successfully that only its vast walls remained intact, had come

and gone, Hargraves went out to transact his business with the old sexton in the church, and to make a half-yearly payment to an ancient pensioner, who was enjoying the usual nine lives of the annuitant.

He did the things perfectly methodically—with the outside of his mind alone; and came back to Patty, still sitting on the balcony dreaming very contentedly, as quickly as might be.

The day was fair to the end. As they glided up the river, the little houses by its banks had that air of home and completeness only known in perfection, perhaps, to England; and the setting sun bathed them in tranquil light.

Peter, refreshed by much eating and drinking, took his party back from Eastcheap at, for him, a smart trot. Patty and Hargraves scarcely spoke at all.

The sun set before they were home, leaving behind him wide spaces of opal and clear gold.

"Look!" said Patty, and they watched them fade into darkness.

As they turned in at the drive, Hargraves said quite suddenly in a momentous voice, "We forgot the salmon!"

Patty, but half roused from a dream by this tidings and being so constituted that it was very difficult for her ever to see that it made much difference if dinner parties ate salmon or herrings, replied consolingly, "Well, I dare say you could get it in the City to-morrow."

Hargraves said gravely, "Nutt's is better and cheaper."

Char, very trim and smiling, with a little shawl on her shoulders, came down the steps to meet them; and, when Hargraves, dismounting from the gig, immediately told her about the salmon, only said good-temperedly, "Well, you never do forget things, Hargraves, as a rule"; and knitted her brows a little to think how to remedy the disaster.

But there was a heaviness on Hargraves's face all the evening; so that at tea-time, when Charlotte was out of the room for a moment, Patty looked across the table and said, "Mat! I don't think Charlotte was really vexed"; and Hargraves replied at once, "No, I don't think she was."

All the same, some oppression seemed to remain with him.

Charlotte, as an invalid, still went to bed early; and to-night, Patty, because she was tired.

For an hour after they left him, Hargraves sat doing nothing—elbow on his knee, strong chin on his hand, eyes deeply fixed—heavy with profound thought, like Rodin's *Penseur*.

## CHAPTER XI

### PASSING THE RUBICON

THE morning after the salmonless dinner party, as Hargraves was finally settling his stock before going down to breakfast, he said to Charlotte from his dressing-room, "It is time we tried to find Patty a post."

Charlotte, deciding the rival claims of two neck ribbons, replied, "I don't think there is any hurry, Hargraves."

Matthew answered, proverbially, "There is no time like the present"; and then, still vaguely reminiscent, perhaps, of the copybooks at Stinger's, "If a thing is to be done, it is better to do it at once."

Mrs. Hargraves, with her charming head on one side and her mind, apparently, on the neck ribbon, inquired, inappositely, "Do you know if Patty has heard again from Sir Francis?"

And Hargraves replied, "She has not told me so."

That afternoon, Charlotte drove Patty to the Tottenham High Street, and a little Berlin-wool emporium with which was incorporated a fee-



ble registry office for governesses and servants, and there explained Patty's requirements to the washed-out and lackadaisical spinster who presided. Miss Mangles desired to be informed if Miss—er—Wyatt could teach harp and piano, French, Italian, and the use of the globes?

Patty said simply she was unacquainted with any of these accomplishments; and Miss Mangles's sham ringlets shook regretfully.

Could Miss—er—Wyatt, then, draw in crayons, paint flowers, and teach ornamental needlework? Miss Mangles threw a pale hand in the direction of her stock-in-trade, to indicate the kind of needlework.

Patty said she could not.

Whereat Charlotte, intervening, remarked firmly that her cousin had received a first-class education in everything else—a useful term, so indisputably vague—and even knew a little Latin: Mangles sadly shaking the curls again and remarking, "Oh, our ladies would not like *that!*" as if it were something improper.

At this juncture, Charlotte, always far from deficient in worldly wisdom, spread out her feathers in the sense of arranging her new silk pelisse, and said in a stately voice, "My cousin would of course only accept a well-paid situation in a good family. She is highly connected"—here Charlotte's neat foot in its merino boot pressed on Patty's for fear Patty should say she was not—"and is simply taking up teaching, for a time,

through the pressure of unforeseen circumstances."

With this lofty sentence, Mrs. Hargraves retreated to her carriage, leaving Miss Mangles much more humble and amenable and promising to do her best.

When they were well away, Patty laughed, and kissed Charlotte, or at least a corner of her bonnet, and said, "It was so clever of you, Char, to turn old Cousin Mary Montgomery—I believe now starving at Boulogne—into well connected!"

Charlotte replied, "I should not have said it if it were not true"; and Patty, with a sigh, looking out of the window, observed, very correctly, that she herself would not have been ingenious enough to think of saying it, true or not.

That evening, in the drawing-room after dinner, Hargraves wrote on half a sheet of paper an advertisement, stating Patty's requirements, which he proposed to insert in the *Times* on the morrow.

In the 'thirties, and long after, the ordinary governess was paid less, and was generally worth less, than the cook. Marriage was the invariable destiny of the girl of all classes; and to be able to differentiate, let one say, between Butler of the *Hudibras* and him of the *Analogy*, or to be so superior as to see the superiority of John Milton over Robert Southey, would at least not better a young person's chance of establishing herself; and, if injudiciously used, might impair it.

The ordinary governess was, therefore, seldom desired (and, so, seldom qualified) to teach any-

thing but the feeblest rudiments of real education; and spent most of her time in imparting what was called the Elegant Accomplishment. As she had few really respectable endowments, self-respect was not her *forte*; she clung to her gentility; was often the "poor lady," who is obviously not a lady; and even if she had not the hypersensitiveness of Jane Eyre (and of Jane Eyre's creator), suffered many trials at the hands of her employers, and was often herself no small trial to them.

There were exceptions to these rules, of course, and, in that age as in all ages, quietly able women, qualified by nature and self-training—better than all university degrees—for their posts; but they were few, and the employers wise enough to appreciate them fewer still.

Hargraves, who had had no personal experience whatever of the demand for governesses, had resolved within himself to be something haughty and difficult, as the best means of securing Patty a really satisfactory situation with the employers who were, in the first instance, to apply in Martin's Lane. But the landaulettes and pairs which his mind had seen driving up to the door—and by whose chariot wheels he had taken so steady a resolution not to be crushed—did not appear.

He inserted a second advertisement, with the same result; when he returned home in the evening suggested tentatively that it might be the wrong time of year?

Charlotte replied calmly, "Well, perhaps it is,"

and went out of the room to fetch her needlework.

It was characteristic of her that, throughout these arrangements for Patty's future, she no more spoke of or alluded to the part she had played which had made them necessary, than did Hargraves. "Repentance is the virtue of weak minds."

Patty, looking up presently at Hargraves's face, said, "It isn't the time of year, Mat! We are all really a drug in the market, and I know hardly any of the things they want. It is good of you and Char to have kept me so long, and not to mind keeping me a little longer, but——" and she stopped, seeing the thanks had wounded Matthew in some vulnerable part of his soul.

A Mrs. Yorke, of Edmonton, put forth tendrils through the Berlin-wool shop, presently, to encircle Miss Wyatt.

Charlotte, with the best pelisse and pair, drove to see her, and closed the interview by rising to her full height,—Mrs. Hargraves could make five feet two inches go a long way,—saying with a crushing dignity, "I see that you are under a misapprehension; it is a tuitional post my cousin is seeking, and not that of a maid of all work."

When she repeated the story to Hargraves that night, his eye gratefully approved Charlotte, and gleamed at the distant Yorke quite savagely.

Without saying anything at Tottenham, he put an advertisement in another paper—also without result. After that, there was some cloud in his heart which must have shadowed his face, for

Atkins decided to postpone a request for a longer summer holiday, and even the lightsome Mason began speculating which of his recent sins had found him out.

Presently, there was a committee meeting of that Society for Befriending the hapless Widows and Daughters of the Clergy; and Hargraves realised that he had never realised before how many women there were awaiting posts, and how very few posts awaiting women; and that, when obtained, such posts hardly ever produced a sum out of which saving for old age was even a possibility.

He, whose fault, or virtue, it had never been to be lavish or open-handed, surprised his brethren and himself by voting so large an increase in the grants to be made to two sisters, beginning a very hard world, that the tough old tradesman next to him said, "Damn it, man, we're here to help 'em, not to keep 'em!" and Hargraves's silence was dogged.

As he walked back to Martin's Lane,—threading his way through the traffic with an habitual carefulness,—the natural law of the complete dependence of woman on man appeared to his thoughts for the first time as a questionable good.

At Tottenham that evening, Patty said she had heard of a situation which she considered possible—a starving country rectory, good people, wages ten pounds per annum, and, said the employer very truthfully, "great possibilities of usefulness."

Hargraves with his glass in his hand—the three were at dessert—put it down suddenly. “That won’t do at all,” he said, and his lips set.

Patty persuaded. “But, Mat, I am used to a rectory! I really think I could do some of the things they want and help them.”

And Hargraves replied, “You have first to help yourself”; and there was something so heavy on his brow, that the tactful Charlotte, peeling a late orange, changed the conversation.

The next day was Sunday. Nothing short of a tornado or an earthquake kept persons of the Hargraveses’ class from church in those days. The headache which Char’s wife-like eye had detected, and which her wife-like mind placed at the door of a pigeon-pie of the night before, accounted also for Hargraves’s silence at breakfast, and in the Psalms at morning service.

Patty sat opposite him in their blue moreen pew; and his eye was upon her so steadily that, during the Second Lesson, she looked up at him with a flicker of a smile to ask why. It had never before seemed to him that she was quite so unfitted for the *rôle* of *femme seule*; but this morning he seemed to see in every line of her—in the soft fulness of her figure, the irregular charm of her face, in a certain indecision of manner, in her faults and her virtues, in her cleverness and her limitations—the call to the natural life. It was quite easy to fancy Charlotte, and even Julia, who was capable of a profound feeling, making no bad

best of the solitary existence; asserting just rights and getting them; but Hargraves knew, with a sort of rage at fate and even a kind of anger with Patty herself, that the unscrupulous would always be taking advantage of her; that she would be wounded and not strike back—in exchange for wages which employers would know better than to offer to a Charlotte.

In the sermon the preacher was delicately, but fairly obviously, paving the difficult way to his wearing a surplice in the pulpit on a future Sunday. Julia, with Rowe in a pew below, listening attentively, girded her loins for battle upon the subject. But, in the April sunshine in the churchyard, she perceived Hargraves's thoughts were elsewhere, and Charlotte accounted for his passivity by the headache.

Afterwards, as Hargraves and Patty were walking round the White Hart Lane garden—Charlotte had stopped to speak to Symonds, who was paying his brief Sabbatical visit—Patty asked, "Is the headache bad, Mat?"

He answered, "No"; and Patty, with her smile, which had the effect sunshine has on landscape, said:

"If it's my destinies, please don't bother! Something is sure to be found."

And Hargraves said, "Something is. But I want to be certain it's the right thing."

That she might stay on at White Hart Lane, almost indefinitely, was a possibility Charlotte had

herself hinted; and with which, since the evening of the day at Greenwich, Hargraves never coquetted. It was characteristic of him that, though he gave no explanations, he was not afraid, but believed, rightly, that if Patty did not know his motives, she would know he was doing what he thought to be his duty.

The next morning, as he was sitting in his sanctum at Martin's Lane, Mason's head came round the door with, "A gentleman to see you, sir."

When Darell followed, Hargraves felt as if he had been expecting him. Darell had some excuse about claret. He had just returned to England, and had been grieved to learn abroad of the sudden death of the senior partner. How were Mrs. Hargraves and Miss Wyatt? Might he call upon them one afternoon? Hargraves had known that was coming, and was ready. Tottenham was too far away for a call; Mrs. Hargraves would write and fix a day for Sir Francis to dine with them. He said the words as if they had been a lesson. Darell's pleasant easiness did not thaw him to any conversational liquidity; but the guest parted from him, not tolerating him from interested motives, but really liking and respecting him as worthy, if dull; admirable too, to a weaker nature, for something settled and steady in the soul.

After he had gone, Hargraves sat for a few minutes, carefully watching the motes dancing in a shaft of spring sunshine, which had penetrated the dark room.



When that evening, having been told of Darell's visit, Charlotte—she and Hargraves were dressing for dinner—said in a satisfied voice, "I told you so, Hargraves!" Hargraves did not reply that she had told him nothing.

Patty, informed of the news at dinner, said at once she was glad; she had thought Sir Francis very pleasant, and he had written a kind letter.

The date was fixed and he came. Mrs. Hargraves had decided to have no one to meet him. At dinner, he was not in the least boring over his travels, and never fell into the common snare of the traveller returned, in making his hearers feel fools for having been nowhere themselves. Mrs. Hargraves's interest in foreign parts was faint, but she said, "How very interesting!" or "Beautiful!" when necessary. Patty tried to draw Hargraves into the conversational web; but it was only she herself who knew anything of the places and pictures, and wanted to know more.

After dinner, Charlotte, who was making lace, made it half listening to Darell and Patty, as one listens to the conversation of children while one's own grown-up mind is concerned with the things that matter—what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. Then she put the work aside, said to Darell, "I am going to see old Anna—I dare say you remember seeing her in Martin's Lane"; and Hargraves, at the same time, went out to give Clement his bone.

It took longer this evening than usual; and when

he returned, Patty looked up quickly into his face and asked, "Is it cold out there? You look as if it were cold."

On the next Sunday afternoon in Trinity Chapel, in a pew adjacent to the Hargraveses', there appeared, rather late in the Psalms, Darell's well-groomed head and good-looking, delicate face. Hargraves kept his eyes from it throughout the sermon. In the churchyard Darell said he had been enticed to the church by the report of the incumbent's excellent preaching, and Patty laughed and said, "How dreadfully disappointed you must have been!"

They walked to White Hart Lane in the right pairs. Once or twice Patty turned to include Char or Hargraves in the conversation; but they were absorbed in their own.

Darell accepted the inevitable invitation to stay on for the five o'clock dinner with an agreeable diffidence. Charlotte suggested Patty should show him the roses in the hot-house, and Patty turned to Hargraves with a faint frown on her forehead and said, "Aren't you coming too, Mat?"

Whereat the resourceful Charlotte replied that she and Hargraves were both coming, and somehow, after the first greenhouse, they vanished into thin air.

It was Darell, rather than Patty, at dinner that afternoon who persisted in drawing his host into the conversation; and over the wine after dinner, he showed much of the intellectual pliability and

sensitiveness of Patty herself, till the talk changed its channel, and Hargraves perceived in him a financial shrewdness (in which Patty was lamentably deficient), and the very sensible intention of one who, having always been comfortable, was minded to guard those comforts.

Hargraves, sipping his wine, could not have told whether he was glad that he liked the man, or would have been better pleased to dislike him. He led the talk so tactfully on to subjects on which Hargraves knew something, and could say it simply and well, that it was the host who made the after-dinner sitting so long that he quite deserved the slightly interrogative eyebrows which Charlotte turned to him when the drawing-room was reached.

After that Darell, without laying any particular stress on the magnificence of the preaching at Trinity Chapel, came down to Tottenham every Sunday, and dined as a matter of course.

Two or three times in the week—he was staying at Long's in Bond Street—he wrote a needless note to Miss Wyatt, to ask for the loan, or the return, of a book he did not want; and one day, having ridden down to White Hart Lane, he paid a long forenoon call, during which he told her and Mrs. Hargraves over the sherry, and with an agreeable modesty, something about his house, his relatives, and his life.

Some instinct—was it of heart or mind?—had before this informed Charlotte that, for some

subtle reason, which, as purely unpractical, she did not trouble to define, it was not agreeable to Hargraves to discuss the progress of this love story; so she only once said, with a confident air, "Sir Francis is evidently very *épris* of Patty, isn't he?"

Hargraves inquired, "What is *épris*?"

Charlotte, who was not very sure herself, replied, with aplomb, "It means 'attached to,'" and the subject was dropped.

But there was nothing to prevent her private mind from rehearsing the pleasing phrase, "My cousin, Lady Darell," or from foreseeing dinner-parties in which Lady Jones's powdered and Roman nose would, to speak vulgarly, be put out of joint; or a supreme occasion when Charlotte, in a frock she had already designed from the hem to the tucker, at last found a use for the curtsy to her Sovereign which she had practised at the Pipsons' three times a week—totally unsupported by any reasonable hope of being able to use it.

As for Patty herself, she was not vain, but she was also not foolish.

At first she really thought—partly because it was more pleasant to her to think—that Sir Francis came equally to see them all. He had admired to Patty—very genuinely—Charlotte's charming prettiness; he had remarked—honestly too—that Hargraves was of that stuff which makes the Briton the man of men. (No Briton then had any doubt that he was at the top of the tree, and

that all the other nations were without the ghost of a chance of reaching that eminence.) Then Patty saw a meaning in Char's glances and manner, and resented it, declined to write an unnecessary note to Darell at Charlotte's instigation, saying—less sweet-temperedly than usual—"You had better write it yourself!" and began to observe that when Hargraves was left with her and Darell, he at once got up and left them alone. Presently Julia looked long and curiously at Patty, when they were talking in the High Cross parlour after church on Sunday afternoon, and Rowe's manner—Patty could have laughed, only she was angry—assumed a mingled air of surprise and deference.

When Darell next dined—he had asked himself, so it was impossible to be annoyed with Hargraves or Charlotte—and found Patty resolved to reply to him in monosyllables, he addressed himself very agreeably to Charlotte, and seemed not to see—perhaps did not see—that Patty had sternly donned her most unbecoming frock. "Beauty is the lover's gift; 'tis he bestows your charms."

When he next came, Patty, in a weaker mood, had not the heart to repeat snubs and coldness which had been so admirably received.

That night, after dinner—when most of Hargraves's person and presumably all his mind was immersed in the *Times*, and Charlotte had gone to see Anna—Darell leaned forward a little and, playing absently with some of the wool which hung from the work in Patty's idle hands, spoke to her

on subjects which at once challenged and flattered her wits and her mind.

Then, still playing with the wool,—once or twice his long thin fingers touched her frock,—he told her of the lands from which he had just come, which she and her father had seen at Great Farning—in the fire; those warm and scented lands, with their still blue skies, and the cypress black against them; the gleaming white houses built steeply up the hill; the misty grey-green of olive groves; the deep and constant sunshine; and knew that he fanned in her a desire to see them. They were lovely, of course—but it was often dull work seeing them alone! It was impossible, certainly, that she should love him “for the dangers he had passed”; for he had always travelled post, with a courier, and been most comfortable. But to be sad and lonely was an immediate passport to her heart, and she always felt that others felt as sorely as she could feel herself.

Darell had certainly in perfection the art of When to Go Away. He left, with excuses, before his hostess had returned to the drawing-room, and while Patty was still softened and meditative. Hargraves, coming back from seeing the guest to his horse, picked up her fallen knitting-pins, and she returned suddenly to common earth, looked up quickly into his face, and said suddenly, with a vexed accent, “Mat, why do you never say anything when Sir Francis is here?”

And Mat said gravely, smiling down at her a

little as he stood, a solid bulwark, at her back, "I suppose because I have nothing to say."

When Patty came down to breakfast the next morning, there were traces of sleeplessness, or it might be tears, in her eyes. Hargraves drove Charlotte up to town with him; she was to spend a long day with Lady Jones (who had been ill, and was still unmeet for the public eye) and be fetched home in the barouche in the evening—so Hargraves and Patty dined, rather silently, alone.

After dinner, Patty, the innovator and the unconventional, said, "Mat! Let us go out of doors! It is lovely to-night," and Hargraves, finding a blue shawl in the chest in the hall, put it over her head and her soft, bare neck.

The night had indeed the balm of a warm May. Since the day at Greenwich, now just a month ago, the laburnums had begun to rain gold; the pink and white mays were thick in scent and blossom; the leaves of the great copper beech on the prim lawn at the back of the house were soft and red; and over the ugly verandah the great trails of wisteria were purple with flower.

As the female shoe of the epoch was designed for anything rather than to keep out damp, Hargraves and Patty chose one of the dry, straight walks, which divided the garden from its neighbours. They walked it once in silence, and when the syringa near the greenhouses had flung its heavy scent for the second time across their faces, Patty said, in a sudden voice, with a break in it,

"Mat, why are you so anxious to marry me off?"

Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have said they were not thus anxious, and then have proceeded to give the reasons why they were. The hundredth man answered simply, "Because I think you will be happier married."

Patty said, "Why?" quite sharply. Then she added impatiently, "Everybody thinks that! We ought to be brought up to be independent of marriage, like you are! I suppose you think I am such a fool that there is no other way for me to earn my livelihood?" And her laugh had the sound of a sob.

Hargraves looked down at the blue shawl by his side, and said slowly, "I think the other women are the fools for not wanting their children to know what you can teach them. But they don't—so there's an end of that. I have thought of it all round"—indeed, he had—"and I'm pretty sure that people are right, and that if a woman marries a good man she is better off than if she does not marry—especially if she has no money. It's not an easy world for a lonely woman anyhow; but it's—it's a—it's a damned hard one," added Mat, stirred in the depths of him to the adjective, "if she is poor."

The blue shawl rubbed against Hargraves's arm pleadingly. "I have sometimes wondered," said Patty hopefully, "out of the things I do know—which nobody wants—if I couldn't write a book?"



Hargraves answered steadily, "Books don't pay—at least, only the publishers."

And when Patty, looking up to him with a rather rueful smile, said, "Oh, they do, sometimes!" Hargraves replied, "Yes, if you are a genius; or if you could write that trash Lady Blessington does; but you can't."

They walked half the length of the path again silently.

Then Hargraves said, as if the words were well thought out, and he had planned to say them, "Being a governess isn't any use—even if you did get a good post. There is no margin for saving in it, at least, not for saving enough to live upon. I told you about that Charity in the City. Lately, I have made special inquiries into the cases, and I shouldn't like—and Charlotte wouldn't like either," said old Mat loyally—"that yours should be like any of theirs."

The shawl rubbed, almost entreatingly, against Hargraves's arm again. "I know you wouldn't, Mat," said Patty. "But you see, you and Char aren't used to being poor—and I am."

"You're not used to fighting your own battles," said Hargraves. "Char could have done that better than you would, and Julia Rowe"—he said it as if he felt justified in disliking her for it—"very well, I dare say. But you haven't been made like that."

And when Patty looked up with her flickering smile and said, "That's a pity!" Hargraves re-

plied suddenly—as if he had not thought out that answer, “I am not at all sure about that!”

Presently he said, straightly and simply, “Darell’s a very good fellow. I have made inquiries about him. He’s your own class too, and can take you among educated people like your father, and he has tastes and interests like yours——”

And when Patty interposed, “As if any of that mattered!” Hargraves said steadily, looking down at the top of her head by his arm, “It does matter. Besides, you like him. And it’s the natural law people should marry, and when they don’t some one has to pay.”

Then Patty put her arm into Hargraves’s and said, looking up at him as if she were trying to read his plain and steady face in the fading light, “But Mat, it’s not a natural law to marry some one you only like. Sometimes you have to pay for doing that!”

And Hargraves stared straight in front of him and answered, with another note in his voice, “Sometimes you do. But I have noticed that people generally get on very well without very strong feelings—on either side.”

Patty gripped the arm a little closer. “When they are incapable of them,” she said.

They walked the path again, in a deeply thinking silence. Then a bell rang within, to mention it was nine o’clock and tea-time; and Hargraves, unconsciously punctual now as a result of having

been carefully punctual through life, turned mechanically in the direction of the house.

As they neared it, he said suddenly, "Don't do it if you feel you can't! It is only because, if you can—I think your life would be happier. It seems, of course," and his voice was suddenly hoarse, "as if you might have stayed here always with us. Only that"—he ended lamely—"wouldn't do, or be right to Char."

And Patty said, in a doubtful voice, "No, no! of course not," held his arm tightly for a moment, and then let her hand fall away from it.

The well-lit drawing-room seemed almost crudely bright after the dimness of the night without. It was Hargraves who was heavily silent at tea, and Patty who was her usual self—her persuasive and sympathetic self—who at last charmed away the oppression from his face, though it stayed, a cloaked and brooding thing—as the painter represents Death in the picture—at the back of his heart.

At tea-time, Charlotte returned, very engaging in a pink hood, and pleased with her evening, having, to the speechless surprise of Lady Jones, conveyed her (Charlotte's) opinion that City society is but City society after all.

A fortnight later—during which Darell was constantly between Bond Street and White Hart Lane, when he appeared more than once at the office of William Leaf, Son & Hargraves, Wine Merchants, and everywhere showed himself the

honourable, easy, and well-bred gentleman he was—Julia Rowe received a neat note from Charlotte, in which she asked the Rowes to dine, and added in a carefully careless postscript, "Sir Francis will be with us too."

Walking down from the High Cross to the Lane on the evening of the dinner, Rowe said he considered that the match had been uncommon neatly pulled off, and when Julia replied that she did not think any one but Sir Francis and Charlotte had exactly tried so to pull it, Rowe enjoyed that contempt for the feminine intelligence which is one of man's privileges, and of which no sensible woman ever robs him.

The dinner excelled in being what it is equally difficult for dinners, persons, and houses to be—"baith grand and comfortable."

Darell got on excellently with Julia, and complimented Charlotte on the dishes as pleasantly as if he always dined at tables where they formed the staple topic of conversation; while when Hargraves spoke, which was not unduly often, he listened to him with the respect due from a younger man to an elder and wiser. There was, indeed, hardly any difference in their ages, but Hargraves represented, not the less, experience and a considered opinion.

Mrs. Hargraves had not forgiven Rowe—and never meant to forgive him—a little scene in a library a few months before; and was therefore so polite and gracious that Rowe might have felt

snubbed if he had not been constitutionally un-snubbable. Patty herself was quieter than usual, in a new frock of Charlotte's choice.

When the wines had been put on the table and the glasses filled, Hargraves rose, and looking steadily at the wall in front of him and one of the pictures of still life, representing a brace of pheasants, a hare, a cut vegetable marrow, and a bunch of marigolds on a check tablecloth, said in that firm voice (with its challenge of *Contradict me if you can!*)—"I propose the healths of Sir Francis and the future Lady Darell!"

## CHAPTER XII

### ALTONS

ALTONS stood, and still stands, in the charming country that surrounds Bath.

The house itself had, without, the substantial hideousness that promises substantial comfort within; looked, from terraces, on to a flat garden with flat flower-beds and a neat piece of artificial water; then on to fields with browsing cows, dotted at long intervals; and to a park with deer.

One of the drawbacks of wealth—it can have very few, for the rich, to comfort the poor, are always looking for them and have, after all, been able to bring forward scarcely one that bears examination—is, that if one's house is large enough it runs every risk of ceasing to be a home; and if the garden requires more than three or four gardeners it becomes their property, and not its owner's.

The gardens at Altons were obviously and wholly Mr. Pearce's, but the house, with its great hall thickly carpeted, hung with bad portraits of ancestors, and served by silent treading men-servants (always gliding in and piling up its two

vast fires), had an air of self-contained security and comfort which denotes the Englishman's castle.

A broad staircase led to a gallery, surrounded by numbered bedrooms—some furnished in the sombre mahogany of William IV.; some, much despised by the housekeeper, pure Queen Anne; some, profoundly admired by her, in brand new satinwood; and most with a little furniture that was fast becoming priceless and a good deal that was frankly atrocious.

The drawing-room—a very long, narrow room—was decorated on the same principle, which meant, of course, that there had been really no principle, and, as in all houses worth living in, each bureau and table was a fraction of family history.

At the little *escritoire* beneath the portrait of the Darell of the Commonwealth—how weakly his Vandyck chin and forehead sloped away!—Sir Francis's mother had kept her accounts, with the laborious feminine arithmetic of the earliest days of the nineteenth century; and beneath a perfectly disastrous picture of Columbus, in a pair of red silk stockings, sighting America from a ship which could not have weathered a pond, was a sofa in violet satin, with a little sofa-table joined on to it, which the housekeeper had persuaded Darell was an absolutely essential adjunct to a drawing-room which was to have a mistress.

On the other side of the room hung the Luini, from Luino, flanked by an early Maclise; a really cruel portrait of Darell's admirable and undis-

tinguished father; a little Fra Angelico, all sweetness and light; while if Sir Francis was responsible for the purchase of a print of Charles I. taking leave of his family, he had had also the, then rare, sagacity to appreciate and buy a Constable, as dewy fresh as the morning it depicted.

The mixture of good and bad, which was much more than skin deep, naturally extended to the library.

The books, with which its shelves were full to the ceiling, were not only the duller classics which everybody hopes they once read and have merely forgotten, but no-one-in-particular's History of Peru and his Considerations on the Lower Insects—all getting quite venerable, and still uncut; then rows of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, *Blackwood*, and the *Quarterlies*; the romances which "will outlive the palace of the Escorial and the imperial eagle of the House of Austria," and those of Lady Morgan and Mrs. Aphra Behn; the singers who filled with melody the spacious times of great Elizabeth, and that "very genteel poem" the *Bas Bleu* of Mrs. Hannah More; all the books Patty and her father treasured in their meagre shelf at Great Farning; and many for whose feeble trashiness old Wyatt would have assigned, as their only fit end and use, a warm place—to be exact, it was but "the back of the fire."

The ten years between 1830 and 1840 may be said indeed, so far as literary production went, to have been the apotheosis of the mediocre person.



Shelley had raised his noble lament over Keats's young grave; and his own wild music was hushed in death. Byron and Lamb were not; Wordsworth's best work was done; Thackeray was known only as a contributor to the comic press; and he, whose glory and epitaph it was that he sang the "Song of the Shirt," was writing burlesque verse to keep his family from starvation. Tennyson's earliest enchanting volumes failed; *Paracelsus* was certainly caviare to the general. The breezy vigour of Macaulay, the manly honesty of Sydney Smith, the irresistible torrent of the energy, the humour, and the ill-restrained pathos of Dickens had but just begun to sweep before them the smug humbugs, sham decencies, and selfish formalisms with which the path to life and nature was blocked.

The acknowledged sovereign of poetry was Samuel Rogers, who had long before achieved an easy Parnassus by the *Pleasures of Memory*, and was confirmed on his throne by *Italy*—perpetually polished and invincibly dull. The streams of mellifluous verse which had poured from Mrs. Hemans and L. E. L. were still taken to be poetry. Bulwer Lytton, with his "flash falsetto dress" and his flash falsetto style—Jack of all literary trades and master of none—was esteemed one of the greatest of contemporary novelists; and the literary robustness which had enabled the women of a slightly earlier date to enjoy *Tom Jones* read aloud to the family circle after tea, had been suc-

ceeded by a depraved taste for the mawkish sweet-stuff provided by Heath's *Book of Beauty* and *The Keepsake*. Marryat's breezy humour indeed brought the salt of the sea to the lips of many male readers; and the startling cleverness of young Disraeli's bombastic fiction was already in their mouths.

In art, the wonder certainly was not that some of Darell's taste should be bad, but that any of it should be good.

Turner, indeed, that "dreamer of enchanted landscapes," was exhibiting at the new Academy; but preferred before him were *The Smile* and *The Frown* and *The Play Scene from Hamlet*. For forty years after the death of Sir Thomas Lawrence, our poor little islands produced no portrait painter worthy of the name; and in architecture, whatsoever the Early Victorian epoch was at pains to erect, our own is athirst to pull down.

The steeple with which Darell's mother (out of her pin-money) adorned Altons's church, having first razed its fine old crumbling tower to the ground, is an eyesore to this day. It was more marvellous that Darell, fresh from the Duomos of Italy, should have cut down some of his finest elms that his windows might have a better view of this monstrosity, than that Patty,—whose education had stopped quite short of architecture,—beholding it for the first time, should have been able to say, quite conscientiously, that she thought it very neat and pretty; while Charlotte could whisper,

when they attended a morning service, "This will be a very genteel little church for the wedding, Patty!"

Round the genteel little church was a village whose population was composed almost entirely of Darell's tenants and dependents.

The better housing of the poor was not then precisely a burning question; and as, at the Queen's accession, there was not a single sanitary law on the Statute Book, the annual death-rate meandered at will from thirty-seven per thousand in favoured localities to sixty per thousand in many a village of aspect quite as idyllic as Altons. It would have been certainly unreasonable to expect Darell to do for his tenants what the law compels his successors to do for theirs. He was suitably munificent in presents of coals, blankets, and shawls to the women at Christmas; and if the wages paid to their husbands and fathers were fearfully low, and their children were growing up as ignorant as the beasts that perish—for these things no individual landowner could be justly held responsible.

As it was, Darell greatly enraged some of the county magnates—especially his cousin and heir, Colonel Caldwell—by advocating an altruistic Liberalism over the walnuts and the wine; while old Caldwell, a red-faced, explosive person, did not know whether to hate Darell more or less when he found out that to talk social reform and to practise it are different things; and that Sir

Francis really, in the heart of him, considered the present dispensations of Providence as wise and beneficent, as we are all apt to do when they are in our own favour.

The Colonel, having returned home by a very crowded and uncomfortable stage to the bosom of his large and impecunious family, after the visit to Altons in which he learnt of Darell's approaching marriage, greatly relieved his mind by abusing Darell as a prig, a stick, and a nincompoop; and ended up by saying he was damned sorry for the young woman who was marrying him—for his money.

Meanwhile Darell—if he had known of the terms in which the Colonel alluded to him, he would have been right in thinking that on some lips they are compliments—was setting his house and affairs in order; and twice a week was writing to Patty letters which, evincing, as they did, and taking for granted in her, a wide acquaintance with much literature, both first and second-rate, were not a little flattering to receive in an age when men generally considered women, and women considered themselves, as "mostly fools."

When it was *de rigueur* to become studiously unnatural the moment one set pen to paper; when, instead of writing that one lived next door to a neighbour, his "residence lay contiguous," or having thrown something hard and heavy at his head in a temper, one apologised for having "discharged a missile in an involuntary absence of self-control,"

it was not surprising that even love letters were still modelled on the polite correspondence of Sir Charles Grandison and Miss Byron, and, like O'Connell's old lady, had "all the characteristics of a poker without its occasional warmth."

A few old sheets, a little spoilt by the seal, lie now beneath the writer's hand, in which a lover of 1833, who thereafter served his mistress with sixty years of faith and devotion, addresses her within three weeks of their marriage as "Dear Miss Day"; signs himself hers "very truly"; and only once so far forgets himself as to thaw to the remark that he does not doubt that his dear little Betsy will make him the best of wives.

It was not, therefore, unnatural that no one of Darell's letters to Patty breathed a hint that, before the green leaves of the spring trees had withered to brown and gold, the writer was to stand to the reader in the most intimate and exacting of human relationships. The innumerable decorums which hedged the life of the young woman, as well as her own personal, inherited dislike to look the difficult and unwelcome in the face, bade Patty ignore it too; while the fact that Charlotte always alluded to marriage as the serenely friendly relationship she had caused it to be in her own case, made it the easier for her cousin to see things, not as they were, but as she wished they might be.

She received nearly all Darell's letters in the evening as she, Charlotte, and Hargraves, sat in

the drawing-room after dinner. The moment Hargraves saw the handwriting on the folded sheets, he always turned his chair so that his solid blue back was towards Patty, and he could not see if he wished, or without wishing, any word on the closely written pages.

One night, that ostentatiously turned back chafed Patty's nerves more than usual, and she passed the sheets to Charlotte, saying carelessly, "You can read it, Char."

Charlotte, dying to, said, "Oh, no, Patty!" and tentatively began; and presently Patty (she saw over Hargraves's immovable shoulder that he was reading *Macbeth*, and the page beginning—

If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Forbear!)

pushed away her work and went out of the room.

Her bedroom looked on to the garden; and she stood at the window, drew the blind, and, for a little, pressed her cheek against the pane.

May had been chilling to-day; rain had fallen, and the thick shrubs and trees of the path which she and Hargraves had paced, and re-paced, on that evening not long ago, dripped irregular tears.

It was like Patty that, now it was altogether useless, she should often fall to thinking—and think round and round again, in a circle—what she should have done, if she had not certainly been going to marry Darell. Mat had said there was

nothing she could do! She took up the tassel of the blind-cord, rubbed the window with it, and tried to look out into the darkness. She remembered poor Mary Shelley's "Without firmness, understanding is impotent"; and, from her own experience, that understanding, not of a mean order, had not helped her father to success in the world; while she realised in herself—dimly, as one always realises one's own characteristics—the lack of the cut and thrust, of the thick skin which parries rebuff like a breast-plate, of the shrewd eye to see her own interests and the determined hand to take them.

The consciousness of incompetence wins little pity; but it deserves much. Patty's tears were not of the kind which relieve. She rubbed away two which fell now, lowered the blind, and went quickly downstairs into the drawing-room, where Darell's sheets lay waiting her, neatly folded by her place; Hargrave's blue back was still turned, and over his shoulder Patty saw he was still at the page beginning—

If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Forbear!

After this, it seemed to her that the cords of her engagement were daily drawn tighter, and that the orbit to which they confined her was in many ways a flower-strewn and a pleasant one.

If there is any one in the world insensible to

the warmth and deliciousness of social sunshine, she is not of the ease-loving and impressionable temperament of Patty Wyatt. To any one else it certainly would have been a satisfaction to meet Lady Jones's complete change of front with coolness; and Charlotte was justly vexed that Patty received the peck on the cheek, which was Lady Jones's version of a kiss, quite gratefully, forgetting snubs which had never troubled her.

It was delightful, too, to an essentially feminine temperament, to choose clothes—no longer in very small quantities, feeling as if one ought not to spend anything at all, as in the old days. Hargraves himself—caution personified—had recommended that the fifty pounds Leaf had left his cousin should be expended on the trousseau; Charlotte enabled Patty to get her money's worth as Patty could never have done alone; the bland shopmen of St. Paul's Churchyard themselves admiring and respecting Mrs. Hargraves for the shrewdness and competence of her choice, and her perfect imperviousness to their own interested recommendations.

Sometimes Patty's eyes, and attention even, wandered, as one lustrous silk after another was unfolded and held up to catch the light and the fancy; and Charlotte would look round under her poke bonnet to Patty under hers, and say in a clear tone, like a bell calling one to duty, "Patty! this is your luncheon silk; it is really important!" and Patty came back to earth from the clouds.



It touched her sense of humour that, now she was to be Lady Darell, Char's kindness was certainly tintured with respect; and that Patty's hair, which had undoubtedly been red when there was every prospect of her remaining Patty Wyatt to the end of her days, had become gold; Charlotte saying to the satellites of the bonnet shop, "With my cousin's golden colouring, I don't *think* I should like that yellow Dunstable, Madam Brown." Whereupon Madam Brown—with plain Mrs. written all over her plain face—suggested the blue silk which made Patty's eyes so much bluer even than their wont that Charlotte decided it should be worn on the wedding journey.

She was a little vexed when, at dinner one night, Patty, looking at Hargraves, and recalling a story he had told her, said suddenly, "Mat! I am going to keep ten pounds out of my fifty by me—for emergencies"; and Hargraves, giving no vote for or against this plan, it seemed to Patty was not displeased with it.

That night, he and Charlotte presented their wedding gift—which still exists—a little bracelet of rubies and chased gold. Round the robust arm, wholesomely if not beautifully developed by athletics, of the new order of women, it will not meet; but even Hargraves fastened it round Patty's soft one without more difficulty than was accounted for by normal stupidity at an unwonted task.

The next day Darell came up to Martin's Lane, and had an entirely satisfactory business inter-

view with Hargraves, in which he admirably accepted Patty's dowerless condition as a matter of not the slightest importance; and it was only when he had left the little dark sanctum that a sudden hot wave of most unreasonable resentment surged up in Hargraves's heart, because he knew that Darell knew—as, in point of fact, he could not help knowing—that in the marriage he was benefactor and Patty benefited, all the same.

Very soon after this, Patty went to pay a farewell visit to old Elspeth—tending a paralysed brother at Richmond—Hargraves driving her up to town in the gig, just as he had driven her on the day they went to Greenwich a month earlier; and seeing her off by the Richmond coach.

He watched it steadily to the last; and when it was quite swallowed up in the traffic, turned away with that sensation of the Left Behind which is always desolate, even when one has carefully arranged Not to Go; and was glad to find in Martin's Lane an abnormal amount of work awaiting him.

Since the evening of the day at Greenwich he had faced his facts; not taking, indeed, one great decision at one great moment, as men do in books, because in life the great decisions are already taken for us by past habit and the character built up in the day of small things.

To the sophist, his own is always a special case. But to Hargraves, Charlotte was not even "the woman thou gavest to be with me," but the

woman I chose—I, myself, open-eyed, of my free will—ignorantly, indeed, but yet in defiance of some muffled warning of the soul. If she in any way failed him, that was no reason to him why he should in any way fail her. Charlotte, if she had not been Charlotte, must have noticed in her husband in these weeks, not only a greater desire than he had ever shown before to forestall her wishes, but a consistent and steady endeavour to bring their home more into the line of other homes, united by a closer, natural tie; and, though he never thrust upon her the feelings which he had not to give her and which—greatest blessing he had—she had shown him she did not want, he several times laid stress upon the fact of their joint interests; spoke, in pre-arranged terms, of their life together when they were old; and almost always, when she set her virtuous obstinacy against any of his plans, yielded, because it was only if he loved her he would have had the right to pain and to make her weep.

But with Charlotte it was not only, as often happens, that sharpness to things material was balanced by great spiritual blindness, and that she was too shrewd to see far; but that she had been created so entirely deficient on one side of her nature that she could not believe in the existence of that side in anybody else.

No one could possibly have convinced her at this time, more than at any other time, but that the way of life she had appointed was the right one.

There were the Rowes, getting poorer and poorer, with two children to maintain, and one starting a costly hip disease! So she knelt Sunday by Sunday in the pew by Hargraves's side, thanked Heaven, with her veil thrown back from the serenest sweet face, that he and she were not as other men are, and was incapable of conceiving the idea that old Mat by her side, singing from the fat Psalter in the relentless respectability of his Sunday clothes, lived an inner life as remote from her ken as if they had been separated by half the world, or had never met.

Straight is the gate and narrow the way, but generally clearly marked enough. To Hargraves's honest eyes, his duty to one person was never anything but plain. But, to the other?

There was certainly nothing in him of the ascetic to suppose that a course is right because it is repugnant; but then, neither was he of the newer, comfortable type which can prove that, because the course is repugnant, it cannot be necessary to salvation.

As he had told Patty, he had well thought out the problem of her life.

The women designed by nature, or self-designed, to some self-supporting work with which marriage is incompatible, were in his day, to his narrow vision, utterly non-existent. The sole exception he had known well to the marriage rule in his own class was a sister of his father, a soured and most unhappy woman. From Charlotte's hear-

say of the old cousin to whom the young Leafs had given a home, he had reconstructed the picture of a petty and fretful nature; making mountains out of the molehills of social slights and favours, and replacing the realities of life with eternal futilities—

Dropping buckets into empty wells,  
And growing old in drawing nothing up.

His imagination was not nearly strong enough to enable him so to see Patty; but his reason told him that this thing too might be. His reason also, as well as all his conventional soul and all his conventional experience, assured him, as he had assured Patty, that the woman did so acclimatise herself, even to uncongenial marriage, that she was often happier in it than without it; and in birth, in tastes and education, Darell and his wife would be well mated.

That there are sympathies which lie deeper than these things; that in the solid strength of his own nature and the plain simplicity of his judgment, the irresolution of Patty's character and the quick versatility of her mind had seemed to find some safe anchorage—might be his dearest recollection, but could have no practical bearing on facts. A cleverer man might have argued that exceptions prove all rules; that to the warmth and sensitiveness of such a nature as Patty's, marriage must be Heaven or Hell. But Hargraves had no cleverness. He believed he had found his duty, and there remained but to do it.

To all outward appearance he lived his life exactly as before; attended, as usual, the committee meetings of the Tottenham charities; showed thereat his old determined thoroughness to bring the slovenly and the sentimental to book; and after a Sunday morning's service, when the vicar had translated his veiled threat of preaching in a surplice into openly Popish action, stepped into the vestry and objected; listened to the vicarial arguments in favour of the change with set lips, and, looking fixedly into the lining of his white beaver hat, replaced the hat, and, forcing his antagonist to meet his eye, said, "I shall not alter my opinion however."

Only, when on the next Sunday the vicar resumed his black gown, Hargraves, looking into his heart for triumph, found none.

Early in June, a few days before Patty's return to White Hart Lane, Hargraves's uncle, Samuel of Shropshire, very properly died, having reached an age when he could not reasonably be expected to do anything else, and, also very properly, left Hargraves his small fortune.

There are three tragedies of money: too little, too much, and that of money which is useless because one cannot spend it on the only thing one wants.

So strong is habit and training, that Hargraves was not the less determined to extract the best possible price for old Samuel's land; and if he pensioned off the elderly housekeeper more largely

than he might have done in other circumstances, the difference was slight.

On the day he was leaving Shropshire, he walked round the deserted little farm. Everything—even the pigs—was ticketed for sale. The little house seemed stiff and cold, and one can always detect in a garden a lack of fostering and personal love. Yet the place, with the soft western wind blowing across it and the warm western rains making its soil a fruitful joy, would have been an ideal one for a quiet man, happy in wife and children.

Hargraves, leaning on the top of the black pigs' sty, and watching those creatures—gross, grunting, and stupid—considered the question.

When he returned to Tottenham on the following evening, Patty was sitting in the drawing-room, with Charlotte, with her bonnet in her lap, describing her visit.

Hargraves could have fancied—but was very likely misled by rumped curls and the natural fatigue from the journey—that she looked older.

The next few weeks seemed filled to overflowing with presents and trousseau. Very often Charlotte and Patty spent half the evening in the chilly, so-called library, from whence, to Hargraves reading in the drawing-room, came sounds of much crackling of tissue paper and delighted exclamations from Charlotte. When she called him in to admire Colonel Caldwell's conception of the beautiful in the shape of a jingling monstrosity of a glass candelabra, Patty was sitting on a packing-

case, with her chin on her hand, considering the masterpiece, offering no opinion on it, and appearing to be a party interested indeed in the business, but by no means the principal party.

Hargraves informed himself that this attitude probably arose from the fact that the presents were mostly from Darell's kin, whom Patty had never seen; for, like consumption, poverty runs in families, and the few relatives she had, had been born with the disease, and were incapable of presents.

Yet Julia, invited to see the trousseau,—and, Julia-like, forgetting that those who ask your opinion only want your praise,—noticed the same detached frame of mind, and that it was Charlotte who took a proprietary pride in the petticoats, pelisses, and bonnets. When she had gone away to fetch the latest consignment of satin boots, Julia put her arm round Patty, and warmly kissing her, wished her happiness; and, as on a morning not long ago in Martin's Lane, the bride drew back; and Julia, returning home, bethought her, through many cares and preoccupations of her own, how in the marriages of her circle coolness seemed to be the fashion; and, with a sigh, half wished she could be in it.

That very afternoon, about five o'clock, coming quietly into her nursery, she beheld Patty sitting on the floor, with a calming hand on Lily's volatile legs and an arm round the silently entranced Bertha, telling a story; and knew her, as, in her wisdom, Julia had always known her, for one of the



women (they are fewer than men prefer to think) born maternal; made for the vocation, as the rose-tree is made to bear roses, and the bird to answer to the call of its mate.

Unseen by the little party on the floor, Julia watched them for a minute or two, and then turned away, thoughtful.

It had been arranged that, late in July, Mr. and Mrs. Hargraves were to take Patty to Altons; pass there Hargraves's annual holiday, which would cover the date of Patty's marriage, which was to take place from Darell's house, Darell's cousin Lady Mary Lawrence, acting as hostess.

It was Lady Mary's pleasingly aristocratic name and lineage—if she was not the daughter of a hundred earls, she was the sixth child of one, much impoverished—which had decided Charlotte to give up the interesting excitement of a thoroughly well-managed wedding from White Hart Lane, and, when she was paying a morning call on Tottenham Green, enabled her to say, in answer to her hostess's suggestion that it was unusual for the bride to be married from the bridegroom's house, "With us, perhaps; but in the class above our own, I fancy not at all."

After which magnificence, Tottenham Green, like Sheba, had no more spirit left in her.

For the last few weeks, Patty was so hemmed in and bound by the exigencies of the trivial that perhaps, like many of us, she lost sight of the greater issues to which it led. More frocks ar-

rived, and more presents; and from Darell a pearl and turquoise necklace which was the Darell heirloom. Patty seemed far less delighted than disturbed by the value of the gift, and her reception of it was one of the occasions which made even the well-regulated Charlotte long to shake her; and when she doubtless deserved to be so shaken.

Three days before they were to leave Tottenham, a desultory epistle was received from Lady Mary, making arrangements for the guests' arrival, and adding in a postscript, "Plenty of room for your maids"; which fired Charlotte to the ambitious suggestion of their taking the housemaid to masquerade as such.

Whereat Patty—Sally was indeed raw from the country and visibly a ploughboy in petticoats—would only laugh and say:

"Oh, but think, Char! what guys we shall look if Sally dresses us!" adding that if she did not perform that office there would be nothing for her to do but that which Satan finds for idle hands; an argument which appealed to Charlotte's good sense at once.

For the last day or two, it was not only the girls who were over-busy, but Hargraves himself—making arrangements for his absence, and forestalling as much of his work as possible.

But though they were to leave Tottenham at cock-crow on Monday, Charlotte properly insisted, as usual, on church twice on Sunday.

After Trinity Chapel in the afternoon, when

Uncle Mat had made his Sunday faces and run up the gamut with his usual conscientiousness and success in the High Cross garden, Patty said good-bye to the children—Lily gaily withdrawing herself from the extra tightness of the embrace to urge Patty not to forget to send them each a piece of wedding cake, and to add prudently, "If you sent some to daddy and mother too we shouldn't have to invite them to ours"; while Bertha, more thoughtful, kept a warm arm round Patty's neck and said, "I *do* wish you had been going to marry Dr. Browne instead, and then we could have kept you here!"

It seemed to Patty that it was only Bertha and Clement who wanted to keep her; every one else was so full of disinterested delight that she was going away.

When she took leave of Clement later on in his yard, and said entreatingly to her friend Dick, who had come to water the horses, "You *will* remember to give him a bone sometimes, won't you, Dick?" the youth, pulling a carrotty forelock, replied, "Master's *h*ordered it reg'lar."

After evening tea, Patty sat for a while with old Anna in the little room, in her usual place, on a stool, with her arm across the old woman's knee, and her fingers pleating up absently the old-womanish black silk apron on which the arm rested. Anna's deafness having lately been of a character which made conversation impossible, they were silent, till Charlotte's voice was heard,

emitting an order into the adjacent pantry, when Anna, thinking Patty had spoken, said, "What, dear?"

Patty replied, "Nothing, you old stupid! I didn't speak."

Anna said, "What, dear?" again, and a bell rang briskly for prayers.

It is only by odious comparison with what Mrs. Sherwood called "the extreme rapidity of a steam carriage," that this age regards stage coaches as lumbering and slow. In point of fact, their old age was so remarkably fast and skittish that the coach by which the Hargraves and Patty Wyatt left Slough (having travelled so far by the Great Western Railway, just opened to that point) easily did its twelve miles an hour; and by the evening they were driving from Bath in one of Darell's chaises through the park of Altons.

Hargraves had been silent most of the journey; Patty had relapsed into silence; Charlotte was so much on the tiptoe of a decorous pleasure and excitement that she admired, and demanded Patty's admiration of, the park, which, in point of fact, under the rather cold drizzle in which the July day was closing, had a slightly dismal air; while the first view of the house, white and gaunt, was such as to make any unprejudiced person desire to live instead at one of its lodges.

Patty saying nothing, Hargraves withdrew the adjective "Very imposing!" from his small store.

As the chaise stopped, the great hall door opened,

a couple of servants came forward, and behind them, Darell, with his slight, handsome face the handsomer for happiness.

He greeted Hargraves and Charlotte, and, putting his hand on Patty's arm, drew her with him through the widely opened door into the great hall, with the bad portraits of ancestors, a log fire smouldering on the hearth, and, round it, a group of his friends and his kin.

Only once Patty looked back, and Hargraves—who was never minded to trust even tall and supercilious men-servants to see to his luggage without his supervision—through that preoccupation caught the wistful hesitation of her eyes, which he had seen when she received the necklace of pearl and turquoise.

For these things forged links in a most binding chain.

## CHAPTER XIII

### DOUBTING CASTLE

WHEN Hargraves had sorted the persons round the fire, which he did after his manner, slowly and thoroughly, he found they were not so many nor so formidable as he had at first supposed.

There was Colonel Caldwell, prepared to hate all the new arrivals whole-heartedly, but particularly Hargraves, who was, of course, the arch-designer of the plot which totally ruined the expectations of a family who lived upon practically nothing else.

So powerful is civilisation, and, very often, so much better man than he means to be, that in about two minutes the Colonel was pressing on Hargraves a glass of sherry and feeling rather sorry for the tradesman, who, in that day, when "a gentleman's son would rather have died a pauper than become a wine merchant," must needs feel "doosed out of it" in a society beyond him.

That the Hargraves of a year or two back would have felt much as, or much worse than, he did when he dined for the first time with William and Charlotte Leaf, is very likely. Only, at this

moment he had occupation for his thoughts which precluded self-consciousness; and was simple, silent, and natural.

Lady Mary Lawrence, who was talking to Charlotte, was a woman about eight-and-forty; still slight and elegant, with a graceful head, an irresponsible manner, very little education,—that of women being then almost invariably “worse in proportion to the wealth and grandeur of the parents,”—and a great deal of natural wit and daring.

From her confident air of charm, even more than from her face, one could see she had been a beautiful woman; in a strictly reserved age she scored many points by frankness, and laughed at the *convenances* even when she followed them.

As she hopped to conclusions as lightly as a bird to a twig, and very nearly as accurately, in ten minutes she had pretty well taken Charlotte’s measure; had decided that there was more to learn about Hargraves than she had learned at the first glance; and though it was difficult for any one, and especially difficult for Lady Mary, to suppose that a girl in such a position as Patty’s was not mercenary, when she had looked at her for a few minutes out of the corner of a roving eye, she found it equally difficult to suppose that she was.

There was a very pretty little person, warming a very small sandalled foot at the logs (Lady Mary had remarked that she had no notion of being fireless and cold because it was the time of year

when you ought to be fireless and warm), who was called up presently to be introduced to Mrs. Hargraves—Charlotte instantly observing the perfection of all her accoutrements; the fair curls, dressed by no heavy-handed Sally; the long, slight neck; the childish arms half revealed by muslin sleeves; and the thin, delicate voice.

Thin and delicate were the adjectives especially meet for Georgina Lawrence's body and mind; but they can be applied to such exquisite things as morning and spring; and to a butterfly or a harebell one can give robustness only at the expense of its charm.

Georgina had the softly considerate manners long out of vogue; asked Mrs. Hargraves if she had not found the journey too cold, or too warm; was sure she must be very tired; and relieved her of her shawl.

Lady Mary considered her daughter with an appraising eye, as if she did not belong to her, and Charlotte perceived in about five minutes that it would have been a convenient thing for the Lawrences if Darell had taken a fancy to Georgina instead of to Patty. That he had not done so put into Charlotte extra moral backbone, and enabled her not to feel crushed even by the superior elegance of Lady Mary and Georgina's clothes and position.

Seated in an armchair, with knitting and a fugitive ball of wool which the rest of the company picked up and restored to her at intervals, was Mrs.



Caldwell—a weak, faded lady, with a runaway chin, and a habit of hopelessness to which Colonel Caldwell attributed most of their ill-luck, on the principle that if you bid the devil good-morrow before you come up to him, you encourage his visits.

There was also, looking with an amiable abstraction into the fire, an elderly man with a stoop, a very old coat, and a neckcloth under one ear—so obviously a professor and scientific that the fact that no one remembered to introduce him to the arrivals was not of moment.

A young man whom everybody called Tim (and whose full cognomen was in fact Marmaduke Timothy Lascelles) completed the party. A hearty and cheerful person was Timothy—the sort of young man who would certainly begin the day by singing in his bath (only that there were few baths to sing in before a pioneer of the sponge persuasion arrived from Ireland in 1840), who never did any work unless he was obliged; and who never was obliged.

When the conversation of these heterogeneous materials began to flag, Lady Mary, who was so easily bored herself that her guests seldom ran the risk of being, took Charlotte and Patty to their rooms; and in Patty's was a little shelf of the books of which she had spoken affectionately to Darell, and also Montgomery's dismal poems, most beautifully bound for her benefit, and one of Miss Ferrier's novels.

When Hargraves came upstairs, Charlotte, briskly unpacking, was debating with herself whether she should warn him to avoid the topics of ancestry, Greenwich, and public-houses; but the natural taciturnity of his character obtruding itself on her notice, she decided to trust to it, and to Fate.

When she came down to dinner in her grey silk frock, she had the slim elegance of a young silver birch—that most fairy-like of trees, which one can hardly believe, till one touches it, is only wood after all; while her aristocratic little head and the warm colour of her cheeks would have made her a pretty person even if she had been ill-dressed; and as has been seen, she was one of those clever women who can give to cairngorms an air of diamonds.

The party were foregathering in the hall where the log-fire still smouldered, the long summer twilight came in at the deep windows, and the ancestors looked down from their black, cracked canvases.

Darell and Lady Mary, who had been talking by the hearth, drew apart as Mrs. Hargraves came down the stairs, and included her in their little circle, and Charlotte's replica of Lady Mary's easy and casual manner was so excellent as to seem nearly perfectly natural. Lady Mary, who was capless and unwrinkled when, at any age over thirty, these omissions were considered scarcely decent, looked up with that irresponsibly critical air Charlotte had noticed before, when Georgina

floated down the wide staircase, as light as thistle-down, with her little fan in her thin hand, all flowing white as to her frock, and soft gold as to her hair.

Darell had turned to speak to a servant who came in with a message, and did not see her.

Mrs. Hargraves, with her best easy manner, inquired of Georgina if she painted; and Georgina said that she tried—on china; and if she played? and at that moment Darell called his cousin to the window to look at one of the dogs flattening his wet nose imploringly against the pane outside; so it was Lady Mary who answered, *sotto voce*, "She only sings a little. I did think at one time of having her taught the guitar. But men are so stupid, you know; they hardly ever dare to marry anything out of the groove; so I came to the conclusion that, after all, the usual little tune, out of tune, would be safer"; and she looked at Charlotte with her quizzical eye, as if considering how she would take this speech.

At the moment, the Professor joined their party, in another coat, and with his neckcloth still under one ear. Hargraves came down with the Caldwells, the Colonel explaining the portraits to him on the stairs.

"This was a doose of a fellow," he said, pointing to one with a tie-wig; "the Darells had plenty of the devil in 'em a hundred years ago, I can tell you"; and added deep in his throat—"More's the pity they haven't got it now"; while Hargraves,

who was quite simple enough to have been ashamed of disreputable ancestors,—supposing he had had any ancestors,—could not think of a reply.

Just as Charlotte was beginning to feel serious apprehension that that vague Patty had not listened for the bell, and was going to be late, Patty came.

She was certainly not calculating enough to have prepared an effective entry, and was so fatally lacking in the necessary self-assertion that, with a *mise-en-scène* not greatly different, her appearance wholly missed the points which Beatrix Esmond gave hers, as, in immortal page, she descended the stairs at Castlewood to greet her cousin, in her red-heeled shoes, with the taper in her hand.

The group in the hall made a way for this much more modest person, by Darell, who, when he had directed the other couples as to the order of their going in to dinner, came back to Patty, just touched her bare wrist, and said in a low voice, "I think I am entitled to take you in, anyhow this evening"; and as she slowly put her arm through his, she looked round, half-hesitating, at the others; and one of them saw, for the second time that day, the shadow of the trapped thing in her eyes.

The dinner-table was lit by candles in great candelabra, and, sparkling with glass and silver, was conspicuous in that day by the absence from it of the removes and entrées, the creams, trifles, and jellies, which were, as a rule, spread from the

first before the diner's eyes, as if to warn him not to overeat himself before their turn came.

Besides the service *à la russe*, Charlotte noted much else for future imitation, and tried to think of a way of reconciling business interests and the substitution of a few thin, light wines for the madeiras and ports, lisbons and sherries, which had hitherto furnished their own, and everybody else's, tables.

Hargraves was so engaged in finding something to say to Mrs. Caldwell—or at any rate was so pre-absorbed—that at first he hardly noticed these alarming and radical changes, while Darell, who was the host *par excellence*, carefully neglected Patty, so that the fault was not his if he did not succeed in introducing topics of mutual interest for the consumption of Mrs. Caldwell and Hargraves.

Patty had the Professor on the other side of her, and they were friends in ten minutes.

If with children she was a child, she had lived so near and looked so close into the heart of the old that she understood them, as the old never understand each other. The Professor had a mild and roving blue eye, seemed vague as to the names, ages, and even numbers of his children, for he had somewhere—Patty never discovered where, and was not quite sure he knew himself—a wife and family. That he considered them all—as they probably were—much less valuable and important than the smallest biological discovery, was as

certain as that he could never be anything but gentle, affectionate, and unpractical in his dealings with them.

Patty soon discovered that he had not the slightest idea of the relationships of any of the party round him, nor of her own *raison d'être* in it. At the entrée, he nodded in the direction of Hargraves, whom he had been quietly considering for some time, and quoted to her, "A solid and sober nature that hath as much of the ballast as of the sail"; and when he found she knew her Bacon—though such a knowledge in a young woman of 1838 was so unusual as to be startling—he had a calm air of expecting it of her.

Once or twice, he reminded her so much of her father that the unshed tears smarted in her eyes, and she thought with a longing ache in her heart how that pleasant company and that good wine and food would have made his old heart glad, and how very little he had ever had the soft things of the world.

After that, Darell, justly feeling his turn had come, monopolised her, in a lowered voice. Hargraves, who could have overheard all they said, fired regularly loud, steady platitudes on the crops and the weather, one after the other, at Mrs. Caldwell; the Professor, who lived in a blessed world where he did not even know one had to talk to neighbours unless one wished to, relapsed into dreams; Lady Mary's light, railing voice came down the table now and then; Timothy struggled

with what Milton politely called "the bashful muteness of a virgin" on the part of Georgina; and Colonel Caldwell, who was extremely short in the neck, puffed and blew as he replied to Mrs. Hargraves's polite commonplaces.

In the drawing-room after dinner, Mrs. Caldwell showed Charlotte a knitting pattern, and Lady Mary, who was perfectly natural in an age when good manners were often taken to be artificial manners, sat with her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand, quite openly weighing and considering Patty and Georgina, who were talking by the piano.

If she had originally hoped that Darell's foolish fancy had been caught by the meretricious attractions of a vulgarly pretty face, with which Georgina's little, fine, aristocratic features and impassive good breeding might yet be brought into successful contrast, she had given up that hope even before dinner; and had sent Georgina in to it with Timothy—the heir of an impoverished baronetcy—but still, the heir.

When the men joined the party, and Georgy had sung her little tune, out of tune, Hargraves found himself sitting with Darell and Patty at the book-strewn table beneath the portrait of the Darell of the Commonwealth; and, looking round for a route of escape from the Victorian Darell and not seeing one, resigned himself for the moment to that position of third person which he had so carefully avoided in White Hart Lane.

Darell took up one or two of the volumes on the table, and, passing them to Patty, began talking of them.

One has to be very simple or very bold, or perhaps both simple and bold, not to admire what a strong public opinion around one holds admirable. As such boats of butter had been poured over *The Forest Sanctuary* of Mrs. Hemans (even George Eliot found herself able to apply to it her "pet adjective, exquisite"), and *The Wife, or Woman's Reward*, of Mrs. Norton, Darell's praise of them was not unnatural; Patty, to whose gentleness it was much easier to fib than to disagree and seem superior, assented rather faintly, and when Darell, to enlist Hargraves's sympathies, handed him a Shakespeare with the latest and most ambiguous annotations, saying, "I know you are a great Shakespearian, and I believe these notes admirably render the poet's meaning," Hargraves and Patty were careful to avoid each other's glance, and, if possible, the recollection of a quiet evening, when they had agreed to agree with Hazlitt, "If we wish to know the force of human genius we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to see the insignificance of human learning, we may study his commentators."

Presently, Darell drew Hargraves's attention to the pictures, and when Patty, looking up at the little Fra Angelico, said in a soft, moved voice, "That is lovely!" Hargraves was gloomily conscious that he really preferred the portrait of



Darell's father on which Patty had only remarked, in a voice Hargraves easily interpreted, that she expected it was a good likeness?

Then, as they all three stood before it, Hargraves looked down at her, and said suddenly, quite loud, "You look very tired!" and was struck by the fact that it had not struck Darell.

He was all kindness and consideration directly it was pointed out. The travelling party having started betimes, the dark lines under Patty's eyes, and an attention that had drooped a little and then recalled itself, were quite natural.

When Darell was lighting her candle for her in the hall, Lady Mary came up to Hargraves—still standing beneath Sir John's portrait (with a thunder-storm for its background, and his curly-brimmed hat on a marble slab at his side)—and said lightly, looking at him, "I dare say Mrs. Hargraves is tired too? Frank, you know, always expects every one to be fresh and lively when he feels so himself!"; and Hargraves considered that trait in Darell's character through Charlotte's admiring comments on Altons, as they were going to bed that evening—and long after.

In spite of Mrs. Caldwell's convictions that if the first few days in July were wet the summer found it impossible ever to recover itself, the next morning dawned clear and fine.

Up to this time, Hargraves had really believed that the idle can never be happy; and had confirmed the theory in his own case by being, after

only a short holiday, weary of it. But he found himself now among people who seemed perfectly content to do nothing but amuse themselves from morning till night, and who regarded as an agreeable birthright an indolence which he had been brought up to think wicked.

Darell's house was managed by the stately housekeeper in black silk, who so perfectly knew her business that there certainly would not be the slightest reason for my Lady to interfere with it—and in Hargraves's mind stood the question if it was well for any woman to be thus relieved of one of the chief natural interests of her life. Having already been himself irked by servants wishing to unpack his clothes and assist him where he preferred independence, he found himself wondering, too, if others also might not find in them more burden than easing of burden; while in a day or two he had discovered that the Professor was much the happiest person in the house-party, because he had an interest which rendered him perfectly independent of it.

In that, too, was food for thought.

On this first morning, when the Professor came down late to breakfast, he made his way at once to his new friend's side, interrupting her conversation with Darell, and so unconscious that there was any reason he should not interrupt it that Georgina, who was far from being capable of a *mot*, said in a gentle aside to Charlotte, "He *must* be clever to be as stupid as that!" and a keen observer—under

her trifling air Lady Mary had great quickness in observation—might have thought that Patty's soft welcome of the intruder was perfectly genuine.

After breakfast, Darell was to take Patty to see the house and grounds, and as the chaperonage of fiancées was still much more than the farce it has since become, Hargraves and Lady Mary were also to make the tour—of course keeping at a tactful distance.

Hargraves had not begun by loving Lady Mary. At first, her rank and her facility of manner—in so great contrast to his own—had made him difficult and tongue-tied. Then his true self penetrated; and, however awkwardly, he must fain tell the truth from his soul. Lady Mary had, of course, been incited by his grave face to her utmost flippancy and candour. Polite society being then as reticent concerning the inside of its purse as the inside of its person, she had mentioned in clear tones, at dinner, how poor she was, and how debts seemed to accumulate, magically, during the night while she slept, and at dessert, with her very bright eye on Hargraves, she had hinted at unfortunate matrimonial experiences—having, in point of fact, agreed surprisingly well with her dull lord, to whom she had been married by her parents from the schoolroom.

Yet, in spite of Hargraves's persistently disapproving countenance, she liked him; and, in spite of the confidences—perhaps, though he was no gentleman, he was not quite wrong in finding

them in bad taste—there was something which made him like her.

This morning, with a lace shawl—which would have paid many of the debts—slipping from her thin and elegant shoulders, and with one of the silly little parasols of fashion partially shielding her improperly brown and bare head from the sun, she and Hargraves followed Darell and Patty through the trim, prim grounds—in a silence which Lady Mary, keeping the corner of that sharp eye on her companion, saw he did not observe.

When, in the low-set rose garden—a mass of bloom, perfume, and colour, a garden whose beauty even the excessive attentions of too many gardeners could hardly impair—they lost sight of the other two for a moment, Lady Mary, lightly waving the parasol to indicate the estate in general, said, in her inconsequent tones, "Quite a nice place, isn't it? You can congratulate yourself on your ward's good fortune!"

That Hargraves had explained on the previous evening that Patty was not his ward, did not prevent him from explaining it afresh. He had already noted before in Lady Mary's manner an assumption that he and she were two worldly guardians—concerned, and solely concerned, to do their best from a monetary point of view for their respective charges—and had resented the implication.

He said gravely he hoped Patty would be very happy.

Lady Mary, looking up indifferently into the violet silk dome of her parasol, replied, "Oh, I should think so! I don't know why not, do you? Money, position, a nice place like this, and quite an excellent husband—as husbands go—a girl really can't expect more? All the same," she looked up at him under the parasol's fringe, which just sheltered her eyes, "I can somehow better fancy your little ward the wife of a plain man—with his modest eight hundred a year perhaps—whom she could delight her heart by spoiling; and a couple of babies she would have to look after herself."

Hargraves made no reply.

They walked, in silence, the length of a soft grass path, where, on either side of them, the roses hung down their beautiful heads and dropped tears of last night's rain.

Presently Lady Mary went on in an absent voice, as if she were speaking to herself.

"Of course," she said, "money saves you any amount of worry; but it brings worries. Frank isn't a bit unreasonable; but he'll naturally expect a good deal from his wife in keeping up his position and helping him to make things go. Still, there's a *quid pro quo* in everything, isn't there? She's clever, too, or well-read, or something? I think Frank said so. He quite likes a woman to have enough brains—to admire his."

Then, lowering her parasol, she looked at Hargraves with an air of coquetry, which, at her age,

he decided was idiotic, and added, "It *is* so silly of men to like women silly, isn't it?" and when Hargraves said (the more firmly that he was not perfectly certain of the position), "We do not," Lady Mary replied, "Oh, yes, you do, Mr. Hargraves! Anyhow, till you are married to us, and sometimes afterwards, for if we were not fools, you know, we might sometimes discover you were!"

She enjoyed this *mot* the more and the longer for Hargraves's strictly unenthusiastic reception of it.

As they came round a corner, they caught sight of the figures they had lost—Darell, with his tall, sleek head bent down over Patty's shining one—her blue scarf on his arm; their setting, the low rose garden and the dark ivied wall that separated it from the lawns.

Their conversation was not so engrossing but that Patty could look back now and again, as if to see if the other pair were in sight. Once, something she said floated back on the summer air to Hargraves's ears, and he stopped dead in front of a rose-tree, so that on the narrow pathway Lady Mary had to stop too.

She put down her parasol slowly, nodded at the two in front, and said in a lowered voice, "I don't fancy there is much billing and cooing to be done, is there? Francis—the most admirable person of course—is just a little bit of a stick, you know, and I suppose Miss Wyatt had to make *some* provision for herself in life?"

The old, angry red came into the back of Hargraves's neck, and spread over his face, as he said, quite hotly, "It is not that!" and when he would have explained why it was not, became suddenly dumb, aware that it was.

Lady Mary just said, "Oh!" in a lightly sceptical voice. "All for love and the world well won, is it? Well, very lucky to be able to combine them!"

Then, as they retraced their steps across the velvet lawns, and she looked up at Hargraves's heavy and silent face, the woman in her, that made her charming, relented; she talked delightfully of indifferent subjects, and the eyes that rested on Hargraves were only half-amused.

As they neared the house, Charlotte, writing to Julia in the bow-window of the drawing-room, felt justified in adding as a postscript, "Lady Mary and Hargraves get on famously," whereas, at that very moment, Lady Mary, with a sudden return of her mischievous spirit, was saying, "But we think so much alike in everything, don't we, Mr. Hargraves?" for the mere enjoyment of seeing the "No, we don't," which Hargraves kept from his lips, reflected in his eyes.

Still, one can have useful allies of whose methods one does not approve; and there are few of our friends in whom we should not like to alter a great deal.

Even the *convenances* of '38 did not oblige Lady Mary, who was already tired of the rôle, to follow Darell and Patty all round the house.

Hargraves was writing in the library when they came to that room in their tour of inspection; and, as the door opened, he heard Patty say to Darell, in quite an entreating voice, "Oh, but please don't change the paper just because I said I liked cream! I really know nothing about it"; and when she saw Hargraves's broad back, she sank into a chair near it, as if it were a kind of signal that this was a resting-place and the expedition were over.

At the moment, a message from his bailiff called Darell away. Patty sat on in the chair with her hands clasped on her muslin lap, saying nothing; and the squeaking of Hargraves's quill continued as steadily as if she were not there.

In the afternoon, the whole party, with the exception of Lady Mary, who stated frankly that ruins bored her to tears, drove to see some conveniently situated near Altons.

That was Georgina's afternoon. Charlotte thought it quite clever of her to ask and get so much masculine assistance in climbing an infinitesimal stile and mounting the perfectly easy steps of the castle keep; and perhaps—in the age when it could still be said that "men of sensibility desire in every woman soft features and a flowing voice, a form not robust, and a demeanour delicate and gentle"—it really was.

Georgina, in fact, played her sex, and played it very prettily, for all it was worth.

This afternoon, even Darell, walking ahead with Patty, turned back, not ill-pleased, to offer a



strong hand to his cousin's very little one, as she daintily hopped across a rivulet which might have been bottled in a milk jug; for strength always finds satisfaction in helping weakness, so that Charlotte was further right in thinking that Patty—whom no one, certainly, could accuse of the not unaggressive independence and off-hand *camaraderie* which distinguish the relations of young woman to man to-day—missed golden opportunities.

This afternoon, she seemed, indeed, to be doing anything but try to find them.

In spite of Char's highly disinterested efforts to keep the Professor at her own side, and the firmly significant look she gave Hargraves round the stooping old back to do the same, that erudite and simple person persisted in pursuing Patty and Darell to the top of the keep, which they had mounted, ostensibly to see the view; when there, drew Patty's hand through his arm, patted it, and gave her and Darell much valuable information about the castle, which Darell bore with a good nature which did the greatest credit to his character of host, and in which Patty seemed really interested.

It is inconsistent, when one has put one's head voluntarily into a noose, to be afraid that one's kindly captor should draw it gently about one's neck; but consistency is the virtue only of persons in books.

That night at dinner, the conversation turned

from the recent Reform Bill to the wider question of the fitness of the people for self-government, and the responsibility of the rich to the poor.

Darell, fingering his modest glass of claret, advanced that easy Liberalism which always made old Caldwell puff, snort, and run great danger of an immediate apoplexy.

The simple Timothy, hardly realising that his host, like Sydney Smith, loved liberty, but hoped it could be so managed that he himself should have soft beds, good dinners, and fine linen for the rest of his life, exclaimed, "Oh, I say, doose take it all! If we give 'em their heads like that, we shan't have an acre left in fifty years!"; Hargraves, who was never afraid of his company when his convictions were at stake, kept a hostile silence, until Darell specifically asked his views, and so brought into light that rigidity and integrity of mind which Hargraves shared with the "better, gentler, and happier Elizabeth" who sat on the English throne, and who represented in her own little person not a few of the qualities most typical of her people, and the source, after all, of half of their greatness.

When presently Darell, sipping the claret, advanced, as a duty, that tenderness to weakness and crime which is the vice, or virtue, of our own age, and was then a startling and revolutionary theory, Hargraves said, in a steady, short voice, that his own experience led him to believe that one might help the virtuous and mediocre to do better, but not the vicious to do well.

Whereat Darell, "That surely is a hard saying? Who can hear it?" and he looked for confirmation at Patty, whose fathoming eyes travelled from Darell's face to Hargraves's, and who said nothing.

Hargraves replied simply, "At Greenwich, as a young man, I saw a great deal of the poor—I judge from them at that time."

At the mention of Greenwich, a slight, perhaps admonitory, cough incommoded Charlotte's throat; but Hargraves, being interested, did not hear it; and all might yet have been well but for Mrs. Caldwell interposing inappositely in a depressed tone, "Where did you live at Greenwich, Mr. Hargraves? My old friends, the Brinley-Johnsons, have that white house by the river—dreadfully damp, they tell me!"

And, as icy, premonitory shivers ran down Charlotte's back, Hargraves replied, to be heard of all men, "I lived at the 'Hope and Anchor' inn. My father was the publican."

There was nothing that could be called a pause before Darell, who had not known of Hargraves's humble origin, leaned forward and said to him, "The old British inn is one of the institutions of our country which even my innovating spirit"—and he smiled—"would be sorry to see changed. There are many besides the poet, I fancy"—he turned to Patty at the quotation—"who have found their 'warmest welcome at an inn.' "

In a voice of great sweetness and softness, she described to him the little rose-covered "Hope and

Anchor," the ivied garden, the balcony which overhung the river; Hargraves put in an explanatory word or two now and again; and the rest of the party resumed an independent conversation.

When the women had left—Darell and Hargraves following them for a moment into the hall—old Caldwell, moving his chair closer to Timothy's, said, "Bit of a facer, that, for our host, eh? Took it mighty well, though, I must say"; and Timothy's comment on the situation was that beer is an uncommon good thing, and you are always sure of the publican's vote going the right way.

In the drawing-room, when the men came in, Lady Mary moved to Hargraves's side and talked to him for a long time; presently walked with him round the conservatories that opened from the drawing-room; and was only her flippant self just for a moment when, as they came back, Darell asked where she had been, and she answered, "Mr Hargraves and I have been flirting in the conservatory," for the pleasure of seeing contradiction written legibly on Hargraves's face.

When, in his dressing-room that evening, he made a casual remark or two through his door to Charlotte, hair-brushing in front of her great cheval-glass, she replied in monosyllables purposely iced. By the light of the candle he took to light him to bed, she appeared to be suddenly and severely asleep—with the pretty face on its high pillows full of calm righteousness.

Just for a moment, there was a smile on old

Hargraves's gravity, as he looked down at her beneath his peaked and tasselled nightcap.

But in the morning—for he owed her much—he said with a great gentleness, “You see, Char, I can't deny my parents.”

To which Charlotte replied, most sensibly and truly, “You are perfectly aware, Hargraves, that I never tell lies myself, and do not wish you to do so. But, as Miss Pipson often said, to indulge a habit of proclaiming unnecessary truths is to render society impossible.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### A SEARCHING OF HEARTS

IN a day or two, Mrs. Caldwell's worst hopes were fulfilled, and it turned very wet.

A billowing white mist came up to the windows of the drawing-room, where it was *de rigueur* the ladies should sit all the morning, doing little nothings.

Mrs. Caldwell, searching for her ball of wool along the floor with her eye, pointed out with a dismal joy how right she had been; and how entirely the pleasantness of a country house-party depended upon good weather.

Charlotte sensibly and diligently applied herself to the embroidering of a sofa cushion. Lady Mary came in and out of the room desultorily, evidently bored, and expecting to be more bored still. Georgina, in one of the soft muslins women then wore all the summer—weather or no—was pressing flowers in an album; and, now and then, without actually having a cough, coughed faintly; so that presently Darell, coming into the room, inquired very kindly after her health; later, Timothy fetched her a shawl, and placed it on her little

shoulders; and Charlotte, over her needlework, again had occasion to admire Miss Lawrence's tactics.

Lady Mary, also watching them with her detached air, said low to Patty—the two liked and understood each other—“So stupid of men to think delicacy interesting in women—especially as they have to pay the doctor's bills and humour the tantrums!”

And Patty, laughing, replied, “But when there is no further object in being delicate, people get strong again!”

To which Lady Mary rejoined shrewdly, “Oh, no, they don't! It has become an occupation”; and resumed her obvious mental comparison of Patty and Georgina.

Patty-like, Patty was sure nearly all the advantages were Georgina's, and did not in the least resent the superiority.

The old Professor—to whom every leaf was an absorbing history and every petal a book—was contentedly botanising in the wet and a shameful old cloak.

It was Patty who fetched him a comforter and turned up the cloak collar about his straggling hair and his old ears; when he was not at work he continued to attach himself to her invariably, and, in a glittering pause between thick showers, when Darell called to her to come into the garden, he trotted after them like a comfortable old dog, with the dog's blissful unconsciousness of ever being *de trop*.

"If he *is de trop*, you know?" said Lady Mary, with the malicious gleam in her eye, to Hargraves, as she watched the scene from the window of the library where the men sat of a morning; Timothy doing nothing except suppress the fearful yawns in which his successors indulge openly; and Hargraves busy with much careful correspondence concerning his own business, some public business connected with City corporations, and also—though he that hateth suretyship is sure, and he was sure before all things—with two or three trusteeships, having that unfortunate appearance which inspires trust at a glance.

Timothy was out of the way on this occasion. Darell was naturally always a good deal occupied with the cares of the estate, for if he had only on paper and by word of mouth broad conceptions of his duty, he certainly lived up to the narrower conceptions which he shared with many landowners who did not live up to them at all.

On one of these wet days, he talked to Hargraves a good deal about the place; Hargraves listening silently and attentively, and approving what he heard.

That he vaguely knew, as Darell knew, that in the rose-covered cottages of pretty little Altons, and among the full congregations who attended the genteel little church on Sundays, there was gross suffering, ignorance, and bestiality, is true enough. But if evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart, it is often left unredressed



solely from want of imagination; and Hargraves would have been in advance of his age, instead of typically of it, if he had expected—of Darell or any one else—reforms which, after all, there is no positive guarantee will not do as much harm as the abuses they destroy.

Presently, Patty came in to fetch a book, and Hargraves, going to the writing-table and instantly beginning a letter, could hear every word of their conversation, and—though it was now ten days since the Tottenham party had arrived—could hear, too, that Darell's tone of deferential admiration was deferential admiration still.

It was not thus—he knew it now by all his own instincts—that Hargraves's father had wooed his mother!

Never afraid of weather like the other women. Patty assented at once when Darell presently suggested they should brave it; and, in a few minutes, Hargraves, passing the window to get a pen from another table, saw the Professor, as usual, join them, Patty put her hand through the old man's arm and her fingers close on his sleeve; and remembered Lady Mary's "*If he is de trop?*" of the previous morning.

That Lady Mary was clearly jealous for her daughter, and that jealousy implies that some one else has a really good thing worth wanting, Hargraves was perfectly aware. Yet he was aware, too, that a person can be self-interested and right in judgment at the same time; and one of the

things he objected to in Lady Mary was her uncommon sharpness.

It *was* Patty who avoided the *tête-à-têtes*; and used all her woman's art to keep Darell to the attitude Hargraves despised. It *was* Patty who had been scared by the present of the jewels; and had looked back—for a way of escape—when Darell had introduced her, as his future wife, to his kith and kin.

The three figures in the garden were soon lost to sight, and Hargraves still stood at the window staring into the impenetrable mist.

Yet might it not be that, in Patty's situation, almost every young woman felt like this? The fact that during Hargraves's own engagement even calm Charlotte had occasionally thought it necessary to seem slightly timid and fluttering, was surely proof that the fiancée, as a rule, really felt so?

But while his mind accepted such evidence, his heart rejected it.

He turned slowly from the window, and, not seeing them, looked fixedly at the rows of books in the great cases.

Yet he had done everything for the best! Poverty *was* ugly, dangerous, and cruel! Only, when one saw wealth near there appeared in it flaws invisible at a distance; lately, Hargraves had not once but many times had to put from him the insistent question if Patty were fitted for or equal to the responsibilities of a great house and fortune;

and the recollection that, in the story, it was not Lord Burleigh, but the village girl, who had found that marriage unsatisfactory.

To be sure, Hargraves was not of the sentimental kind to be swayed by legends; but then he was not swayed, either, by other people's opinions; and that all his world thought him right, did not convince him he was right.

Still staring at the books, he seemed to see for the first time to-day that poverty and its ways are a habit, which clings like all habits; if one could fancy a Patty, determined and self-assured, with the *aplomb* and the importance her position would ask of her, one must fancy her bereft of half her sweetness—in fact, not Patty at all.

"The wife of a plain man!" Hargraves took down one of the great tomes, opened it, turned a few leaves; and replaced it without knowing what it was.

Then, if she were not equal to the position, would Darell be very gentle to her failure—Darell, who expected—no blame to him—that all his assets, his estate, his house, his friends, his wife—should do him credit?

Even the intellectual tastes which the two had in common had seemed to Hargraves in these last few days to be but a frail foundation for happiness, after all; and he saw reluctantly that, even in these refined and exalted spheres, intellectual conversation forms but a small part of life.

Of all Darell's friends gathered at Altons now,

the Professor alone, it seemed, would appreciate such tastes in Darell's wife; and, by their own fireside, would wife and husband, after all, find their own so much akin?

Back to Hargraves's heart came clearly the picture, instantly dismissed, of those evenings in White Hart Lane when Charlotte was ill upstairs. Then, looking round Darell's pompous and substantial library, he could see Sir Francis, from the high-backed chair, upholstered in new leather, which creaked, reading aloud the last verbose critique in the last Quarterly on some poet whose wild-bird song Patty had by heart—her absent eyes, and her agreement, presently, with her lord's opinions, lest she should wound her lord's heart.

Supposing he had one, after all?

Hargraves walked to the window again; and stood there as if he would see through those blind mists.

Yet, if she had not given him hers, better for her he had none; better a thousand times!

But the life Hargraves had tried to obtain for her—"with all his will, but much against his heart"—had been the natural life—"the warm, safe corner of the household fire, behind the heads of children."

And if Patty's relation to Darell were to be as Hargraves's relation to Charlotte, his honesty forced him to see that, though his own attitude to Charlotte was, "You have at least given me so much, I can never give you enough," Darell's to

Patty might rather be, "I have given you so much, I naturally expect return"; that Patty, like Hargraves himself, knowing she could not give to her mate the best she had, would be the more anxious to surrender her time, her tastes—her happiness; until, in the marriage where she seemed to have gained everything, she would have paid in full.

The thought was unbearable!

For a moment, that other took him. "The wife of a plain man!"

To shelter and to spare her; to supply her weakness with his strength; to fight the world—not at her side, two abreast, comrades to share its rough and tumble—but to fight it *for* her, that there might no harm happen to her, and not a hair of her head be hurt—that was Hargraves's effete and incomplete ideal of the relations of man and woman.

Yet, realised, it has made some women happy.

He went back to his chair by the writing-table, and with his eyes fixed as steadily on the carpet as if he were learning its Persian pattern by heart, he might have sat there dreaming minutes or an hour—he knew not which—when he looked up to see Timothy's broad back at the window, and heard Timothy's cheerful tones saying, "A bore, this weather, ain't it? Plagued if I can find anything to do either!"

If there is one thing objectionable to the invariably diligent, it is to be classed with the invariably idle. Timothy, if he had not the lounging

body, the determination to be comfortable at any cost to other people's convenience and to his own self-respect, which sometimes marks his kind to-day, had certainly the lounging mind; and Hargraves could almost have wished him less jolly, good-tempered, and kind-hearted, so that he could have disliked him.

Hargraves replied shortly, "I find plenty to do myself."

Timothy, roused to the recollection that Hargraves was in business, and what business, replied, "Oh, yes, I forgot!" then added, as a confidential after-thought, "What do you think of old Frank's port? Not A1, eh?"

And Hargraves, not without what may be described as a solemn smile, replied, "*I* find it A1. I supply it myself."

Timothy replied cheerfully, "Beg pardon, I'm sure. Always putting my foot in it!" and subsided into a whistle.

That afternoon Hargraves, who, since they had been at Altons, had avoided Patty so steadily and quietly that the avoidance had certainly escaped the notice of all but one quick pair of eyes, and had been so successful that they had never exchanged a word in private, asked her—the mists having rolled away—if she would come for a ten minutes' turn with him in the park.

As he made the request, they were standing in the drawing-room, in its bow-window. Patty looked round before she answered, and Lady Mary,

suppressing yawns over a book, interposed quickly, "Frank is interviewing a tenant; and he's so pleasant and polite refusing all the ridiculous things they ask for, it's always a long business"; and Patty went at once to get her bonnet.

Georgina and Charlotte were practising a duet for the evening in an inner room. Though his whole life and conduct were consistently regulated by the rule of her happiness, it may yet be said that in these days Hargraves sometimes almost forgot his wife's existence; and that the virtuous coolness of manner which she still exhibited as just retribution for his candour about his birth was practically wasted upon him.

When he and Patty were in the garden, where the raindrops twinkled on shrubs and flowers like jewels, and the sweet smell of wet earth up-rose, he said at once, as if he had arranged to say it, and in the firm voice of one who does not mean to be contradicted, "This is a beautiful place!"

Patty, looking back for a minute at the ugly house behind them, said pleadingly, "Oh, I don't think beautiful, Mat! Imposing and substantial—but not beautiful!"

Perhaps she had given Hargraves the lead he wanted, for he said almost sternly, and looking straight in front of him, "You speak as if you did not like imposing places."

And Patty, with the little laugh he knew, which almost sounded as if it had a sob behind it, replied,

## A Searching of Hearts 315

"You see, I am not sure if they won't impose on me more than I am equal to!"

Until then, Hargraves had not known what a formidable array of arguments he had collected in his mind to prove to Patty that she was equal to them; that any one was equal to them who chose to be; that by birth and ancestry (Hargraves mentioned the second cousin, Lady Montgomery, starving at Boulogne, Patty interposing hastily, "Oh, but, Mat! I have never set eyes upon her!") she was especially fitted; and that, if there were any ways in which she seemed not to be fitted, she must call upon herself for powers and resolutions which she undoubtedly had and which she was culpably negligent in using.

They were walking between low hedges of sweet-briar on a grass path. The great house was already out of sight, and before them stretched the park—on this dull day almost gloomy in its vastness—the emblem of the landowner, of the extent of his responsibilities, of his dignity, of his loneliness, and of his cares.

Patty said nothing for so long, in answer to all the arguments, that Hargraves was obliged to look down at her at last and see the trembling of her mouth and the tears in her eyes.

He had so strong a command of himself, and so far stronger a desire for her happiness, that he spared neither himself nor her.

"What you want," he said firmly, "is only more self-confidence. You would find that silly little



Miss Lawrence, if she were in your place" ("She would like to have had the chance of being," added Mat, trying to stir in Patty's heart the jealousies he knew were never there), "would have given herself airs in it and set down everybody. I don't say it is necessary for you to do that. But it will be necessary for you to assert yourself. I have seen lately that it doesn't do—in any position—for a woman always to be giving in. You yield too much; and, even in marriage"—few persons would have been more horrified than Hargraves to know himself the spiritual successor of Mary Wollstonecraft and the prototype of "Nora" of *A Doll's House*—"you have a right to be yourself, and to keep your own opinions; and it won't be for your happiness, or for Darell's either, if you do not."

Patty stooped, and put her face—to hide it perhaps—close to the briar-hedge, saying inconsequently, in an uncertain voice, "How lovely it smells!" as one who would gain time; then suddenly lifted her eyes, with tears in them, and walking on quickly by Hargraves's side, exclaimed, "Mat, Mat! I hope—how I hope—we are not both making a mistake!"

To blunder, and pay for your blunder with the happiness not only of your own life, but of the life for which you have sacrificed your own, is among things intolerable.

Hargraves said in a hoarse, strange voice, "Don't you care for him?"

## A Searching of Hearts 317

And Patty answered, "Oh, Mat, I like him—I like him very much—only I have been afraid again lately if that is enough?"

The white mists were billowing up—hiding the park and the landscape, blotting out even the great house, and leaving only two together in a dim world.

Hargraves said, still in that hoarse voice, "Remember, nothing that can't be undone is done yet; and until it is, there is always time. There is our house for you to come to. Char said," added old Mat loyally, "that she would always be glad to see you"; and while he said it, he knew, and Patty knew too, it was not Patty but the future or actual Lady Darell that Charlotte would always be glad to see.

That she had distressed Hargraves, instantly distressed Patty for him, and made her fatally ready to retract. She looked up at him with a smile through her tears, and said, "Don't trouble! I dare say it's all nonsense"; and added, with a long sigh, "If I could only keep you for a friend and know you were there to consult and depend on! But you have your own life, and will be so far away!"

And because Hargraves was too honest to say he could remain her friend—for any effectual uses—and too sore in heart to say he could not, he answered not a word.

Then Patty, removing the traces of the tears with her handkerchief, asked the time a little anxiously.

She had a gold watch Darell had given her hung round her neck by a long chain, but because she was unused to such a luxury, or because it was not only a watch—but a chain—she never consulted it. Hargraves drew out his old turnip of a silver repeater, and showed it to her silently.

Patty said, "I promised to help Frank sort some books at three!" and they retraced their steps to the house.

As they went, Hargraves, looking down on her blue-ribboned bonnet, talked to her of Julia and the children—she had had letters from them in the morning—and of indifferent things, as if to give her time to recover herself. When they reached the house, she looked up to him with a faint smile of reassurance on her face, and turned at once to the library.

As Hargraves passed the open door of the drawing-room, he heard the voices of Lady Mary and some visitors; and before he could give the warning cough expected of the eavesdropper, overheard an unknown voice complete a sentence with, "Then why should he want to marry her?" and the light inconsequence of Lady Mary's tone in answer, "I think it must be because she was the only single woman he knew who didn't want to marry him!"

Hargraves was so perfectly silent at dinner that night that Charlotte, being near him in the drawing-room afterwards, administered a slight touch on his foot with her satin slipper, and a glance urging agreeableness. When they were going to

bed, she said, "I thought it was very rash of you to take trifle last night; but you are so stupid about catching my eye!" to which Hargraves responded, "I did catch it, but I thought it referred to the pineapple"; and they continued their toilettes.

The next day was bright and fine.

If the fact that Patty's advent threatened to put the nose of the Caldwells for ever out of joint gave an unholy satisfaction to some of the house-party, it only inspired Patty herself with so much apologetic gentleness towards the persons ousted that by this time the Colonel had been heard to declare that if that stuck-up ninny must marry somebody, he had rather it was that little girl than any one else. On this particular morning, he took Patty for a walk and told her how poor they were, and when she had told him how, being much poorer herself, she could sympathise with the condition, they returned as friends and cronies.

There was to be a large Tory meeting at Altons that afternoon, at which Darell and the local member were to speak from the terrace; indoors there was to be a refection for the gentlefolk of the neighbourhood; and in the grounds well-filled tables for the tenantry and the poor. Instead of the, usually unsuccessful, attempts which well-meaning persons make now at such meetings to break down the barriers between the classes, at Altons a cord, actual and not figurative, was drawn across the lawn to part them, to spare the olfactory senses of the polite and to minimise the

danger of disease—the poor being considered (not wholly unjustly in that era) a chronic source of contagion.

In Charlotte and Patty's walk of life, when there was anything in the nature of a fête, the women of the family were always kept busy beforehand preparing for it; and Charlotte, still embroidering the cushion of which she was getting woefully tired, privately wondered if, by missing all the work, one did not also miss most of the pleasure and interest too.

Georgina, who was copying some music, prattled to her a little; and Patty, returned from her walk, perceived on Charlotte's face the strained expression of the yawn suppressed—Mrs. Hargraves being altogether too sensible for Georgina, and too sensible to show she was too sensible.

Patty, with her bonnet hanging by its ribbon strings to her arm, sat at the window in the old listless attitude Charlotte had mentally condemned before, looking into the garden, where a marquee was being put up—Darell now and again appearing to direct operations.

Once, he turned to give Patty a nod and a smile, and Charlotte had to say, in a quick, rallying voice, "There is Sir Francis, Patty!" to prevent Patty looking right through him into space.

Lady Mary, who was wandering idly about the room, interposed with, "Don't bother her, Mrs. Hargraves! She will have plenty of Frank this afternoon—he is going to introduce her to half

the county," and added that she only hoped the length of the introductions would shorten the length of the speeches, being, she said, personally, tired of listening to old Lord Norreys telling people what a good thing it was for everybody he was rich and they were poor, and to Frank's platitudes about freedom.

Char's face stiffened slightly at this irreverence; and Lady Mary, who saw everything, responded maliciously, "Well, they are platitudes, you know! Frank was all for the bill in '32—but I can assure you he was more than a little disgusted when it went through; and though I dare say he would be quite agreeable to our sharing *our* property—if we had any—with the needy, I don't fancy he wants to share his own at present!"

Charlotte, for whom the trite had no terrors, replied in an aphorism she had found useful before, "After all, money does not make one happy!"

To which Lady Mary rejoined with considerable tartness, "That's your blissful ignorance, my dear Mrs. Hargraves! I can assure you the want of money can make one very miserable; and do many things"—she added in a lower voice—"for which one despises oneself."

She saw by Patty's face that a bullet, aimed at nothing in particular, had found a mark.

There was a light, cool wind and a bright sunshine that afternoon; and the terrace was gay with the bright, deep colours which were in vogue then for women's wear and which the taste of her

Majesty was to keep in vogue for many years to come. The young and the unmarried, however, escaped lightly with white, as the symbol of innocence.

Patty's muslin had a long blue sash, and her wide hat, blue ribbons. If the future Lady Darell's interests had been directly, instead of only very indirectly, her own, Charlotte could not have taken more trouble to nullify the effect of the red hair and to show the milk and roses of Patty's complexion and the soft grace of her figure to the best advantage.

It was Charlotte who, this afternoon in Patty's room, stepping back to regard her handiwork, suggested as a finishing touch at Patty's waist a moss-rose from the vase on the dressing-table; and Patty who, very slightly regarding herself in the glass, acquiesced immediately and indifferently; so that even Charlotte perceived an unusual mental attitude, and inquired rather anxiously if Patty would like some sal volatile.

The girls came downstairs together. Darell and Hargraves were awaiting them in the hall. By a window stood Georgina—more gossamer-like than ever—with her muslin bonnet with white violets under it nestling against the pale gold of her hair—the gentlest, breakable thing; whose husband, when achieved, one would hardly be able to help calling a brute; who would make him the dearest little wife; shed the soft tears of a genuine little grief when he died; and, after the proper interval,

no doubt make the dearest little wife to somebody else.

"The more women resemble our sex," said Rousseau, "the less power they have over us"; and, in 1838, it was Mary Wollstonecraft alone who had dared the proud retort, "This is the very point I aim at; I do not wish them to have power over men, but over themselves."

As Hargraves and Charlotte were following Darell and Patty on to the terrace—Darell was playing with the end of Patty's sash and, handsome and happy in his trim blue coat and high stock, bending over to talk to her—Charlotte said, "Hargraves! I really think Patty is getting very thin!" and Hargraves felt that strong sense of irritation which it is natural to feel with any one who suggests, or confirms, an unwelcome idea.

The afternoon passed off as well as possible.

The unwashed surged up to the barrier but not beyond it. Old Lord Norreys, mopping a red forehead, for the afternoon sun burnt, announced opinions which, over the water fifty years earlier, would have conducted him straight to the tumbril and the guillotine; but as his life was spent in belying his words, and he was known to be the most kindly, generous, and easy of men and landlords, his hearers applauded everything he said; received the member (who was a fluent, smooth person) amiably because he was my lord's friend and nominee; and bore with Darell's well-thought-out speech because he was host, and not ill-liked.



The sound rule that any speech is too long unless every one complains it is too short was not observed at Altons, or anywhere else, in that leisurely age.

The outskirts of the crowd faded away presently to look at the preparations in the refreshment tents; humble mothers whispered conversations to each other about really interesting practical things over the babies' heads; the old countrymen awaited the end of the speechifying with a patience taught by long contact with nature; the yokels and labourers shifted from one leg to another and kept their minds a blank; the faces of the classes on the terrace wore the strained look Charlotte's had worn in the morning; and after a good many cheers, led by arrangement by the Altons grooms and gardeners, the meeting ended and eating began.

Hargraves, asked to look after some dowagers, supplied them amply, in turn. The one or two who tried to beguile him into conversation met with slight response. Conversation was not in the bond. But if there was a neglected spinster sitting with weary smiles in a far corner, he found and fed her, stated that it was a fine day and the sun was hot; and moved on to discover her duplicate.

There were to be fireworks and a band in the park for the people in the evening; but by six o'clock Darell was seeing off the last coach-load of county.

Hargraves stood on the terrace—at a little distance from the rest of the house-party—and

## A Searching of Hearts 325

looked down at the people beyond the dividing barrier, in the field which, after yesterday's wet, was muddy with trampling feet—a people poor, ugly, ill-fed, whose most dangerous failing—though no longer a universal failing—was content with conditions which self-respect finds unendurable.

Hargraves had thought, when by honest work he had achieved wealth and place among the substantial citizens of no mean city, he must needs find only satisfaction and a deep and proper pride in that position. Until to-day, he had so found them. But now, for a moment, as he looked over the parapet, some strange sense of apology took him that he should be high up and these low down; for the first time in his life, perhaps, he wondered if he were really the better, or only the luckier, man.

Patty, passing to go into the house, saw him and turned and joined him; and they stood side by side for a minute, quite silent, watching the moving masses below.

For her and her father, in every village wastrel, or wan creature with all the use and spirit crushed out of her by cares, there, but for the grace of God, went David and Patty Wyatt.

Perhaps some memory from those old days, or the thought in Hargraves's mind, was transmitted to her.

She looked up into his face from under the broad brim of her hat with a smile, and said, pointing

down, "I suppose you would be angry if I said that I shall never be any use as Lady Bountiful, because, instead of teaching them how much better they might manage, I always know they manage now ever so much better than I could do in their place!"

Hargraves replied decidedly that that was certainly not the way to improve people. If you want a man to do all he can, you must ask of him more than he can; it was a rule of life!

Then, in quite a different and a gentler tone, he added, "I am really at home down there. I felt just now as if I had no business up here, after all. I suppose it's the call of the blood."

And for a few minutes longer they watched the moving crowds, in silence.

Then the Professor, who had been vaguely peering about for Patty for the last half hour, came up to her with Darell, saying, "Here's my friend at last!" and, with his old hand on her shoulder and Darell on her other side, they turned towards the house—Hargraves following slowly.

At dinner that night, Charlotte had to be perpetually catching his eye to galvanise him into conversation; but at dessert, the host *par excellence* drew him again into the talk; he became interested, and when he spoke showed, as he nearly always showed, not only the *ächtbritische Beschränktheit*—the "genuine British narrowness"—which Heine hated, but also the absolute steadiness of character and purpose which once made the Briton too

tough to beat, and, after all, keeps him unbeaten yet.

The night was warm; and when the men came into the drawing-room its long windows were open to the terrace, where Mrs. Hargraves and Georgina were strolling; and—Georgina at once putting her fair head into the drawing-room and saying in her delicate voice, "It is lovely out here, do come!"—Darell and Timothy followed her.

Mrs. Caldwell had gone to bed with a headache; the Professor had remained in the dining-room, calmly continuing his own thoughts while Colonel Caldwell demonstrated to him the immediate ruin of the country and the constitution; so, in the drawing-room in a very dim light (for the open windows had made the candles gutter, and Lady Mary had blown them out) Hargraves found only Lady Mary herself, sitting at the piano with her hands on the silent keys, and—a whiteness in a corner of the sofa, her head lying back against one of its stiff cushions—Patty.

He sat down near her, and, taking up a paper-knife from a table, cut a paper that lay on it.

For a fortnight, Lady Mary had duly asked every evening for Char's "Tell me, mother, shall I chide him?" and her daughter's little tune without any hint of her own capacity as a musician.

But now, when she struck the chords, the listeners knew for the first time the piano was beautiful in tone and richness, and the great room seemed full of melody—as an organ fills a cathedral.

Sometimes, she broke for a minute or two into singing—a gay line of a mocking little French roulade, or

“Short swallow flights of song, that dip  
Their wings in tears, and skim away,”

and one could hear in her voice, as one could see in her face, the beauty it once had had.

The voice trailed into silence, or was hidden in music, before one could detect its defects—which was Lady Mary's cleverness; and the sob of a poignant melody drifted into the scoffing, irresponsible gaiety of the roulade again—which was her character.

She had come to some March of Priests with full, loud chords, when Hargraves leaned forward suddenly, and with a strange sensation that he must now again impress this thing on Patty, or never again impress it, laid his stout and steady hand upon her knee, and said in a low voice, “Don't forget! Nothing is past undoing; and if it is not for your happiness it must never be done!”

Patty lifted her head from the cushion, and, for a second, put her small, cold hand over his. “Mat!” she said. “Lately, I have wondered sometimes if it is not my duty to do it, whether it is for my happiness or not!”

The priests were filing up the temple to the blare of trumpets and the full swell of the great organ.

## A Searching of Hearts 329

Hargraves answered, almost loudly, that that was a fatal thing to think; that that would be to bring misery upon every one; "for all our sakes—" he added hoarsely; and the loud chords died into a sudden silence, and Lady Mary's light, quick voice from the piano said, "Here's Frank coming to look for you, Patty!" and Darell came into the room through the open window.

Patty got up at once, like a quickly obedient child, and went with him.

Lady Mary sat silent at the piano, watching Hargraves as he sat, silent too and wholly unconscious of her, staring at nothing.

The next morning at breakfast, the first letter he opened was from Atkins, telling him of the sudden death of old Barnes. As he was Hargraves's only efficient *remplaçant* in Martin's Lane, the news meant, of course, that Hargraves must return there immediately, instead of remaining on at Altons for the wedding, now only a fortnight distant.

Darell said at once, "Is there no chance of your being able to come back to us?" and added, if not, how great the disappointment would be to himself, as to Patty.

She murmured something which sufficed.

There was at once much talk and confusion at the table; a servant was sent to fetch the timetable of trains and coaches; the advisability of posting all the way was discussed; the Professor—his mental equipment being vastly superior to that

of any other person present—looked vaguely round about him, grasping imperfectly what had happened; and Lady Mary turned to Charlotte with, “I suppose *you* must go too, Mrs. Hargraves?”

In those days, when husband and wife walked to church and entered a room inevitably arm-in-arm, as the symbol of the closeness of the marriage tie, it would have been almost tantamount to breaking it for the woman to desert her lord under such circumstances; and Charlotte was, besides, much too conscientious to send Hargraves back alone to a house tied up to the last chair in holland bags, and to the tender mercies of young servants new to their work, and of old Anna, past hers.

She was practical and cheerful in her disappointment, and Lady Mary had never liked her better; while, as to Darell, he and Charlotte had got on really well (was there something *borné* in both their minds which made them akin?), and he was sincerely sorry at the departure.

Charlotte ran upstairs at once to pack—Patty following—and the two girls began to fold Charlotte’s best frocks and pelisses; Charlotte, through her own briskness, keeping a doubtful eye on Patty, believing her, justly, incapable of folding as well as she did herself; while, in the dressing-room, Hargraves compressed his toilette into a carpet bag.

“I am sure you are disappointed too, Patty?” asked Char, standing by the bed, filling her best evening sleeves with paper, and noting Patty’s

silence; and if the loss of the last prop on which one's poor house rests, of the raft to which the drowning cling, is disappointment, Patty was justified in saying that she was.

Hargraves came into the room at the moment with his best waistcoat, which always toured among Charlotte's gowns; looked once, steadily, at Patty still folding by the bed; before Lady Mary's maid tapped at the door with offers of assistance, and Georgina with a nosegay from the hothouses for Mrs. Hargraves's acceptance—and the room became full of bustle and talkers.

In less than an hour after the receipt of Atkins's letter, one of the Altons chaises stood at its door, and all the house-party had gathered on the terrace and about the steps to say good-bye to the travellers—Darell coming down to the chaise for last words, handshakes, and regrets.

At the bend of the drive, Hargraves, looking back, saw Patty in her blue cotton frock standing by the Professor, who had as usual his old arm through hers and the vaguely pleasant air about him of one who has not yet ascertained who is going nor why they go; while Lady Mary, almost improperly youthful of figure, and quite improperly capless as ever, was on her other side.

Lady Mary stood for everything that Hargraves most cordially disapproved in woman; was flippant and freespoken where she ought to have been tender and quiet; and had principles as to debt and duty brazenly lax.



Yet he was not without some strange sensation that she was Patty's best friend in that world to which he had left Patty for ever; and that when Lady Mary had shaken hands with him to say good-bye, he had seen, for the passing of a second, something assuring and steady in her irresponsible eye.

That look was with him as the hoofs of Darell's quickest cobs beat monotonous measure upon the road to Bath; and was the only consolation he had.

## CHAPTER XV

### HUSH-MONEY

ABOUT a week after his return to Tottenham, Hargraves, driving thither from the City one evening, when he was about two miles from the High Cross, perceived on the pathway a gesticulating female form.

No one, except an omnibus, likes to be so signalled; and when Mrs. Rowe had requested a lift, climbed into the gig, and taken her seat by him, she found his mood was gruff. He was not pleased to remember afterwards that, during their quarter of an hour's drive, by the pertinent, or impertinent, questions for which she was famous, she had extracted from him the information that Charlotte's cook was under notice to leave, and that on the morrow Charlotte—without Matthew—proposed to dine and spend the evening with Lady Jones, who was still an invalid.

Julia's questions about Altons, however, were not so many and leading as might have been expected. Looking up at him from the depths of her bonnet, she stated that Matthew did not look any better for his visit there.

To which Hargraves, paying strict attention to Peter, replied, "It is impossible I should look better, as I was perfectly well when I went."

Having deposited her at the High Cross, he was left with the vague impression that she herself was, in a vulgar but irreplaceable phrase, down on her luck; though, under cross-examination from Charlotte in the evening, he was unable to state positively whether it was gown, bonnet or face that had looked worn.

Proceeding to town on Peter's back the next morning, he caught sight of Rowe, whose appearance was, on the other hand, excessively jaunty; with a new coat, a flower in the buttonhole, a swinging cane, and an air of cheerful conceit.

In the contrast, Hargraves found some food for thought.

The house in White Hart Lane seemed particularly prim and quiet when he dismounted at the door that evening. But then, since they had arrived at it on the day of their hurried return from Altons, it had often seemed to him like a place which has known recent death.

Anna, all shaking curls and cap-ribbons, had come to the door to meet them on that surprising occasion, and, hearing very little of their explanations, and that little wrong, said, in her trembling, old feeble accents, "And what have you done to Miss Patty, Mr. 'Argraves?"

What, indeed?

In the drawing-room Patty had left her needle

still in an unfinished piece of embroidery, in which she had imperfectly copied an excellent production of Charlotte's; and on the table, by which Hargraves always sat in his armed, wool-worked chair and read book or paper of an evening, was her little, old, shabby Keats, with her marker in it. Had she left that too—a careless Patty for ever—by mistake, or “rosemary, for remembrance”?

At Hargraves's solitary dinner this evening—an excellent dinner, composed of such dishes as had the double merit of being what Charlotte considered good for his digestion and what he liked—Patty's seemed one of those vacant chairs from which one turns one's eyes to spare one's heart.

By eating a cutlet more than he required, Hargraves was able to reserve three bones for the benefit of Clement; and, as the dessert was being put on the table, he opened one of the long windows and went out by it to the stable yard to present the dainties. When Clement had devoured them in a great hurry he had time to be grateful, and rubbed against Hargraves's leg and licked his hand. Patty had known how to play with the creature and excite him to joy and barks: he and Hargraves had between them some silent understanding. Presently, for a minute, Clement pricked his ears; there was certainly a step in the drive, and Hargraves, taking into consideration Charlotte's absence, diagnosed a lover for the kitchenmaid. But the steps did not turn towards the back premises, and he remembered the open

dining-room window and the silver on the table.

Sitting by it, in the worn gown and bonnet of the previous day, with something both feverish and dejected in her attitude—for her eyes were turned to the window as if she at once expected Matthew and feared him—he found Julia Rowe.

Hargraves belonged to the sensible class of persons who hate the melodramatic and those who glide mysteriously through windows when there are hall doors, with bells waiting to be pulled in the usual way.

Julia must have seen the disapproval on his face, for she said hurriedly, "Matthew! It will be better, if possible, the servants should not know I am here! I want to speak to you privately—so I took advantage of the open window."

There was something so strained in her face, something in her whole bearing so very unlike its usual self-confident positiveness, that Hargraves (who indeed would never have suspected Julia of anything so amiable as a feminine weakness) saw there was something seriously wrong. He poured out a large glass of port, and said, in a voice much gentler than Julia knew, "First, drink that. You can tell me afterwards," and while she obeyed him, he went to the window, closed it, and drew the blinds.

The dining-room was at the end of a long passage, inconveniently remote from the kitchen; its only neighbour was Anna—deaf, by the will of Heaven.

For a few minutes, the heavy tick of the bronze clock (late of Martin's Lane) between the two capering warriors (of the same place) alone broke the silence.

When Julia had finished the port, she pushed the glass away, put her elbows on the table and let her chin fall into her hands; then said, "Matthew, I don't know how I can ever tell you—you, of all people!"

And Hargraves replied, still in that merciful voice she hardly knew, "I dare say you will find it easier than you think."

His type, the embodiment of all the respectabilities, the comfortable, righteous man, who has known no temptation, made her hesitate; but he looked so reliable and firm—swayed by no gusts of passion, sensible, thoughtful, resourceful—and that gave encouragement.

She asked, "Have you heard any rumours in the City—about Dick's business?"

Hargraves answered, "Yes, I have. Atkins had some story. I didn't listen to it."

Julia said, in a low voice, "I expect it was true, though."

And Hargraves replied simply, "Yes, I expected so, too."

Then he waited, not looking at her but at the heavy decanters of wine, with their "Christian names in silver round their necks," until she was ready to speak.

"Things have been going wrong a long time,"

she said. "I think they were never right! Dick stepped into the business, ready-made, without any effort of his own. At first, his father and Roberts—the old clerk, you know—did everything; and I think his father was proud of Dick's being so good-looking and lively and clever, and didn't want him to work much. Then his father died, and Roberts kept everything together, and then he died too. Oh, Matthew," said poor Julia, "I know you don't approve of women knowing anything about business—and there are some happy ones, like Char, who don't need to—but I felt I had to try to keep Dick to his work for the sake of the children. I know a woman's place is her home, but then, you see, as our homes generally depend on our husband's business, that makes it our business too," and she looked up with the old, acute, determined look Hargraves had hated, and as it passed into a sad smile, added, "Still, I suppose you would say you were right—my interference was of no use, and simply made disagreements between us. We had never disagreed till then! Dick neglected the business till there was almost none to neglect; and then he began to get into difficulties. I tried to be as economical as I could. Oh, I really think it takes as much cleverness to live on very little money as to make a great deal! But it was no good. Dick—he doesn't mean any harm—but he was always brought up to think he must have what he wanted, so he went on having it; and made me so angry, bringing presents for

Lily, and I think—I suppose—betting sometimes. And in the office, you know, he had—as I suppose all solicitors have—what you call securities belonging to other people; and when things were very bad—oh, Matthew, how can I tell you?” said Julia, “he realised them by degrees—hoping to be able to replace them.”

And her proud head dropped on her hands among the glass and silver of the table.

Hargraves said, not in a harsh voice, “They always hope that.” Then, after a long pause, as if he were giving her time to recover herself, he asked, “What is the amount?”

Julia looked him in the face, with a courage he at once disapproved and admired, and said, “Two thousand pounds.”

And Hargraves replied quietly, “A large sum.”

For a few minutes, the fat tick of the clock from Martin’s Lane was the only sound in the room; or, very distantly, the voices of the servants in the kitchen at the end of the passage. But absorbed minds make deaf ears.

If Matthew Hargraves had heard that story a year earlier, his own course, and the course of other lives, would have been different.

But to have had one’s own share of personal sorrow leaves man (unless it turns him, like Niobe, to stone), for a while at least, more tender to the sorrows of others; and from Patty he had learned something of that grace of pity, so difficult to the strong nature; for, after all, there is no better way



of teaching a virtue than by having it oneself. To be sure, he was still perfectly aware that to oblige a gentleman by lending him a large sum of money, usually only means to disoblige him by refusing the loan of a larger in a few weeks' time; and that, as he had stated at Altons, as a rule one can only help such people as would do pretty well without that help. But though he associated the word chivalry with sentimental youths, absurdly dressed, capering about on horses with petticoats, in tournaments and the Middle Ages, it was one of his most dogged persuasions that the man should take all the kicks and the woman the halfpence. That Julia—objectionable in her self-reliance and assertion—sat before him with the tears falling unheeded down her white cheeks on to the capable thin hands, softened him to her as much as it enraged him with Rowe.

He said, looking steadily at a decanter, "I suppose he is threatened with exposure?"

Julia answered, rather breathlessly, "In a few days' time! Unless the money is replaced, he will be charged with fraudulent conversion. My own little fortune is settled on me and the children, so that can't help us, as Dick can't touch the capital."

And Hargraves could not refrain from remarking, "A very good thing."

"Oh, I don't know," says poor Julia, "it might have saved us from disgrace, anyhow."

Not as a sarcasm, but as a statement of fact,

Hargraves replied, "Only, by this time it wouldn't be there."

Presently he took up one of the wine labels, turned it in his hand, looked at it thoughtfully, and asked, "There is no one nearer to you, upon whom you have more claim than on myself, to whom you can apply?"

And Julia said, "Only Charlotte."

To find it easier to give to the needy of whom you know nothing but their need, than to give to your own relations of whom you know much else also to their disadvantage, is not a peculiarity of Mrs. Hargraves.

Matthew said at once, "Charlotte's fortune is not in her own control; and if it were, and she wished to use it in such a way, it would be my duty to prevent her. If anything is to be done, I must do it myself."

He went to a drawer in a writing-table; unlocked it; produced a few small books and papers; took them to the table; cleared a space in front of him, and considered them, in silence. Julia watched him, breathing quickly. Presently he looked up, and said with a smile:

"People don't keep two thousand pounds lying idle at their bank, you know."

She answered, with a sort of sudden simplicity that made her seem to him less hard and younger than he had ever known her, "We have kept hardly anything at our bank for some time. The manager was always writing to say so."

Presently Hargraves folded the papers and neatly enclosed them in an elastic ring.

"I must understand the position in detail," he said. "I shall see Rowe to-morrow. If I replace the money it will be, you understand, on my own conditions. Your husband will have to try to make a fresh start in a different place. I shall dictate such terms," his mouth hardened, "as I think will be best for you and your children. This—loan will give me some power to advise and restrain Rowe in the future—and I shall use it."

"Oh, Matthew!" says Julia, "you say 'loan,' but how shall we ever be in a position to pay you back?"

Hargraves answered, his plebeian and plain face softening a little, "Well, don't trouble about that now. We can see to that later on."

Then, as a horrible fear took him that Julia was about to take his hand, possibly kiss it, or otherwise hoist them both to the dizzy realms of sentiment, he hastily suggested another half glass of port; and added, in his most matter-of-fact manner, "A new start under different surroundings will be essential. Something has evidently leaked out here, and in such a business as Rowe's, trustworthiness is the first essential."

Julia, gathering her shawl about her preparatory to departure, only said, with a sigh she could not stifle, "Perhaps in a new place there will be fewer temptations!"

And Hargraves, literally truthful, replied, "Not

fewer, but different"; and added, to himself only, "Where the devil cannot come, he will send."

Julia was standing—a tall figure and imposing, even in the shabby shawl and gown, but for that agony and fear in her which had drained her of her pride. She caught the thought in his mind, and, with her hand resting steadily on the table, she looked full at him, and said, in a voice not wholly under control:

"Yet, Matthew, it is always Dick who is the easy, good-tempered one at home; and so kind and unselfish to the children; and I know really devoted to me."

By his stiff lip Hargraves showed that he was constitutionally incapable of understanding the kind unselfishness of the husband and father who brought wife and children to ruin, and proved his real devotion to his wife by running after every pretty face he saw.

He rose too—his eyes were hardly on a level with tall Julia's—and said, in his steady voice, "Of course, say nothing to any one. The fewer people who know anything, the better for Rowe. I shall not speak of it to Charlotte; the money part of it will in no way affect her, and is entirely my private affair. If you go quietly as you came no one is likely to hear you"; and seeing more thanks in Julia's beautiful and softened eyes, he added prudently, "Only you had better go at once."

As he was, morally, propelling her through the window, she wrested her mind for a moment from

her own affairs, and said, "I have not heard from Patty for several days. I do hope—one of us—is going to be happy!"

Hargraves did not reply; before Julia was across the lawn, he had quietly shut and locked the window; then, feeling like the villain in the melodrama who has just got rid of his victim by poison, he carefully washed Julia's port glass in his finger-bowl, to avert suspicion, and, by eight o'clock tea-time, was sitting reading innocently in the drawing-room as usual.

Charlotte came in by eleven.

"Lady Jones was so anxious to know all about Altons," she said (meaning that it was good for Lady Jones's proud stomach that she should be told), "that I stayed later than I meant. I hope you have not been lonely, Hargraves?"

And Hargraves, feeling more than ever like the villain of cheap melodrama, and being unused to conveying a lie through the truth (or any other medium), replied that he had not.

If, a year before, any one had told him that he would be saving from not unmerited disgrace a man he did not respect and a woman he did not like, and who had on his generosity but the slenderest claims, by a gift of two thousand pounds, he would have repudiated the suggestion with contempt; but if he had been told that, on the same evening, the thought of that gift would not be paramount in his mind, and that he would lie long awake thinking of something far different, even

his clean lips would have been tempted to deny the possibility, with an oath.

At eleven o'clock the next morning, Rowe, still with that jaunty air with which he sought to impose his own opinion of himself upon the world, met Hargraves by appointment in Martin's Lane.

If Hargraves had made the acceptance of his gift easy for Julia, he made it hard and bitter for Rowe; hit straight from the shoulder, and standing, facing him, told him in the plainest Anglo-Saxon the things the well-bred hardly permit themselves to say, or, having said, regret.

Hargraves regretted nothing that he said. His face reddened and coarsened as he spoke; he might have been his old father, punishing a guilty servant. Belonging, and proud to belong, to that City which has been defined as the "greatest, the strictest, the most sober, and the most dignified of all commercial communities," he considered that Rowe, as also a member of it, in disgracing himself had disgraced it, and told him so.

At first, the wretched Richard made an attempt at bluster and at his normal attitude of non-chalance; but as Hargraves, standing looking at him with his hand steady on the high wooden mantelpiece, dealt him blow after blow, the miserable Dick's conceit shrivelled, as a garment is shrivelled by fire, and when Hargraves had finished with him, his handsome face was as white as paper.

Patty would have seen even then the so much

that was good in him; the affectionate disposition and easy temper to which Julia had witnessed, and that his dishonesty had been the fruit of weakness rather than of cunning. But if she had taught Hargraves pity, she had not taught him to pity the type of man who preys first on such women as Patty herself, accepts everything from them, and drags them under in his fall.

When at last Rowe tried to get some thanks off his dry tongue, Hargraves said roughly, "You may be sure I don't do it for you. You should stand in the dock but for your wife and children," and when the wretched Dick faltered out the promises of amendment that his kind make so easily, and added that, if he could, he would pay back his debt in time—"If you can," Hargraves answered grimly, "I shall certainly see to it that you do."

Before he left the place, Hargraves had stipulated that Rowe should effect an insurance on his life for the benefit of those dependent on him. "There will be no shirking the payment of the premiums," he added, with his ugly mouth tight set.

Then there was some talk of the future, and of a fresh start in a foreign country. Rowe's sanguine disposition jumped cheerfully at the prospect; he advanced the vaguely sanguine belief that there was very good business doing in some of those places; and Hargraves added, quenchingly, "For an honest man."

Then his attitude, though not his lips, said, "Now you can go." He turned to his desk. Rowe looked quickly at his face, and decided not to offer to shake hands, murmured some more gratitude, and thankfully found himself in the street.

The lively air returned to him gradually; he flicked his neat leg with his cane. The summer sun made even dull old London look cheerful, and many men have made a fortune from a new beginning. Presently he met a friend, and had a glass of wine with him, and the friend observing that old Rowe looked a bit off colour, old Rowe replied, truthfully, in the past tense, that he had been.

That evening Julia, sitting absorbed in long reverie in the gathering dusk in her drawing-room, heard him whistling in good spirits, as he worked among his rose-trees in the garden without.

A few days later, Charlotte, having been to see her cousin at the High Cross, met Hargraves on his return from town in the afternoon with, "Is there anything wrong with Richard Rowe's business, Hargraves? Their house looks so shabby, and Lily and Bertha are still in their last summer's frocks with the tucks let down; and when I asked Julia if anything was amiss, she seemed quite haughty and furtive about it. Have you heard anything?"

Hargraves, dismounting from Peter and taking the bridle to lead him stableward, replied, "Rowe consulted me about his affairs a few days ago.



There is less work doing for solicitors in the City now than there used to be, and he is considering the advisability of setting up elsewhere."

Charlotte said, "Oh!" in a prim voice. Then she looked at Hargraves rather sharply and added, "It would not be the least use helping Richard Rowe or lending him money; it never does that sort of people any real good."

And Hargraves replied, most truthfully, but still with that unwelcome sensation of being a liar, "I am aware of that, my dear."

As the wedding at Altons drew nearer—it was now but a week away—Patty's letters became fewer; those few were all naturally directed to Charlotte, and exclusively taken up with the daily *minutiae*.

Hargraves, who had extracts from them read to him as he ate his kidneys and bacon before going Citywards, made out from them that there had been dinner parties to introduce the bride; that the house-party remained the same, and that Patty saw much of Lady Mary and liked her the more she saw. Sometimes, there were whole letters in which Darell's name was not mentioned; unless he was, as it were, included under the useful and generic head of "we" which designated the entire party.

It was naturally Hargraves's part to listen to many speculations from Charlotte as to whether the wedding-day was likely to be fine; if Patty, unreminded by Charlotte, would properly adjust

her wedding gown; or remember to pack the right clothes for the Italian trip. It was also his part and his duty when Charlotte, at dessert one evening, sipping the little glass of port she always took to keep her husband company, inquired of him if he thought Patty really attached to Sir Francis, to reply that he concluded she was; whereto Charlotte returned shrewdly, "Lady Mary was always saying that of course a girl in Patty's position had to make provision for herself; but, in point of fact that was just what Patty was too stupid to have ever thought of doing—at least, without a good deal of help from us!"

Five days before the wedding, there was a polite line from Darell, expressing further regrets that Mr. and Mrs. Hargraves had finally found it impossible to return to Altons for the great occasion, and giving a brief outline of the proposed wedding journey.

Hargraves, who was certainly no shirker, passed the letter to Charlotte—Miss Leaf had won a Reward of Merit for the correctness of her Epistolary Correspondence at the Pipsons'—and asked her to answer it for them both, and himself sat long at his desk in Martin's Lane that morning, trying to compose to Patty the letter of paternal blessing and advice, which he and Charlotte agreed the occasion demanded of him, and to convey in and through it a last, strong reminder that no step was yet taken that could not be retraced.

Perhaps he was not clever enough for such

subtlety, or perceived that, though it had been in his power to push her into the untried waters, she must struggle out of them herself. Herself—Patty—who always went with the stream!

Hargraves sat staring at the blank sheet of paper, and wrote not a line.

Charlotte attributed his taciturnity when he returned in the evening to the effect of thunder on the internal economy; and if she was more than commonly unseeing, yet it is usually the eye of the stranger, and not the eye of custom, that surprises the secrets of the heart.

Hargraves was extra busy now in Martin's Lane, training Atkins to become a Barnes, and young Mason to become an Atkins. He had pensioned off old Barnes's widow, in Mrs. Hargraves's opinion with an excessive generosity—but then persons who are themselves charitable are nearly always suspicious of the worthiness of the charities of others.

To-night, at dinner, he tried to keep the conversation to Mrs. Barnes, and off that other subject which was naturally to the fore in Charlotte's mind; but at tea in the drawing-room, she returned at once to surmises about the Italian wedding trip; and instead of the printed page of the book before him Hargrave saw the blue Italian sky and Southern landscape—as he had seen them in some crude print in his childhood—with Darell, correct and admirable, and at his side, in the cotton frock in which Hargraves had last seen her and with her

garden bonnet hanging on her arm, Patty, who suddenly looked up at him with the look of the imprisoned bird with its panting breast against the door of its cage:

Only, then, it would be shut for ever.

Hargraves rose, said he thought Charlotte was right and the night sultry, and that he would go into the garden.

He paced it a long while—bullet head held downwards; staring, unseeing eyes; heavy hands inert at his sides. He noticed neither the hot scents of the August night, nor, presently, great drops of rain. Rowe came across his mind. The utter dependence of the wife on the husband, which he had once maintained as a good thing, as some of the best of men have maintained it because they themselves would not misuse it, seemed to him now to be fraught with horrible dangers. To be sure, Darell was no Richard Rowe; but poor thing as Richard was, his salvation and his wife's lay in the fact that she loved him.

Ay, there was the rub!

Several more large drops of rain fell quickly. A window was opened in the drawing-room, and a clear, bell-like voice issued, "Hargraves! Do come in! It is raining quite fast, and you know your blue coat spots!"

And Hargraves, obeying the mandate, saw by the nobly repressed annoyance in his wife's face that she found difficulty in believing at the moment in the doctrine of man's mental superiority.

She was more convinced than ever of the correctness of her theory that thunder discomposed his inward parts when Hargraves delayed coming up to bed so long that evening that she had to rap quite briskly with her slipper on her bedroom floor.

When he appeared, she said, "I am certain you have been asleep, Hargraves!" whereat Hargraves, who felt himself getting used to lying, replied he had not, in the voice of one who leaves it to be concluded that he has.

The wedding was to take place on a Thursday. Monday and Tuesday passed in the Lane at Tottenham, and in the Lane in the parish of St. Martin's Orgar in the City, as usual.

On Wednesday afternoon, the Rowses with the two children were to dine with the Hargraveses, to drink Patty's health. On his return from the City, Matthew found the party already arrived—Lily skipping about in the hall waiting for the Joker-in-Ordinary, while Bertha put a faithful hand silently into his.

When presently the pair were admitted to his dressing-room to help him select a suitable, gorgeous waistcoat for the festal evening, Hargraves, brushing his hair, did not forget to make the sudden, absent-minded dabs with the brush expected of him, at the fair little heads at his side; until presently Bertha, seated on the leather box which contained Hargrave's Sunday hat, looked up at the owner and inquired, "Do you feel funny

inside, Uncle Mat, as well as out?" And Hargraves replied, "Through and through, my dear Bertha, I assure you; through and through."

But for the children, the dinner would hardly have been easy or comfortable.

Charlotte, always on high stilts with Rowe, would have been on a much loftier pair to-night if she had known all there was to know about him. Rowe felt Hargraves's stern eye upon him—which it was not—and it was in the natural order of things that when Hargraves and Julia parleyed they should disagree. To-night, however, Julia yielded up Dr. Pusey to be torn in pieces, quite willingly, and looked up quickly at Hargraves when the subject, as a rule a very red flag to a bull, left him also indifferent.

At dessert, as usual, Uncle Mat ran up the scale on his false falsetto. Failing an orange, a peach played the part of the sea-sick passenger crossing the Channel in a finger-bowl, and Lily's joyful legs kicked the table underneath in her excitement.

Then Charlotte said, "We mustn't forget Patty's health, Hargraves!" And, as once before, Hargraves, with eyes fixed on the picture of still life, and glass upraised in his steady hand, proposed the health of Sir Francis and Lady Darell.

Rowe said, "Hear, hear! good luck to 'em!" very loud; and then quiet fell on the little party, until Charlotte suggested the move to the drawing-room.

Richard found his bad quarter of an hour with

his host better than he expected: Hargraves was nothing worse than perfectly silent.

The children both made a rush at him directly he came into the drawing-room, and with Bertha on his knee and Lily with a hand on his shoulder, he received a double encore for "Miss Myrtle is going to be married." Then Lily deserted him for her father, and Hargraves drew a *Book of Beauty* from the table to him and showed it to Bertha, without much comment. He could feel her nearness—a soft, warm, wholly dependable thing; and presently, because she could see the book better in that fashion, her arm came round his neck. It had seemed to him for many days as if the heart within him was turned to iron and stone—as if nothing could ever touch or soften him again. And upon that harsh and barren land there came now rain and a spring of water, and, for the moment, the bitterness of his soul gave place to a gentler mood.

He was able to live up to his character of jester for the rest of the evening with less difficulty; and, when the children had gone, to say something, long owing, to Charlotte about his appreciation of the good temper she had shown in her disappointment in not being at Altons for the wedding.

Mrs. Hargraves, tidying the room after the havoc wrought by the children, observed that she made a point of never troubling about anything that could not be helped, and Hargraves replied that it was a very good plan.

Patty's wedding morning broke in storms of rain. It was only the end of August, but after a wild night—Hargraves had listened long to the sudden loud moans of wind, and then to the slashings of wet against the window pane—the torn garden had in it something of death and desolation and the morning air was cold.

Charlotte, fresh and brisk, making the tea at breakfast, greeted Hargraves's appearance with, "How unfortunate! A wet wedding is so depressing and marquees always drop," and suggested that, instead of riding to town on Peter, Hargraves should drive there in the gig.

He did. The rough, cool wind buffeted him unnoticed, and when he passed the little house where, with the timid beginnings of spring in the garden about them, he and Patty on their way to Greenwich had seen the City clerk with wife and child, lo! there was a board up "To Let," and the garden lay a tangled ruin.

Atkins was ready with several dramatic stories of the havoc the gale had wrought in his part of the world; but the discouraging expression of the governor's face nipped their recitation in the bud. Presently, Atkins put his head into Mason's minute sanctum—Mason, who still fell up, down, and over everything—and remarked, "None of your tricks, young man! Governor's barometer ain't at set fair to-day."

About eleven o'clock in the morning, a customer appeared (designated by Atkins as a nob from the



west) and Hargraves took him the round of the cellars. As they were concluding their business over a glass of wine, twelve o'clock struck. Patty had sealed her fate.

To the sane mind, the unbearable moment never comes; that it will come, and find man too weak for it, is one of the worst and most unreasonable fears of life.

Hargraves performed all his duties that day as usual. When the two juniors had gone, the master stayed on awhile, glad to be further occupied. When he had put away his papers, and locked desk and safe, he saw it was again pouring with wild rain.

It was his custom to walk to the hostelry where Peter put up, and ride or drive home from there; and it occurred to him, indifferently, that it would have been better this afternoon if he had bidden the ostler bring the gig round to the office.

It was blowing furiously as he went out into the street, locking the door behind him with difficulty. An umbrella was still an effeminacy, and Hargraves never carried one. So, with his coat collar turned up about his ears, and his head held low, he battled his way towards Eastcheap; finding in the physical discomfort some vague relief for his soul.

Where Martin's Lane turns left towards Cannon Street, he ran into a girl's figure, coming rapidly in the opposite direction.

And it was Patty.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

HARGRAVES could never recollect what, at first, either of them said—in what broken words, if any, Patty spoke. He only knew, by the blessedness of the relief of that moment, how great had been the past suffering.

The rain was drenching upon them, and the fierce noise of the wind made any speech difficult.

Hargraves laid his firm hand on Patty's arm, and drew her down the Lane; unlocked the doors of the office, unshuttered its windows, pushed the least uneasy of the chairs in his little room towards her, and bade her sit down. She was wet through and trembling. Her old bonnet dripped with rain; her summer pelisse was a soaked rag, clinging to her. Everything that had made the old Patty desirable to the ordinary man, Fate had taken away from her. She sank into the wooden chair with a long sigh that was only not a sob, with her hands clasped in her lap, and the tears and the drips from the bonnet running together down her cheeks.

But it was the old Patty who said, looking up

with the ghost of the old Patty's smile, "Oh, Mat, Mat! You don't know what I've done!"

Hargraves, busy at a side cupboard, only said, "I know what you are going to do now, though!" and there was a strange elation he did not keep out of his voice. He poured out a glass of sherry and brought it to her, and as she drank it, and her lips ceased to tremble, he knelt down and with his clumsy hands removed the little foolish, soaked merino boots.

"Go on drinking it," he said, as Patty paused.

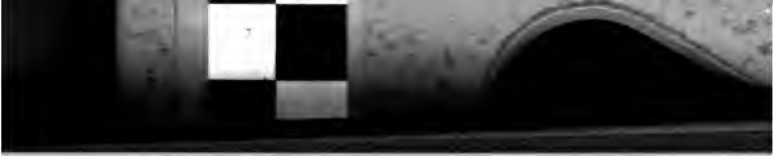
Then from an inner room he collected firing, and, with an expenditure of wood quite royal, in five minutes had a fire blazing up the chimney. The storm without made the afternoon very dark; and in the deeply panelled room the hearth was the one point of light. Presently, he made Patty take off her pelisse, then removed his own coat, and came and sat near her.

For a minute or two they were both silent, looking intently into the blazing fire.

Then Patty, leaning forward to it, said, almost in a whisper, "I found out after all I *couldn't!* So I ran away."

Hargraves said, in the steady voice that steadied her, and still with that strange note of elation in it, "I hoped you would. Only, to-day I had almost given up hoping."

Patty hardly seemed to hear. Her eyes were still fixed on the fire, as if she saw her story written there, and were reading it from a book.



## A Declaration of Independence 359

"I knew I did not care 'enough really from the first," she said, "but you said, Mat—that people got accustomed to each other, and that there was nothing else I could do, and I knew you were so sensible and always meant everything for my happiness. When we got to Altons, I was more sure we had both been wrong. But it seemed too late to draw back. And when you went away, and I knew I could never care for him and be happy, I thought somehow something must come to stop it; that Providence must help, like it does in books! I thought," said Patty, looking up with a laugh with a sob in it, "that one of us would 'go to bed perfectly well and wake up stone dead'; or Francis would lose all his money, or elope with Georgina, or *something!* I thought something *must* come! And then the time got nearer and nearer, and nothing happened. Lady Mary—well, I think she hoped as I did. She so often told me"—and Patty smiled again—"all the drawbacks there would be. And when yesterday came, I knew, if anything was to be done, I must do it myself. Frank's lawyer came down about the settlements, and that frightened me—it seemed so nearly too late! When they were busy in the library in the afternoon, Lady Mary came into the hall and talked—about the wedding trip. She puts things so plainly, not like Char does; and she began talking, too, about the Bath coaches, and how convenient they are for meeting the trains at Slough; and there was the new time-table lying on the table. When she had

gone, I took it. Of course, she knew I would take it! I know she wanted Frank to marry Georgina, but she was sorry for me too. . . ." And when Hargraves muttered something in his throat uncomplimentary to any unselfishness in Lady Mary's intentions, Patty said with her smile, "But she was, Mat, really and truly! Only you always *will* think people are black or white, instead of grey, as they mostly are! Frank was so kind and nice that night—I think he never was anything else—that I couldn't bear to deceive him, only I knew then that marrying him would be the worst deceit of all.

"When I got up to my room—Lady Mary was looking at me all the evening out of the corner of her eye, and I am sure she *felt* what I was going to do—I wrote a letter to Frank; but when I read it over, it sounded so much as if I really cared for him, and only wanted to be fetched back, that I tore it up and wrote it again. He was always so—oh, Mat, so polite and generous—that I don't think I could have done it"—her voice sank to a whisper—"even to save my soul; only I had begun to know that I should hurt his pride, not his heart. Oh, poor Francis!" and she stretched out a little cold hand and laid it on Hargraves's knee, "I don't think I ever touched it, and I hope—I do so hope now—that there isn't one to touch!"

Hargraves said, "There isn't."

And he put his hand, warm and strong, over hers.



## A Declaration of Independence 361

After a little pause, Patty went on in a low voice, as if to herself, "If there had been, I expect I should have known, and then I should never even have thought I could marry him."

For a few minutes the tick of the old grandfather's clock in the corner, and the roar of the wind and the City, were the only sounds. The founder of the firm, with his thumbs on his ample waistcoat, and his mildly benevolent eye, looked down steadily from his canvas.

Then Hargraves, with his hand still firm over Patty's said, "Still, his coolness would not have spared you much. There were the name and the race to be carried on."

Patty made answer, "Lady Mary was always telling me so."

And Hargraves replied, most unreasonably, "Then she had no business to!"

Patty smiled a little at that, took her hand from under Hargraves's, and, with her eyes fixed on the fire, and her old air of reading it there, and of not being responsible for it, went on with her story.

"I saw there was a coach from Bath very early," she said. "I thought I could walk in—perhaps getting a lift on the way. I put on these old things"—she touched them—"because all the others, though I had bought them myself, had been bought for Francis, and somehow seemed to belong to him. I had the ten pounds. Mat! I believe I always knew, deep down somewhere, how I should use it! When it was daylight, I slipped

downstairs. How queer houses look then, and how much noisier bolts and bars are than in the daytime! When I was in the garden, I looked back to see if any one had heard me—and I think, I really think, I saw Lady Mary's blind move! In the park I met one of the farm labourers, going to work; but I had my veil down, and he didn't know me. I must have walked six or seven miles on the road before I met a man in a cart, who gave me a lift; and by the time I reached the coach office, there was still a little time to spare. I went to an inn and waited, and ordered some breakfast, and drank some of the tea. The inside seats in the coach were all taken, so I had to sit outside and got very wet; and in the train coming from Slough, I thought it all out and that the best thing I could do when I got to London would be to try and find a post-chaise and go straight to Julia. Only before, I had to come here, just to look once at the place where I was so happy, with Cousin William."

She paused.

"If he had lived," she said, "that would have solved everything!"

And Hargraves answered, "Not everything."

After a while, Patty, leaning forward to look at his face and see the answer there, asked, "You don't think Francis will be dreadfully hurt, do you, Mat? It would be bad enough if I had run away *with*—but simply to run away *from*, is so insulting!"

Hargraves said quietly, "In time, he will marry



## A Declaration of Independence 363

Georgina." Then, in another voice, of great gentleness, "Are you sure *you* are not going to repent?"

Patty said, "Never!" Her hands were clasped loosely in her lap, and her eyes still fixed, dreaming, on the fire.

A blazing coal fell on the hearth; as Hargraves replaced it, he asked, not looking at her, "Why were you going to Julia?"

Patty said in a low voice, "I knew she would understand—not better than you, Mat—but better than Char. Char has always been so fortunate!"

After a little, she added, almost in a whisper, as if she were convincing herself, "I *was* going to Julia; but I believe I had a dim hope you might be going back late to-night, and I should find you here."

And they sat, motionless, in silence.

After a few minutes, Patty looked up and said, "What a fool everybody *will* think me, won't they?" Then a smile broke on her tired face, like a gleam of sunshine on a dreary day. "Mat!" she said, "you did draw very doleful pictures yourself of governessing, and dying in penury. And I suppose if they were true then, they are true now!"

Hargraves stood up, and faced her squarely. "They're not going to be true for you," he said. "I thought it so hard for a woman to stand alone—I still think it hard for her—that I did not see that it is worse for her to trust to a man who is no support, and ends by supporting himself on her.



But if there is a way out in this country, or in any other, and I believe there is"—as he spoke the words a sudden thought struck him—"I shall find it, and if there isn't a way, I shall make it."

His sturdy figure, the dogged set of the lips, the thick shoulders, gave the sense of refuge and certainty which is the strong staff in the hand to such natures as Patty's. She leaned her head almost restfully against the hard back of the uneasy chair, and some of the tension died out of her face.

Hargraves, putting on his coat, said briskly, "Now, I am going to get the gig and bring it round here. Get yourself as dry as you can while I am out."

But when he came back, she had fallen into a light doze, her ruffled curls red against the dead white of the temples, and a faint rose colour on the dead white of the face; her forlorn old bonnet fallen on the floor beside her, and the old cheap frock, not bought for Darell, wet and muddy.

For a minute, Hargraves stood looking down at her.

He knew he had reached that attitude of heart—so strange to his kind—that it was not in spite, but because, of her insignificance and her weakness that he was drawn the nearer to her, that to him, who had respected respect and prosperity, the good opinion of the world and the people who get it, her supreme appeal was her failure, and that

## A Declaration of Independence 365

she had no help and refuge but himself. They should be enough! In spite of experience and the reasoning of the world, they should suffice to make her life no bad thing.

His nearness roused her. She sat up, put up her hands to her hair, said, "Fancy my going to sleep!" then tried to use the door of the bookcase as a looking-glass to adjust the forlorn bonnet, and, abandoning the attempt, said, like the old Patty, "Well, I expect it is better for my peace of mind I can't see myself!"

Hargraves replied simply, "Well, perhaps it is!" and they laughed as people laugh when some long anxiety has been taken from them.

The gig was at the door. Hargraves helped Patty into his own coat, and himself put on one he had borrowed at the inn. As they came into it, the wind and rain were sweeping down the Lane. Peter looked round with reproach in his eye as the ostler released his head, and took them, at a pace that manifested the strongest disgust at being out and desire to be in, through the narrow streets of the old City.

The gale ran so high that, even in the deep hood of the gig, the two could hear each other speak only with great difficulty; and when they came out into the open country, any speech became impossible. Once or twice, Hargraves felt Patty sway against him, as if driven by the wind, or her own will because she felt him steady and sheltering, like the wall of that house on which,

when the flood arose and the storm beat vehemently, they could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock.

When they had passed the twinkling lights of Tottenham High Street, and were driving into White Hart Lane, she grasped his arm tightly for a minute and said in an awed voice, "How angry Charlotte will be!" and Hargraves replied simply, "That we have to expect."

When they drew up at the steps, he gave Patty the reins and bade her stay where she was, and himself got down. It was Charlotte who opened the door, and let the warm light of the house spread over the shining wet steps and the nymphs at the top with their trays full of water.

Hargraves said to her quickly, in a low voice, "You will be very surprised, Charlotte! Patty found she could not marry Sir Francis after all, so she has come back to us."

Then, as the flabbergasted astonishment spread over Charlotte's face and person, Hargraves, knowing that her practical mind hated illness (as keeping the housemaid from doing the bedrooms, and involving irregular meals at improper times), added, "She's out here—wet to the skin. If we don't get her warmed and fed before long, we shall have her ill on our hands."

At that moment, Sally appeared in the background, and Mrs. Hargraves, turning to her with a calm dignity really admirable, said, "Sally, Miss Patty's marriage has been temporarily postponed,

## A Declaration of Independence 367

and she has come back with Master. Get her room ready at once."

On which Sally, with her mouth and eyes wide open, was forced to retire.

As Hargraves very well knew, and always gratefully remembered, there were few things that did Charlotte greater credit than her reception that evening of one who, to put it in the plain words in which Mrs. Hargraves put it to herself only, had behaved in a manner at once disgraceful and idiotic. Any woman, having been promised a baronet in the family and then rudely disappointed of him, would have been justified in showing displeasure. Charlotte's manner, as Patty stood, a most forlorn person, with her dejected garments almost literally dripping on to the new drawing-room carpet, evinced only a startled coldness. It was Charlotte who, with her own hands, lit a fire in Patty's bedroom, and at dinner, not only led a lightly easy conversation to deceive the maids (who, of course, were not deceived in the least), but insisted on Patty eating and drinking properly, "after your very tiring journey"; and presently, at dessert, when Patty faltered out a little more of her story, received it with nothing worse than a logical criticism.

If Patty had not liked Sir Francis well enough to marry him, why had she become engaged to him? or, having become engaged, why had she not broken the engagement in the usual manner?

And when Patty replied, in a trembling voice,

that he had been so kind she could not bear to hurt his feelings, Charlotte would have been more, or less, than human if she had refrained from saying that she considered Patty had now chosen a strange way of sparing them.

At that, two large tears fell on Patty's dessert plate.

Hargraves rose at once from his seat, and said gruffly, "What's done, Char, is done; and the best thing for Patty to do now is to go to bed," which immediately appealed to Char's excellent sense.

When Patty was left alone in the gaunt room that had been hers, she stood for a few minutes by the high mantelpiece and rested her aching head on it, while a few tears fell on the immaculateness of the polished steel fender. But not many. The familiar room was, as it were, a refuge and a guardian; the accustomed, comfortable, ugly things it held, like safe friends. Imagination, which exaggerates the ills to come, also helps one to realise the enormity of ills escaped. Nothing could make Patty, in her soul, anything but thankful to-night. She was physically worn out, and the exquisiteness of her relief was so great that the moment she laid her head on the great pillows of the cavernous four-poster she was asleep, deep and sweet, as she had slept under the meagre blankets of her poor bed at Great Farning as a child.

Meanwhile, Charlotte, discussing affairs with Hargraves in the drawing-room, dealt more severely with Patty's conduct, in that she had of

## A Declaration of Independence 369

course perceived Hargraves desired to condone it, and rounded a judgment, not unjust, with, "Of course, if there was anything against Sir Francis's character, *that* would have been a different thing. But it is absurd to suppose a woman cannot get used to anybody, really nice and respectable, in the course of a few weeks!"

To which Hargraves made answer, quite simply, and without sarcasm, "Most women can, but I think not all."

While, when presently, after a meditation, Charlotte said in a vexed voice, "Of course, it will be quite useless my telling Lady Jones or any one that it was *Patty* who broke off the marriage!" he justly felt it would be unreasonable to expect Charlotte to rise to the independence of mind, which he had himself but recently acquired, of damning Lady Jones and all Lady Joneses, their opinions, their standards, and their conclusions.

After Charlotte had gone to bed, he sat, only for a few minutes, with his hands on the arms of the wool-worked chair, thinking. When he got upstairs, a neat, night-capped head came through the bed curtains, and Charlotte said:

"Oh, Hargraves! I quite forgot to tell you—all this upset about *Patty* put it out of my head—Julia came here this afternoon to tell me such a strange thing. A cousin of hers has died somewhere in Austria, and she has inherited his little property there! She wants to see you about it to-morrow."

In that one day, Hargraves had lived through the most wretched and the happiest hours of his life. He had just heard news which, he believed, might change a life very close to him; but so powerful with him too was the narcotic, relief, and the knowledge that Patty lay under his roof safe and free, that his sleep was as quick and as deep as hers.

At breakfast in the morning, before she came down, he prosecuted a few inquiries as to the nature and extent of the property Julia had inherited, and Charlotte answered briskly and sensibly.

"Julia said the property was a very flourishing little farm, I believe somewhere not far from Salzburg," said Charlotte, "and I should think, if Richard is getting on so badly here, he might do much worse than make a fresh start out there. His father had a farm near here, and I believe Richard understands farming."

Hargraves replied that there seemed a good deal in the idea.

Patty came down just before he rode off on Peter.

A faint and fitful colour had come back to her cheeks; she was a much less forlorn little person than on the night before, and the old black frock (in which she had mourned William Leaf, and left behind her at Tottenham for Char to administer to a suitable charity) set off, as of yore, the red hair and the white of her neck. She looked up

## A Declaration of Independence 371

rather piteously at Hargraves, as he rose from the breakfast-table to leave for the day.

But he knew that though, selfishly, he liked her weakness, she must not, for her own sake, be allowed to be a weakling, and must needs pay the price of her freedom.

She came out to pat Peter, and as Hargraves mounted, he said, "It's natural Char should be disappointed; it *was* a very good match."

And it was quite the old Patty who looked up with a smile, and yet something very soft in her eyes, and said, "Oh, Mat! I know! and so long as I am not going to make it, I don't really mind anything."

At the High Cross, Hargraves dismounted, and accommodated Peter in the disused stable.

After the storm and its havoc, the morning was fair and cool. The sun played through the trees of the high-walled garden, and down one of its long straight paths Hargraves perceived Rowe and Julia coming towards him.

Though it spared him telling the whole story himself, it was nevertheless irritating to him that the news of Patty's return had already reached Julia's sharp ears; and that several sharp questions about it were already on her tongue.

But when she said meditatively, with an absent look in her eyes, "Well, *I* am glad! I did not feel easy about Patty," and Rowe merely remarked cheerfully that it was a nasty slap in the eye for Darell, Hargraves liked them both better.



Rowe instantly discovered, by reference to his watch, that if he did not hurry off he should miss the omnibus to town; though he knew, and knew that Hargraves knew he knew, there was time to spare. Saying lightly, "Ju's got something to tell you!" he disappeared, whistling with an assumption of gaiety which Hargraves and Julia, watching him, knew very well would be genuine in about five minutes.

There was a deprecating smile on Julia's lips and the tenderness her prodigal always brought to her eyes, as she turned to Hargraves with, "I suppose Char's told you already?" and in a few minutes Julia had amplified and completed Char's story of the legacy, having the details at her fingers' ends as logically clear as Euclid—a gentleman of whom she had scarcely heard.

The property was a small and flourishing farm in the Salzkammergut. The cousin who had left it had been a recluse and a wanderer; embittered with his native land, which had given him neither happiness nor competence, he had found both among a simpler race, and, dying, had left his property, with a sum of five thousand pounds, to his cousin and her children—from no affection to them, but because, as Julia explained, he had no nearer relatives, and had received many small kindnesses from her father in a neglected boyhood.

Hargraves listened in silence, which was perfectly his gift.

"Of course," she finished, "I thought at once,

## A Declaration of Independence 373

under our circumstances, and with your approval, Matthew, that the best thing we could do was to go and settle out there and make a fresh start. Dick's story"—the proud colour flushed her face—"might leak out, anywhere, if he tried to practise his profession again. He managed his father's little farm here very successfully; and he thinks he would do well out there" (Hargraves interrupted, within himself, "He would think so!") "and the climate might be good for Bertha; Dr. Browne has often urged a change of air, but we could not give it to her." Then she added suddenly, with a break in her firm voice, "It is a long way off everybody!"

And Hargraves responded assuringly, "You will take everybody with you."

Then, feeling certain that Julia was too previous and quick-witted not to have thought already of the idea which was in his own heart, he put it forward.

"It would be very difficult," he said, "to get any kind of service, at least English service, out there. If you are to help Rowe run the farm, you will want some one to teach and care for the children—particularly my friend Bertha. If you were to take Patty, you would be doing her a service, and yourself and the children a better. Here teaching is vilely ill-paid; there, an English-woman would ask a higher rate."

He stopped in the middle of the garden walk, and faced Julia with his firm eyes.

"What I mean is," he said, producing a stout, neat pocket-book and a paper from it, "that Rowe gave me, in due form, his I O U for that two thousand pounds I lent him. It may, or may not, be a valuable document. Anyhow," and he tore it across, "that's the end of it. Still, you owe me something, both of you, and I want it paid." His mouth took its obstinate look, and his eyes did not leave Julia's. "I want you, if Patty will go with you, to undertake to give her a higher salary even than you need give out there—out of which it will be possible for her to save and lay by for her old age. I shall stipulate that the investment of her earnings is to be entrusted to me, and that she doesn't under any circumstances"—the colour that flamed into poor Julia's cheeks did not prevent Hargraves from finishing the sentence as he had intended—"lend money to Richard." Then the smile that softened his plain face appeared on it. "I suppose you think I am always the tradesman, driving a bargain!" and Julia, who had thought so, thought too how many gentlemen they knew who would have driven one in which the bargainer surrendered his capital, and only stoutly saw to it that the whole of the interest was paid—to some one else.

But Hargraves had not finished his plain speaking, and meant to finish it.

"After all," he said firmly, "it will be well-spent money for you. You think a great deal of learning; and you would find it uncommonly

## A Declaration of Independence 375

hard to get any woman who can teach what's worth knowing."

The pride had faded from Julia's face. She considered a little. Then, as they came to the turn of a path, she looked up with her bright quick eyes, and sealed her consent.

"We owe you almost everything," she said; "and, if we didn't, I would rather have Patty than anybody. Of course," adds Julia, with a flash of her independent spirit, "she hasn't any accomplishments——"

And Hargraves broke across her with, "If you think it's better for your children to paint something on china which may just as well be a bird as a butterfly, and don't look like either, and to speak French so that a Frenchman would understand 'em just as well if they kept English, you can get some one else! But Patty can give them interests which will interest them when they are old and dull, perhaps, or"—and his voice had a hoarse sound—"have made the mistakes in life there's no undoing."

They were nearing the lawn and the mulberry tree. The children's lively tones could be heard coming from the nursery above the drawing-room. Absently, Hargraves stooped and collected one or two of the twigs with which last night's gale had strewn the paths. Then he said, as though he forced himself to it, "After all, especially in that country, she might still marry."

And Julia, looking straight in front of her, and

waving a hand to the children, whose faces had appeared at the window, answered in a quiet voice, "But I think she will not."

For the second time in his life, Hargraves was late at his work that morning, and for the fourth or fifth in his eminently regular career, left it early.

He found, as perhaps some instinct had told him he should, that Charlotte had taken her best pelisse and the barouche, and gone calling, to give the true and earliest version of Patty's story—without much hope of its being believed.

Patty was in the yard with Clement, who had received her home with a joy so loud and strong that it had utterly exhausted him; while old Anna's welcome had been almost as heart-whole, and conveniently muddled. She had said in her shaking tones, "Why, those stupid girls" (meaning the servants) "told me you had gone away to be married"; and Patty, thankful to omit the explanations, had shouted back, "Well, I haven't!"

She tethered up Clement when she saw Hargraves coming, and they walked towards the garden. After last night, it was an autumn garden; but though it had lost the summer, and was strewn with light wreckage, there was something fair and calm about it, and the afternoon sun was clear and bright.

Both Hargraves and Patty turned their steps instinctively from the path where they had walked on a spring night—and decided—wrong; and

## A Declaration of Independence 377

presently sat down under the great copper-beech tree on the lawn. Hargraves told the story of the Rowes' plans, and of the part Patty might take in them, at once, and in as few words as possible. He had his riding-whip across his knee, and sometimes, as he spoke, dug into the soft grass with it, absently.

Patty listened in silence to the end. Then, with the sunlight gleaming through the burnished gold of the copper-beech and falling on the burnished gold of her bare head, she asked, in the old doubtful, yielding fashion, "What do *you* think, Mat? Had I better go?"

He answered at once, "I don't know. I tried to play Providence once, and burnt my fingers—and yours. You must decide for yourself."

"I always repent what I decide," says Patty.

She took the riding-whip from his knee and considered it closely as if she were studying its workmanship. Then she laid it on his knee again, and looked up at him. "Do you *want* me to go, Mat?"

"Yes, and no," he answered, as one prepared for the question. "It is a long way off. For that reason—no. But it will give you the fair wage which will mean independence when you are old, and you are fond of Julia and of the children. For those reasons—yes. But it is a new life, and a way of life you haven't tried. And it means a long parting from everything you're—used to."

They sat quite silent. A wind stirred, and a

few of the dead, red leaves of the beech fell about them.

The argument that steam seemed likely so to abolish space that the parting, if long, need not at least be for ever, occurred to Hargraves, but he did not use it.

There was the sound of the carriage wheels in the distance.

Patty looked up, and said, in an uncertain voice, "Mat! I know I must go!" Then added, "After all, I shall not be nearly so far off as if I was married!"

Hargraves made no answer; but it seemed to her that he acquiesced, and that his grave face wore all that evening a look of happiness.

In a few minutes, the carriage had come up the drive, and Charlotte, in the best pelisse, joined them on the lawn. The visible grains of salt with which, in one or two quarters at least, her story had been taken, would have ruffled any other woman's temper; in Charlotte's manner to Patty there was merely a slight asperity.

Hargraves told her at once what they had been talking about, finishing with, "Patty thinks she ought not to miss the opportunity."

And Charlotte said, in her clear utterance, "Certainly not!"

That a woman who preferred being an old maid and a governess, to the wife of a wealthy baronet, was fit to be at large, Charlotte was far from sure; but the law not demanding confinement for such

## A Declaration of Independence 379

cases, it was decidedly better that Patty, unmarried, penniless, and with red hair, should encumber Austria and not White Hart Lane.

They discussed some practical points. Charlotte was quite at her best—full of sensible schemes for Patty's outfit, and for helping Julia with packings and sewings, and presently suggested that it should be mooted to Julia that Elspeth, who had just lost her paralysed charge, should accompany the party.

"How kind and clever of you to think of such a thing!" said Patty, with grateful tears in her voice; and she rubbed her cheek against Char's, and put an impulsive arm round a waist which Char felt she owed it to herself and honesty to make stiff and hard like a piece of wood—for, indeed, the suggestion had emanated from her sense, not her sensibility.

At that moment, Sally appeared on the lawn, bringing a letter on a tray for Patty. She just looked at the handwriting, then let it lie on her lap, as though it were an angry creature which, if her fingers touched it, would punish her with its sting. Presently Hargraves met her eyes, and she opened it.

All the good things that heredity and training had made Darell were in the letter. He was wholly in the right, and a position to use coals of fire. Had he really been so harsh that Patty could not have trusted him and told him the state of her heart? Two slow tears fell on that sentence. But at the end the only phrase in which he had meant, per-



haps, to hurt her had healing in it. She passed the sheets silently to Hargraves and to Charlotte; and they both read, without comment—Char with her red lips firmly pursed.


When the letter was returned to Patty, she pointed to the phrase which allowed itself to hint—in a perfectly gentlemanly fashion, for it was Darell's weakness that no emotion was ever strong enough with him to make him merely a man—that he might not be inconsolable for ever, and said earnestly, "That *does* mean he doesn't mind so very much?"

And Charlotte, like Darell, healing where she would hurt, replied in a voice of great clearness and calm, "I should say myself that it means he is already half engaged to Georgina."

The three sat without speaking; then Hargraves rose and left them. Patty, with her hands clasped round her knee, looked after him. When he had quite disappeared, she turned to Charlotte and said in a low voice, "*Do* forgive me, Char! I know what a horrid disappointment I have been to you all along, and what an idiot you must think me. But I couldn't do it! I couldn't!"

Charlotte replied, but in a tone slightly mollified, "I am sure you might have contrived to be much happier than you supposed."

And Patty, taking hold of Charlotte's cool hand and holding it very tightly, said with a firmness and decision strange to her, "No, Char, I could never have been anything but most miserable!"



## A Declaration of Independence 381

After that, it seemed to her that even Charlotte was gentler, as if her sense made her admit that there are persons who have so little that they actually cannot prevent the heart getting the better of the head, and are to be pitied (with the pity, certainly, that is more akin to contempt than to love) rather than to be blamed.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE DREAM OF A MAN AWAKE

WHILE White Hart Lane was still at breakfast one morning about three days later, Julia appeared unexpectedly with the news that Rowe had received an excellent offer for the purchase of the house at the High Cross, on the condition of immediate possession; which would involve for the emigrating party a quicker departure.

Patty had already spent a long forenoon with Julia, arranging the details of their plans; it only remained to hurry them forward and to ante-date a farewell visit which it had been arranged Patty must pay to her aunt at Norwich.

If Hargraves, mixing the sauce for the kidneys and bacon (it was Sunday, which made Julia's visit but ill-timed), saw the dismay on Patty's face, he did not appear to see it; but presently, when Julia and Charlotte were talking apart, he said to her in a low voice that if things were to be, perhaps it was no worse they should be soon; and the Rowes could not afford to refuse such an offer. Julia, whose confident manner certainly of late often covered a doubting heart, had come to

## The Dream of a Man Awake 383

regard Hargraves's opinion as land in shifting seas; as did Patty herself; and the matter was settled.

On the Saturday afternoon following Patty's departure to Norwich, when Hargraves, as usual, arrived home early from the City, Rowe, morally impelled by Julia, came with her to White Hart Lane to call on their benefactor and tell him of the development of their plans.

When Dick, with that "irresistible tendency to seize on a cheering reflection," which he shared with Mr. Micawber, had described the sale of his house in the rosiest colours, he winked meaningly to Julia to take his place by Hargraves's side; but she was deep in conversation with Charlotte, and took no notice. Hargraves proposed a turn in the garden; and the four walked round it in what Dick certainly considered the wrong pairs.

At the end of the long path by the peach wall, Hargraves, who had scarcely spoken for some time, said gruffly, "Well, you'll have a fresh chance out there! Take it."

Dick, flicking the sunflowers with his cane (a trick Hargraves hated), was sure he should; and ended awkwardly with, "Of course I'm doosed grateful to you—for everything."

Hargraves said simply: "You needn't be. I told you I did it for the sake of your wife."

Dick, always natural, returned, "I used to think you and old Ju didn't hit it off!"

And Hargraves made answer intending no

aphorism, "You can respect more people than you can agree with."

If he did not agree with Julia, he almost liked, as well as respected, her, when, a few minutes later, they changed partners, and Julia, after a silence, and *à propos* of nothing at all, said in a low voice, "I am going to take great care of Patty—I know you and Char feel responsible for her."

Hargraves said quietly, "Yes, we do," and was grateful to Julia that her next remark was a normal, interfering one about the hothouses, and that she ended the conversation upon that note.

But, as they parted at the gates of the drive, she looked up at him with her fearless and honest eyes, as who would say, "I shall remember."

As they retraced their steps to the house, Charlotte expressed herself to Hargraves as hoping—meaning she did not think—that the Austrian plan would answer; and as having small faith in Richard Rowe.

Hargraves made no reply, and did not seem to hear. For him it sufficed that he had strong faith in Richard's wife.

The next morning Charlotte was as surprised as Hargraves himself was disgusted, by his being too ill to get up.

In those days, if people were not ashamed of ill-health, they were certainly much less fond and proud of it than they are now; and the stern old dictum, "Either this man has sinned or his parents," lingered vaguely in many minds.

## The Dream of a Man Awake 385

Hargraves, who always refused and fought all illness in its beginning, had already had a few days' stern tussle with this one, which old Browne, sent for by Charlotte, relieved him by diagnosing as influenza—Hargraves considering all ailments not exclusively physical to be fanciful and ridiculous, and not choosing to own, even to himself, that he had been through long mental strain.

For the first few days he was tossing and wretched—the sick body making a dead heart and mind, and reminding him that he who would leave the settlement of his temporal and spiritual affairs to his last illness must be in a position to choose its nature.

But when the fever left him—weak indeed in body—it seemed to leave him also strangely clear in soul, as if the mists of a thick night had rolled away and left the dawn, thin and cool.

It was Sunday, and he was so much better that Charlotte, who had rubbed and drugged him most conscientiously and strictly according to the medical formulas, allowed herself to yield to persuasion, and went to afternoon church.

The quiet house had only those sounds in it which are more soothing than absolute silence—the tick of the clock on the landing; sometimes the distant footfalls of Sally, in charge in the distant kitchen; or of a door carefully opened and shut. Across the closed bedroom window the soft wind of the wet September threw, now and again, a half-stripped spray of Virginian creeper; and pre-

sently there was the sound of the falling of rain on leaves. A little fire burnt in the cavernous grate, for company; and Hargraves's eyes, under the absurd, decent nightcap with its red tassel, watched it glow, not seeing it, till they ached.

Charlotte's kindness was no more a trouble to him. He could repay it, as she wished it repaid, by giving her always liberty, consideration, the calm affection of habit; and, as an especial thank-offering for her attendance and consideration in this illness, a pair of new drawing-room curtains, or a locket. He debated for a few minutes the rival claims of these gifts; and, considering that, since she had failed to get the better of Lady Jones by being related to a baronet, she might naturally desire the satisfaction of outvying her in drawing-rooms, decided on the curtains.

For a moment, he closed his eyes, that he might see the future clearer. He had married for the well-ordered home and the regular life, and he would have them; and knew that he was so much his old self that they would, in their measure, please him still. There would be the heavy, solemn dinner parties, not greatly boring because to talk about what one ate, drank, and made, had the solace of custom; while, when he and Char drove home afterwards, it would never wholly stale the just satisfaction that they could do it in their own barouche.

There would be the long days in the City—satisfactory, because prosperous work well done

## The Dream of a Man Awake 387

always brings its due meed of satisfaction; and there would be the resulting satisfaction of plenty of that money which Hargraves knew still to be "liberty . . . friendship . . . society, almost every external blessing."

On Sundays, he and Char would walk to and from All Hallows and Trinity Chapel, arm in arm as usual; and about once in two years there would be a sea-change to Brighton, with the same white mists rolling up to the windows, or the same loud wind blustering on the cliffs towards Rottingdean.

Home again, there would be the quiet, long evenings—as in the days before Patty came; Charlotte would sing, "Tell me, mother," and precisely make the tea; and at night, with her smooth head in its spotless cap, she would sleep the sleep of perfect health and virtue at Hargraves's side.

Only, because Patty had come, in everything and through all he would be a different man.

Even at the tables of the fat and prosperous he would be less sure that "those who have naught are naughty"; of the justice of the confident, harsh judgment on the fool and the weakling of the righteous men who need no repentance; and yet the more enraged when such weaklings—the universal British opinion not condemning them—left their daughters to provide for themselves by chance or by marriage.

Because of Patty, he would go every evening and sit half an hour with Anna, gruffly sympa-



thetic; not knowing what to say, so saying nothing; leaving her decidedly uncertain if he were Leaf or himself; yet—so one might hope—with a dim old heart a little warmed.

Because of Patty, he would lay by for Lily and Bertha; swallowing in his neckcloth his extreme annoyance at the thought that he was thereby doing the plain duty of that worthless father of theirs for him; and because he was still himself, neglecting no precaution to keep Rowe from fingering those moneys.

Because of Patty, through the business of the day, reading in the drawing-room's orderly calm of an evening, at Charlotte's side in those still nights, he would be far away in heart and soul, and yet not injure her to whom all his duty was; for his plain and solid sense told him that, as that distance would be the measure of his own content, so would it be the security of hers; for rare are they who can convey lasting happiness being themselves unhappy.

Before Charlotte left for church, she had bidden him pull the embroidered bell-rope at his side to summon Sally, when need was, to put on coals; but his thoughts so profoundly occupied him that the fire fell presently in deep, hot caverns, and the dusk of the September afternoon crept into the quiet room.

Only a week ago, Hargraves had added a clause to his will, by which he made small provision for Patty—small, but as large as he dared, lest a cen-

## The Dream of a Man Awake 389

sorious world ask, "Why?" He thought over its terms now—tried, looking fixedly at the carved bedpost in front of him as if for enlightenment, to see some gap or weak point in them which might let in to her distress or the cavil of tongues; and could not.

But it was not only by his death he must help her, but by all his life!

During the last fortnight, he had become a member of the London Institution; and, in the time the busy man always finds and the idler never can, had read everything he could obtain there concerning the new world to which she was going; and had thus constructed for himself, not very wrongly, the picture of a stolid, simple, and pastoral peasantry; the clean picturesqueness of their large, low houses and of their villages; something of the tenderness of their rich valleys, and the glory of their snowy heights; and had decided that to Salzburg hard by—the Salzburg of Mozart and, it seemed, of Paracelsus (a celebrity of whom Hargraves had not previously heard)—it might be possible, through a money gift for the children's education, to send Patty sometimes on this excuse for a change in the rigid winters which would make life on a country farm too hard and dull.

He thought these plans out in minute detail. Perhaps a mind more delicate and scrupulous would hardly have permitted itself to rejoice so plainly that, in regard to all arrangements, he had Rowe and Julia, so to speak, in the hollow of his

hand. The thought of Julia brought back for a moment the old resentment; and he made a mental note to urge on Patty the duty of defending her own opinions.

But, of course, she would never do it!

After all, he knew that, thus, he cared for her the better; and on to his plain face stole a great tenderness.

That she would have the little girls to need and plague her, was, he knew, very well; for, since this world must be, it seems, a world of compromise, better for such a nature as hers to have another woman's children greatly dependent, on whom to lavish her cares and fondness, than none. Then too, his simple heart, with his mother's memory laid by in it, did not doubt that, as she had found, Patty would find in the necessary sewings and dustings, the daily, obligatory tasks, that occupation for the hands which means quietness of spirit.

Well, her new life would have compensations; and he could add to them.

If he could but give her what she had given him—that dream life which, “in some close corner of the brain,” made the dull life of flesh and blood worth having; so that if the heart knew its own bitterness, it was true, too, that a stranger did not intermeddle with its joys! If he could but think she would have what he had and would have, then, indeed, she would have touched happiness!

Now and again, of course, in Charlotte's, they

## The Dream of a Man Awake 391

would exchange brief letters; but seldom. As their life had not depended on the spoken, so it would not depend on the written, word; but on that which is as intangible—and as real—as the scent of a rose.

The fire dropped suddenly into deeper hollows; and the dusk was nearly dark. But not yet so dark but that Hargraves could see in it one more plan and picture. On the prim chiffonier in the drawing-room there stood now a little oval water-colour portrait of Patty, which Charlotte had had painted, when Patty was to be Lady Darell.

Every evening when Char had gone to bed, Hargraves had arranged to turn the portrait so that, from his accustomed chair, he could see it; and, for a blessed space, sit there with it.

When, five minutes later, Charlotte came back from church, brisk, with a prayer-book, she evinced such slight vexation as is permitted to a really good person immediately after service, at the chilly gloom of Hargraves's room; inquired why he had not rung for Sally, and remarked that he must have been dreaming.

When the candles came, it seemed to her that the invalid looked, as he said he was, better; some strain and pain the face had worn had left it; and its homeliness had relapsed into softer lines.

One sure sign of convalescence—a stalwart objection to the medicines—Hargraves also showed so markedly that, after evening tea, Charlotte returned to his room and read aloud to him an

excellent, heavy sermon "On the Patient Endurance of Suffering."

Well, the common vice of the Patient Endurance of the Sufferings of Other People was his no more.

Just five days later, exactly a week before the travellers were to start for Austria, on the afternoon on which Patty's return from Norwich was expected, as Hargraves and Charlotte were sitting in the drawing-room, Sally, in a voice from which no previous training could keep the awe and surprise, announced "Lady Mary Lawrence"; and Lady Mary, rather floating as to her veil and with a manner which appeared to Hargraves to justify more than ever the damnatory adjective of flighty, sank into the first handy chair, and exclaimed in her lightest tones, "We're all in town for a week or two, and I thought I must just run down and see how you're all feeling after these *coups de théâtre!*"

Charlotte, pleased at the visit, but feeling that she owed it to herself to be a little stiff with the visitor, who had certainly been in the plot, so to speak, to defraud the family of Sir Francis, replied with composure that they were not the worse for those events, but that her husband had had influenza.

Lady Mary looked at him under the curtain of a much livelier bonnet than forty-eight has any business with, and said, "Oh!" Then she was silent for a minute, and then, laughing a little as if

## The Dream of a Man Awake 393

to herself, continued, "I assure you I would have given ten pounds to have seen Frank's face when his man brought him Patty's letter that morning! If the skies and the church and the constitution had all fallen at once, or she had run away with the groom, he wouldn't have been half so taken aback. But to elope by yourself to marry nobody is to be so thoroughly original!" and she laughed again.

Hargraves's face and body were as set and steady as a rock, and as disapproving—for rocks can frown.

Charlotte, folding her plain work into a silk handkerchief, said concisely, "I hope Sir Francis understood that *we* highly disapproved of Patty's action?"

And Lady Mary, looking up for a second at Hargraves, responded in an absent tone, "Oh, yes, certainly!"

Then she surveyed the room, and began to laugh again. "This room is so exactly what I should have expected," she said. "I could have drawn it blindfold. All neatness and polish! If you weren't respectable, it would literally throw you out of it!"

As Mrs. Hargraves was still dying with curiosity on several points, she brushed aside these impertinences with a slight smile, and asked a few more questions about Altons.

It appeared Sir Francis had borne his disappointment with both spirit and courage—*bon chien*

*chasse de race*,—had faced the county and the gossip with composure, and had never permitted himself to utter or hear a word against the girl, who, when all was said and done, had treated him very ill.

Hargraves stirred slightly in his chair when Charlotte diagnosed Patty's behaviour as "wrong"; and, balancing a paper-knife in his fingers, said simply, "It was a pity she did not know her mind sooner. But the real wrong would have been to marry him without caring for him."

Lady Mary turned to him and said, "It would," in a softer voice; then rather sharply observed to Charlotte, "If you're worrying about Francis, Mrs. Hargraves, you really needn't! There's Georgy, you know. Of course, nothing is settled, or even talked about, yet. But if it should be, I can assure you she will be in every way a better wife for him. Patty would always have been giving up to him as if she liked it; and that's a perfectly fatal thing to do with the ordinary man—he goes on obliging you! Whereas Georgy cries if she doesn't get her way; she really cries very prettily"—Lady Mary spoke as if it was an accomplishment and had been taught her—"and as Frank is anything but a brute, that will pull him up, and they will jog along excellently."

Even Lady Mary's pedigree could not prevent Charlotte from asking her at this juncture, in clipped tones, what Mr. Lascelles had to say to this arrangement.

## The Dream of a Man Awake 395

Hargraves's eye approved her spirit, and Lady Mary responded with great naturalness and candour, "Oh! Tim? He will be quite thankful! His mother was always bothering him to marry and settle, you know. He looks upon this as a delightful respite."

Then, perhaps on the principle that one hit deserves another, she observed that her present visit was really not to Mrs. Hargraves at all, but to Patty.

"You have no idea how the Professor missed her," she added. "It was quite melancholy to see him wandering vaguely about the house—it was as if he had found a really fine specimen and then let it blow away! Now I come to think of it, Patty *is* quite a rare specimen—to prefer being a governess" (Patty had written of her prospects to Lady Mary); "and I can assure you"—at this thought Lady Mary reprehensibly laughed quite loud—"even those stupid Caldwells see now how much better they would have come off under Patty's régime than they will under Georgy's, with Patty always pitying the discomfited and helping them; whereas Georgy—won't be so silly."

Mrs. Hargraves, who would not have been so silly herself, said nothing; and Lady Mary, pulling off her gloves and laying bonnet and veil on a chair, asked if she might try that pretty little piano, and after a few easy chords, broke—not without a spice of gay malice—into the fashionable song of the moment:



“Fly away, pretty Moth, to the shade  
Of the leaf where you slumbered all day!  
Be content with the moon and the stars, pretty Moth,  
And make use of your wings while you may!”

Charlotte, having kindly bought of her most of the trousseau frocks which were agreed to be unsuitable to her present prospects, Patty, when she arrived a few minutes later in her old pelisse and bonnet, *was* a little like the humble brown moth of the ballad; only the wind of September and the drive from town in the gig had given her face its flush of wild rose, and the eyes were serene and shining.

A faint distress came into them when she saw Lady Mary; but presently, when the two had been round the garden together, the old happiness returned, and Lady Mary perceived that she had to do with a person so misconstrued, from a worldly point of view, that she was really consoled the rejected lover was not inconsolable.

Punctiliously invited by the host and hostess to stay to dinner, Lady Mary would talk thereof of nothing but her journey to Tottenham in the omnibus—a means of locomotion then considered improper for the well-born woman, and which she had chosen on that account. The more disapproving the face of Mrs. Hargraves, the more elaborate became Lady Mary's stories of the persons and entertainment she had found in that plebeian vehicle; and she only consented to be sent back

## The Dream of a Man Awake 397

to town in the barouche on it being proved to her that the last omnibus had departed.

When the carriage came to the door, she bade good-bye to Charlotte and Patty there, kissing Patty warmly; told Hargraves to tell the coachman to go on ahead a little, and himself to walk down the drive with her.

As they went, she said, in her usual vague manner, with her customary air of everything being equally indifferent to her, and looking up carelessly into the red and gold canopy of autumn trees, "I really do believe somehow, Mr. Hargraves, Patty isn't going to make such a bad thing of her life—her own way! I shouldn't try again, if I were you, to foist any other upon her."

And Hargraves said gruffly, "I am not going to."

As Lady Mary got into the carriage, which was waiting at the gate, she turned her giddy and charming head to observe, slightly *sotto voce*, for the benefit of the coachman and with a glance at his solid back, "I hope we shall meet again some time, Mr. Hargraves. But what is to bring us together, I am sure I don't know! It is hardly likely Frank will go on buying his port in Martin's Lane after this!"

And the old twinkle came into Hargraves's eyes as he replied, "One could not expect it."

As they said good-bye, she left her thin hand in Hargraves's stout one for a moment longer than usual, then looked straight into his eyes, and, with

that air of seeing just as much as she felt inclined to see, said, "Well, good luck, Mr. Hargraves, in everything!" and sank back on the cushions.

As the carriage turned the corner of the road, she looked round to wave an airy hand; and there he stood, at his ugly, heavy gates—the bullet head bare, the grave and substantial figure indicating in every line of it "the old plainness of manner and the old singleness of heart"—until she could see him no more.

Hargraves spent the hour immediately after dinner that evening, as he had resolved to spend it, in coaching Patty in the first principles of finance and the knowledge which is independence; ay, though it should make her independent of himself.

The book-table was cleared for their work; Charlotte sat by on the sofa—herself always sensibly aware of the paramount importance of pounds, shillings, and pence, and so highly approving that Hargraves should endeavour to show it to a person who might be "learned" (a quite cruel adjective to apply to a woman then, and not a kind one now), but who had shown herself so far from ordinarily sensible.

Patty leaned her chin in her hand in the old fashion, and gave all the attention of her mind; and only once or twice, when her eyes met Hargraves's, a sudden brief smile came across her seriousness, to soften his.

That the best of family solicitors (of a type quite

## The Dream of a Man Awake 399

other than Rowe) do not take as much interest in one's affairs as one ought to take in one's own, and that even a bank clerk's arithmetic is mortal and can err, were propositions sense must admit.

But when the lesson closed, Hargraves knew that the pupil was not convinced, and perhaps never would be convinced, of the selfishness and the dishonesty of the world; and knew, too, that, though he had tried his best to make her thus wise and cunning, he was glad she would never be so made. Charlotte, folding her work,—Sally had just summoned her to see a humble visitor in the kitchen,—was also beginning to be resignedly sure of Patty's unworldliness, only she called it by the name all that world calls it—stupidity.

When she had gone, Patty sat silent a little, playing absently with the pencil and the fat, serious account-book Hargraves had given her. Presently she told him about her visit to Norwich.

"It is good of you to send Aunt Ellen such handsome presents, Mat," said Patty (Hargraves moved uneasily in his chair). "It is so dull to be ugly and poor like that; and now, do you know, as I am not going to be married, she is saving—for my old age! When I told her you had arranged so well for me that I ought to be able to provide for myself, I saw she was dreadfully disappointed, so I said then," said Patty the accommodating, "that if one dropped one's savings into gold mines and things (as you say I shall have to), they

generally can never be got up again, and that I was sure her legacy would make just the difference between comfort and discomfort; and she seemed quite pleased."

After a pause, Hargraves said, "She likes to feel she is wanted, you see."

Then, because he knew that, not only for Ellen Wyatt, but for her niece, as for us all, to be needed is to be reconciled to life, he began to speak of the High Cross children and that increasing weakness which made constant attention for Bertha a matter of real necessity.

Patty, making little drawings on the cover of the virgin account-book, agreed.

Then Hargraves told her he had a plan for sending out regularly parcels of books to her and Julia, adding with a slow smile, "And you can write and tell me the ones I ought to have admired—and did not!"

Patty made answer, with her April, transforming smile, "Mat! You like so very few books—and people!"

And he replied, looking at her, "But, you see, I like those for ever."

In the silence that followed, Charlotte returned. She had been called to see an old woman suddenly taken ill in a cottage at the end of the Lane. Hargraves at once offered to accompany her; but Charlotte replied that Sally would be the more useful. Patty jumped up and followed Charlotte into the hall, asking what was the matter with

## The Dream of a Man Awake 401

the poor old thing; Charlotte replying that it was the third stroke of paralysis, which is inevitably fatal.

Patty said wistfully, "Oh, but *perhaps* it won't be, Char!"

And Charlotte pointed out, with the admirable sense and composure which always distinguished her philanthropy (and without which philanthropy usually does more harm than good), that she considered a recovery to be quite undesirable.

Patty tied the ribbons of that becoming pink hood, which framed her cousin's charming face like the outer petals of a well-made flower; put her arm round her; gave her a quite unnecessary, warm kiss, and said, with something between a laugh and a sigh, "Char! I do believe if I am away fifty years I shall come back and find you as calm and pretty as ever!" and, indeed, it *was* impossible to imagine Mrs. Hargraves flustered, distressed, or old.

"La bêtise est souvent l'ornement de la beauté et toujours sa conservation . . . elle éloigne les rides."

She detached herself slightly from Patty,—feeling for the thousandth time how unpractical she was,—said, "Sally ought to be ready!" and so Sally was, appearing in the background with a neat basket and her mistress's shawl.

Patty stood at the top of the steps, watching the two figures descend them; and stood there till the forms and voices lost themselves in the heavy

shadows of the drive. Then she turned away slowly—with a sigh not of envy; for she knew Charlotte only seemed to have the best this world can give.

In the drawing-room, Hargraves was reading, as always at that hour. Patty took her work and sat on the hearthrug; it might have been one of their old, happy, peaceful evenings once more; fire and candle-light fell as of yore on her shining head, and if Hargraves had stretched out his hand he could have touched it.

Perhaps twenty minutes passed without either of them saying a word.

Then Patty, dropping on her lap the travelling pelisse she was making for Bertha's doll, said in a low voice, as if she were speaking to herself, "So Bertha's my mission for ever!"

Hargraves put his book face-downwards on the table, and replied in the old, trite, copybook phrase that for ever was a long day. Then he began speaking of the prospects of her coming back for visits.

"Oh, Mat!" says Patty doubtfully, and twisting in her fingers the long hairs of the rug on which she sat. "We shall come so seldom—it's so difficult and dear!"

He answered, very slowly and distinctly, "Thought is free, though, and distance doesn't matter to it. You have often said yourself that life is not only what we do."

"Have I?" said Patty in an uncertain voice;

## The Dream of a Man Awake 403

but as she spoke some dream crept into her eyes, and when she looked up into the homely face above her, she saw its reflection there.

At that moment, Clement barked the announcement of Charlotte and Sally's homecoming steps.

"You'll take a *great* deal of notice of him, won't you?" said Patty wistfully, turning a little on the rug and laying her hand on Hargraves's knee. She did not wait his promise, but asked quickly, in a low voice, "What shall *you* do, Mat, all this long time I am away?"

The steps and voices in the drive drew nearer. About the quiet two in the drawing-room was the atmosphere at which Lady Mary had laughed: precision, respectability, self-respect; the life well ordered; faith kept with discipline and with duty.

Hargraves answered simply, "There'll be Char to make happy and comfortable, and I have my work."

Then, as for a moment his stout and steady hand closed over hers, he added, "And I shall wait."

THE END





# The Folk of Furry Farm

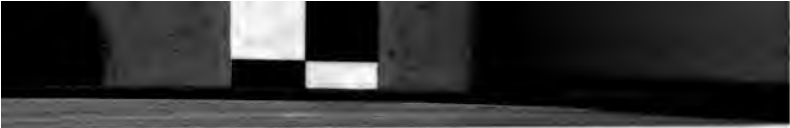
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# Jean Gilles, Schoolboy

By

**André Lafon**

Translated from the French by Lady  
Theodora Davidson

*Jean Gilles, Schoolboy* has won the highest recompense in the gift of the Académie Française, having been awarded the prize of \$2000 offered for "imaginative work of an elevated character." It is the first book to be thus honored by the most august literary body of France.

Other authors have endeavored to portray the workings of a child's mind,—Tolstoi, in his *Souvenirs*, Dickens in *David Copperfield*, Pierre Loti, Daudet, Henry James,—but these have all written in later life, when the vividness of their own impressions has faded, and disillusion has laid its withering grasp upon them. They relate, as mature men, the story of infancy; André Lafon, a youth not long emerged from adolescence, who stepped straight from boyhood into the teaching profession, has never lost touch. He knows exactly what every type of schoolboy thinks and feels.







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